

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST

God's solid foundation stands firm. 2 Tim. 2-19

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Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel,
but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in
the house.

Matthew 5:15

From The Editor's Desk.

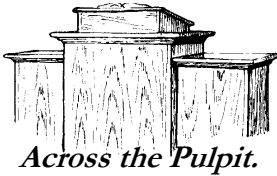
An Attitude Carried About by Earthen Vessels.

As earthen vessels, we are to live by trusting in the treasure, the Lord Jesus who dwells within us: "But we have this treasure in earthen vessels." 2 Corinthians 4:7. Also, we are to give Him all honour and glory as He sustains us day by day through the trials of life: "that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us." In addition, to help us magnify the treasure that lives in us, there is to be an attitude, an outlook carried about (embraced) by the earthen vessels.

The particular attitude that results in magnifying the treasure is the perspective we hold concerning the death of Christ: "Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." This is about dying in order to live. Jesus taught this. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it" Luke 9:24. Those who hold on to the life they received from Adam lose what they are trying to guard and develop. They never find true life. However, all who renounce their sinful natural life and trust in Jesus find a new life from Him. This is the attitude that followers of Christ are to carry with them. "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me" Luke 9:23. Day by day, our perspective is to include a rejection of any life that we could produce on our own ("deny himself"). We are to agree with God that the self-life always deserves the cross of Christ ("take up his cross daily"). This leaves us with only one option: pursue after Jesus for the life that He alone can provide ("and follow Me").

Such confessions are in harmony with what actually happened to us at the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism [that is, through identification] into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" Romans 6:4. When we placed our trust in the Lord, His death and resurrection became our death and resurrection! This is to be our confidence continually. "Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord" Romans 6:11.

When we carry about this attitude, we are actually trusting the Lord Jesus, the treasure who dwells within us, to live in and through our "earthen vessels," our humanity: "that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." And thus we can overcome temptation and exercise temperance.



Overcoming Temptation.

*Part 1 of 2 from a message by Fred Carpenter
Given at Danskin Mennonite Church*

I bring you greetings this morning in the name of the Lord Jesus, we are thankful that we have the privilege to ask Him to help us to face temptation.

I would like you to turn to first Corinthians 10 verse 13, this Scripture and the song that we sang introduces our thought this morning of overcoming temptation, every one of us is tempted, the Bible says that every man is tempted, it doesn't stop there but it does say that every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed, ([James 1:14](#)) so this is something all of us relate to, each of us has opportunity, many, many opportunities to ask the Saviour to help us to resist temptation and to overcome.

“Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.” [1 Cor. 10:12](#). I think this verse is telling us that if we think that we don't have temptations, that we think that we have always done what is right, if we think that we are not in a position where we might fall why then we need to take heed. We need to realise that by nature we have a downward tendency, our carnal nature, and we need the power of God in our lives to be victorious over that to die daily, to crucify the flesh.

Let's read first Corinthians 10:13 together:

“There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.”

We raise several questions in relation to this thought of overcoming temptation.

1] First of all what is temptation?

Well one thing that it is not is that it is not sin rather it is a suggestion to sin or an allurements to sin or an enticement to sin.

In [Matthew 4](#) and [Luke 4](#) we have record of Jesus being tempted but we do know also that the Scripture says that He did no sin, [1 Peter 2:22](#) says that He did no sin, when He was reviled, reviled not again, when He suffered He threatened not but committed Himself to Him that judges righteously.

So we know that temptation in itself is not sin and sometimes we may have a great deal of difficulty to discern the difference between being tempted and sinning.

It is a little bit like the account of Christian travelling through in Pilgrim's Progress, and as he was travelling through that valley the book says the hobgoblins were speaking into his ear and he had a hard time to discern whether it was his own thoughts or whether it was something else that was bringing these thoughts to him.

And so there are times in our lives when it is like that, we have a great deal of difficulty to tell the difference between actually being tempted and actually thinking wrong thoughts but then there are also times when it is clear when there is a more distinct line.

Someone has said that we cannot keep the birds from flying over our heads but we can keep them from making nests in our hair.

And I think that is maybe one thing that helps us to understand the difference between being tempted and actually yielding to temptation or actually sinning.

But this Scripture says that there hath no temptation taken you.

2] Secondly: How does it take us?

There has no temptation taken you, maybe if we would read it as “there has no temptation overtaken you or come upon you but such as is common to men.”

How does temptation overtake us or come upon us?

James 1:13 and 14 maybe we could turn to that now but we will be coming back here, this Scripture helps us to understand how temptation takes us, how it comes upon us:

[James 1:13-14:](#)

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man."

So first of all we understand from this Scripture that it does not come from God, God does not tempt us, even though temptation is allowed by

God it is not sent by God, it is not that God is trying to make us sin because this verse says: Let no man say when he is tempted: I am tempted of God.

God cannot be tempted with evil neither tempteth He any man. God is not interested in making us sin, this is exactly the opposite of the way that He works, it is the work of God to keep us from sin and so temptation does not come from God, He allows it.

I realise that we have for example in Genesis a Scripture that says that God did tempt Abraham and He wanted him to offer up his son Isaac. As we compare Scripture with Scripture we understand that that word tempt has different meanings, it is more the idea that God tested Abraham and this Scripture makes it plain that it is not the purpose of God to cause us to sin.

Notice also verse 14, (James 1) I did stop in the middle of the sentence but he says let's not say that we are tempted of God, God does not tempt us part in verse 14:

"¹⁴But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed."

How does temptation overtake us?

Well it arises from within, in the mind and in the heart. Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by what? His own lust and enticed thereby.

If I did not want it, if I have no desire for it, it would not tempt me. For example a dish of rotten potatoes – who would be tempted to eat them? You don't have any desire for them so they don't tempt you.

And a torn and dirty coat who would be tempted to lust after that, to have a strong desire to have a torn and dirty coat? Well maybe that could be a possibility but generally a coat isn't something that would tempt us, it would rather be something that would be outstanding or supposedly pretty that could be an allurements to us.

An extremely difficult job, again you could add to this list to illustrate that but what we don't have a desire for does not tempt us but again on the other hand what we do have a desire for is the thing that tempts us and Achan illustrates this back in [Joshua 7:21](#), where Joshua had used the lot to determine that Achan was the one that was guilty and that is why the children of Israel didn't have victory in their combat against Ai and Joshua

said: My son give glory to the God of Israel and Achan said: I saw, I coveted, I took.

That was the order in which things happened; I saw, he saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, a wedge of gold, he saw these things and he coveted them and so he took them, it was that sequence, every man is drawn when he is drawn away of his own lust.

Now the person who has developed an appetite for strong drink is tempted by that and the person who has developed an appetite for tobacco in some form is tempted by that, and that is one of the reasons, that is an illustration why we need to stay away from things like this, that is why we need to stay away from sin because if we stay away from these things we do not develop an appetite for them, they don't hold any power over us that they otherwise would and we need to realise that.

We need to reckon with our own natural tendencies, our own carnal nature, and you know if you never listen to the radio you won't have an appetite for what it presents, that is the way it works, and you can apply that and I can apply that to many areas of our lives.

Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts. So we need to stay away from sin so that we do not develop an appetite for it so that it doesn't have nearly so much of an appeal to us.

My carnal nature is bent toward sin and if I feed it, and we all can do that, if we feed our carnal nature the more we feed it the stronger it will become and the more of an appeal it will have to us and all power we will need to resist it and to overcome it, the more help we will need from God to overcome that temptation.

Every man is tempted and is drawn away of his own lusts.

So how does this overtake us? Why it arises from within in the mind and in the heart.

And how does this overtake us, in the third place?

The devil brings us many temptations to sin.

Maybe this is what you think of first in relation to temptation that it comes from the devil, and it is true that the devil is very instrumental in tempting us to sin and when I referred to the hobgoblins whispering many things into Christian's ear that is the kind of thing that the devil is involved in. You know that he is trying to present us with a lot of ideas and just like

he did to Eve there in the Garden of Eden and say well: Look at this tree, it is good, it is good to eat and God is keeping something back from you.

Making it look appealing, it is the way the devil works. The devil brings us many temptations to sin.

The Scripture says in [Luke 4:1-2](#), and Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness being forty days being tempted of the devil.

He was there in the wilderness forty days tempted of Satan.

[2 Corinthians 10:11](#): lest Satan should get an advantage of us for we are not ignorant of his devices.

Satan is definitely very much involved in temptation, we understand that, he has many forces working with him we also need to realise, I gave it in the order that I did because it is important that we don't just blame the devil. I think maybe you have seen it already, I've seen it not so recently but earlier in my life on some vehicles and people had it written on their back "The devil made me do it."

Well that is an easy excuse to say you know I'm not really responsible, the devil made me do it! But that is not Scripture, that is not a justifiable reason, it is not a good reason to try justify our actions, it may be that we yielded to the temptation that the devil brought to us, and all of us have, but that doesn't mean we are then innocent just because he was the devil who tempted us because we are the ones who have the power to choose what we will do, what we will think, what we will say, how we will feel toward other people, whether we will have grudges towards them or whether we will have a forgiving spirit, those choices that we make and many more where we are tempted to sin.

Now this text also says that there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man.

In what ways is temptation common to man?

Well first of all no one escapes being tempted, in [James 1:14](#) we read but every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts. But every man is tempted, no-one escapes it and further although temptation is often difficult it can be borne successfully, [James 1:12](#) says: Blessed is the man that does what? That endureth temptation for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love Him.

No one has to yield to it. That is not a foregone conclusion that we are victims and that we just absolutely cannot do anything to help ourselves but rather the Scripture teaches that there is hope for us.

Temptations overcome have a common potential for good in us and in this way they are common to man, when they overcome them they have a common potential for good in us.

James 1:2-3:

"My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; ³Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience."

And he goes on and adds to that list.

You know it is the difficulties in life that can make us strong and temptation is one of those difficulties that can make us strong. We think about how in a physical natural way you know what happens to the child who is three years old and never lifts anything heavier than what he has lifted so far, what happens to him? What will he be like by the time he is 30? Well he will still be as strong as the three-year-old but he surely won't be a 30-year-old, he won't have the strength of a 30-year-old, and that is how it is with us in a spiritual sense, if we are never willing to face what is hard well we are not going to become any stronger.

Think of it in relation to our children in school.

What would happen to a child who would never do anything more than first grade work?

Sounds appealing to children in school, sometimes they think it would be pretty nice but it really doesn't work that way, we just don't develop that way, we don't develop in the strength and we want to be more than jelly-fish, we want to be able to have some backbone, we want to be able to stand up and so we need to realise that temptations overcome will have a common potential for good in us.

The trying of your faith worketh patience.

I know that we are not inclined to ask for trouble is, we are not inclined to do that, we are especially not inclined to wish them upon others or we shouldn't desire them upon ourselves either, we don't want hard things and yet as we face them we find that God uses them if we respond properly, in faith God uses them to make us stronger.

In what ways is temptation common to man?

Well a fourth answer is that all are tempted in three basic areas.

I would like us to turn to first John 2:15-16, maybe you can quote these verses from memory but otherwise turn to them.

1 John 2:15-16. The Scripture says, let's say it together:

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."

All that is in the world.

You think about these three things; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. Can you think of any temptation that would not fall into one of those three categories?

The lust of the flesh is the appetite of the body, whether it be eating or drinking or many other things we know that the body desires. These are the lusts of the flesh.

And the lust of the eyes that is the affections that can so easily be led astray, the lust of the eyes.

And the pride of life, the desires and ambitions that we are tempted to rise up to and exalt ourselves and try to make a name for ourselves or try to be important or try to be maybe above others.

The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.

I believe that all of temptations fall into one of these three categories and I believe also that Eve and Adam were tempted on these three points. **Genesis 3:6** says:

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, What's that? Well it is the lust of the flesh. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, What's that? Well that is the lust of the eyes. it was pleasant to the eyes and that is was a tree to be desired to make one wise, What's that? Well that's the pride of life.

It is these three basic areas where all men are tempted and you can look also at **Matthew 4** and **Luke 4** where our Lord Jesus was tempted, Matthew and Luke do not list these temptations in exactly the same order, we take them in the sequence in which Luke lists them, **Luke 4:1-13**, the first appeal of the devil to Jesus was: Command this stone that it be made bread. Well what was that?

The Scripture tells us that Jesus had fasted for 40 days and 40 nights and after that He was hungered. So the devil was trying to take advantage of His hunger to stir Him into doing something that was wrong: Command this stone that it be made bread, feed your flesh, satisfy your hunger, it's all right to eat, well sure it is, but he was tempting Jesus here to take advantage of His divine powers to satisfy the needs of His own human body in which He dwelt and Jesus recognised that as wrong.

Command this stone that it be made bread – it was the lust of the flesh that he was appealing to.

And again in verse six: All this power will I give thee and the glory of them if you will fall down and worship me. All this I will give you, lust of the eyes, you can have this and then the third placed the pride of life; Cast thyself down, God will take care of you and you can think of yourself as someone important.

Let's turn to [Hebrews 4:14-16](#).

As I see in these three temptations that are recorded the Scriptures make it plain that these are not the only temptations which our Lord Jesus faced but I believe that these are recorded to help us understand the truth of Hebrews 4 verses 14 to 16:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. ¹⁵For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

Verse 15 we could read in the positive sense leaving the negatives out, we have a high priest which can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He was in all points tempted like as we are yet without sin. It is saying the same thing here.

What does it mean that He was in all points tempted like as we are?

Well discussing this with a brother one time he made this comment, he said: Well we know that Jesus was never tempted to have a wife because he didn't have a wife.

And for myself I'd probably be inclined to think that He had every particular temptation that we have, I am not so sure that it does mean that, but I think perhaps rather it is just as that illustration that not every possible temptation that a human could face that Jesus faced, maybe He faced the that a different level, I'm not saying that it wasn't that way, but it does one thing that satisfies my mind in relation to it says here in Hebrews that He was tempted in all points like as we are yet without sin, it is this comparison of the three basic areas of temptation to the temptations that He faced.

I believe that this is perhaps one thing that is in focus here or maybe it goes further than that. It would be interesting to hear your thoughts in relation to that but in what sense are they common to man?

Editor's note: This message will be concluded in the July issue and perhaps each of us could in the intervening ties consider how the temptations that Jesus faced are common to all of us.



THE ANABAPTIST VIEW OF CONVERSION.

Spiritual conversion is "the changing of purpose direction and spirit of life from one of self-seeking and enmity toward God to one of love toward God and man." it is to turn from sin to salvation, becoming a new creature in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The following consideration of Anabaptist convictions regarding conversion contrasts their Biblical view with the views of their opponents.

Contrasted with the Roman Catholic View.

As the early church drifted away from the teachings of the apostles, the emerging Roman Catholic Church taught that saving merit was miraculously received through the sacraments. They believed that Communion was the partaking of the physical body and blood of Christ and that infant baptism washed away original sin. They believed that "conversion consisted essentially in the acceptance of a creed and the authority of the church."

In contrast, Anabaptists believed that salvation was by faith, and that baptism and Communion do not in themselves have saving merit. Anabaptists spoke of the "sign of baptism," and of Communion as "this visible

sign," recognizing them as symbols of Christ's redeeming work in the believer. Menno Simons wrote, "I know of a certainty that... a defaming, slandering person is no Christian, or anybody uncompassionate or cruel, even if he is baptized a hundred times and attends the Lord's Supper."

Contrasted with the Protestant View.

Martin Luther was deeply impressed with the Scriptural truth that "the just shall live by faith" (Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11; Hebrews 10:38). He rejected supposedly meritorious works, prayers, fastings, pilgrimages, and selling of indulgences.

Ironically, however, Luther hardly differed from the Catholics regarding sacramentalism, basically maintaining the Catholic views regarding communion and baptism. Considering that Luther's great emphasis was faith, this position seems indefensible. Luther's view of communion and baptism, compared to Menno Simons' understanding given above, gives credence to the observation that Menno Simons "was more consistent than Luther and others in his teaching on this point."

The basic difference between the Anabaptists and Luther regarding conversion was not the question of salvation by grace through faith (Ephesians 2:8), but a Scriptural understanding of faith. Luther and most other Protestants emphasized doctrine, tending to isolate it from practice.

Anabaptists recognized that Bible doctrine cannot be separated from practice. Faith is more than an inner conviction; it includes an outward manifestation. Lutherans and other Protestants defined salvation as [to be declared righteous]. In contrast, Anabaptists emphasized [to be made righteous], or [to be made pious or God-fearing]. If the other Protestants found the center of gravity in doctrine, [the Anabaptists] placed it in life." This emphasis that salvation has tangible outward evidence has been described as an existential understanding of justification as contrasted with the theological view of most Protestants.

The Anabaptists taught that in conversion, the believer is justified from sin rather than in sin. Menno Simons, in condemning the Lutheran understanding of faith, wrote, they begin to sing a psalm: [The cord is cut asunder and we are at liberty] . . . Any one who can but read this, that if he live ever so carnally, is a good evangelical man, and a fine brother. And should someone come, who would in true and sincere love, admonish or reprove them, and direct them to Jesus Christ and to His doctrine, sacraments and unblameable example, and show that it does not become the Christian to

carouse and drink, and to revile and curse, &c., he must from that time hear, that he is a legalist [teacher of holiness by works], one who would take heaven by storm, a factionist, a fanatic or hypocrite, a defamer of the sacrament, or an anabaptist."

Protestants were quick to accuse Anabaptists of believing in justification by works.

An Anabaptist response was "for we know that our work, insofar as it is our work, is naught but sin and unrighteousness: but insofar as it is of Christ and done by Christ in us, so far it is truth."

Summarizing the consideration of faith, Anabaptists maintained that conversion results in a changed life in Christ, a truth clearly held forth in Ephesians 2:8-10.

Protestants generally emphasize verses 8 and 9, overlooking the continued teaching in verse 10 that, in being saved by grace through faith, "we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them."

The Anabaptists also rejected the Protestants' teaching of predestination held by Ulrich Zwingli and emphasized by John Calvin. Even Luther did not believe in the free will of man. He once compared man's will to a beast to be ridden by either God or Satan. "If God sits thereon, it wills and goes where God will.... If Satan sits thereon it wills and goes as Satan will. Nor is it in the power of its own will, to choose to which rider it will run, nor which it will seek; but the riders themselves consent, which shall have and hold it."

In contrast, the Anabaptists emphasized that man is a free moral agent, who of his own free will chooses or rejects salvation. The Martyrs Mirror contains a confession of faith, written about 1600, when Calvinism was in the ascendancy in the Netherlands. This statement includes an article on the will that teaches that "this saving grace of God is not limited to a few particular men, but... He has extended His grace to all of Adam's race," thus denying the Calvinist teaching of limited atonement. It further confesses that "all men who now in this time of grace believe and accept the Gospel attain unto life, but all who do not believe the Gospel, but voluntarily reject it, will receive death as their portion."

Contrasted with the Quietist and later Pietist Views.

During the Reformation, a Bible scholar named Casper Schwenckfeld believed much like the Anabaptists but chose to remain in the Protestant state

church, avoiding persecution. His position is referred to as quietism or [standing still].

About a century after the Reformation, men such as Philip Spener became dissatisfied with the coldness and carnality of the Protestant state churches. These men, known as Pietists, emphasized a spiritual relationship with Christ and pious living. Both the quietists and the Pietists emphasized the glory and joy of the Christian life. This emphasis has been described by some as the "sweet Christ."

Anabaptists rejected this avoidance of the cross of persecution. To them conversion was a commitment to [to unreservedly follow Christ], even in suffering. Following Christ in suffering has been described as the "bitter Christ." Already in 1524, Grebel said of Zwingli, who had avoided persecution through compromise, "All men adhere to them because they preach a sinful sweet Christ." Hans Haffner wrote in 1534, "The world accepts Christ as a gift, but it does not know Him as a suffering Christ."

To the Anabaptists, conversion was not primarily an emotional experience, it was a commitment to accept Christ's cross for salvation and to take up the cross of self-denial and suffering.

The Anabaptists of the Reformation period had a Scriptural understanding that differed from those of Catholics and Protestants. Are we maintaining the Scriptural understanding that conversion includes a decisive change of life, expressing itself in yieldedness, obedience, discipleship, and separation?

Brother Glenn. Adapted from the Eastern Mennonite Historical Journal October 2007. (Ed. The words in [...] are the English translations from German given in the original article.)



Shifting Sand

I love my early morning, hour long walk on the beach. I go whatever the weather (except in heavy rain) and I think the times I like best are when the sky is grey and overcast and the sea is rough.

Normally I walk on firm sand, but this morning, the tide was very high and I had to walk on the soft sand. It was hard going.

Every so often I would hit a firmer patch and I could stride out again, only to suddenly put my foot down into a soft patch of sand and it was back to plodding and struggling along. I only had a narrow strip of sand to walk on, and tree branches, that had been washed up by the sea, to step over. High sand dunes on one side of me and the crashing waves on the other. And as I plodded along I got to thinking about life.

We all have a road to walk - sometimes it is littered with obstacles (like the tree branches), sometimes we feel like we are sinking (like walking on soft, shifting sand) and then at other times we are able to walk unhindered and enjoy the journey (the firm sand).

I thought about the narrow strip of sand I had to walk on (the narrow road?), and those things and situations that come alongside us on our walk - the crashing sea (those difficult people perhaps?), and the high sandhills (problems looming?) and we feel we are getting squeezed in on all sides.

Sometimes the walk gets too hard and I think I'll turn back. Then I look out to sea and on the horizon see a gap in the grey clouds, and the silver rays of sunlight beaming through onto the grey sea. My feet hit some firm sand, the sandhills are opening out to grass areas, and the tide is going out. So I keep walking; thinking, I'll never take that firm sand I usually walk on for granted again. I get to my turning point and head back along the beach (by this time the tide has receded enough that I can walk the whole way on firm sand). I look up and see big patches of blue sky, the sun streaming down, and the sea sparkling and dancing in the sunlight.

Life gets hard sometimes. We feel like giving up the struggle... turning back. It all just gets too hard.

But God is there with us. He gives us the firm sand and the rays of sunshine. Do you see them? Or are you focused on the obstacles?

God and His Word is our firm foundation (2 Timothy 2:19), underneath our soft, shifting sand (Matthew 7:26). He will not let our foot slip (Psalm 121:3). And underneath are the everlasting arms (Deuteronomy 33:27).

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TEMPERANCE.

*From a message by David M Fisher
given at Pleasant Valley Mennonite Church.*

I would like to think about temperance this morning. I find the text in [2 Peter 1:1–13](#). In verse 6 we notice the word “temperance,” as one of the things that needs to be added to our faith. Verses 2–4 talk about the provision that has been made so that we can be partakers of the divine nature, which is “through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.” (v.2) Through all that it is by the shed blood of Jesus Christ as it is applied to our hearts and lives. It makes it possible so that we might be able to “walk in newness of life.” ([Romans 6:4](#))

[Colossians 3:1–3](#) talks about this walking in newness of life. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.” If we have the blood applied to our hearts and lives, are risen with Christ, if it is our aim in life to seek those things which are above, then consequently we will be “temperate in all things,” as [1 Corinthians 9:25](#) says. Or, may I ask you the question, “Will we?”

We realize man is given to extremes and inconsistencies. So it is important that we have this teaching, that we are reminded of what God expects of us. Or, at least, I need that and especially as we think of the area of temperance this morning. We notice in our text that though we know those things, yet, from time to time we need to be reminded to “be established in the present truth.” (v.12)

As we consider the definition of the word temperance, it has to do with being “moderate, discrete and not given to extremes.” The carnal man defines this as being moderate and discrete and even self-controlled not just in that which is right and good but that which is wrong as well. They apply being temperate in right or wrong. When the Bible uses the word “temperance,” it is usually in reference to self-control in that which is right in itself rather than the thought that doing a little wrong is okay. As long as we do not overdo it and as long as we are not caught, or get into trouble.

The Christian’s motivation for temperance or self-control comes from within, realizing that even a good thing can be overdone and can adversely affect us as well as those around us. Whereas, the carnal man in general

practices self-control (temperance sometimes) for his own benefit or even to manipulate others. Sometimes he is forced to use self-control because of outward control or the consequences of doing wrong, or being out of control. But even the consequences of doing wrong will not always help a carnal man to be temperate. There are times when in moments of passion, or anger, or for various other reasons, he will not be temperate.

Romans 7 give a picture of a man out of control. I have never quite thought of it that way as I noticed it here in this study. A man out of control doing the things he does not want to do and not doing the things he wants to do. Intemperate on either side I suppose. [Romans 7:14–21](#). “For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.” It certainly is a picture of a man or a person out of control. Notice verses 15, 18 and 19 again. Now that is the carnal man.

Does the spiritual man (or the Christian) find himself out of control sometimes? Certainly not in the things that we would consider gross sins. The teaching of the Word of God in our homes, in our churches, as well as the grace of God pretty well helps us in those areas that we do not get too far out. Also we do realize that we are accountable to God. Remember Joseph realized that. When he was faced with the advances of Potiphar’s wife he said, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” ([Genesis 39:9](#)) Finally, when she caught him by his garments, he left the garments and fled. Today, you and I are not only accountable to God, we are accountable within our own home, we are accountable to the Church our brethren.

Another word we could use for temperance, and we had noticed that in the definition of the word “moderation.” [Philippians 4:4–7](#) uses that word “Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests

be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” It is only as we truly “rejoice in the Lord,” are “careful for nothing,” or overly concerned, we make our requests “known unto God . . . by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving,” it is only then that we can truly be temperate and moderate in all things. Otherwise we feel that we have to make things work out. We feel that we are in control. But no, it is God who is in control. If we do not allow the peace of God to keep our hearts and minds on Christ Jesus, we will probably find ourselves in all kinds of inconsistencies and extremes in relation to temperance and yet possibly all the while claiming to be a child of God.

Temperance is something that is generally admired in the character of man, yet few are willing to practice the self-discipline that it takes to attain it. As we consider the history of man in the Bible, as well as up to the present time, we notice that true temperance and moderation has seldom been a part of man’s experience, consistently at least. We notice that the first man who was born on the earth got out of control. [Genesis 6:5–8](#), we also notice man being out of control. Notice here in the beginning of the chapter the sons of God looking to the daughters of the men. “And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And it repented the LORD that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him at his heart. And the LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man, and beast, and the creeping thing, and the fowls of the air; for it repenteth me that I have made them. But Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.”

What a sad state of affairs for man to be in. In spite of all this, we have one man who found grace in the eyes of God. That was Noah. He, at the commandment of God, against all odds that were, built “an ark to the saving of his house,” ([Hebrews 11:7](#)) as well as carrying human as well as animal life into the post flood world. And yet so soon, man again found himself in extremes in an effort to gratify himself, an effort to make a name for himself. We are familiar with the building of the tower of Babel. God stepped in and took care of that. Finally, God called Abraham out of his father’s house and chose him and his posterity, as His chosen people. And in this lineage we do find many faithful.

But again, we find some in that lineage who did not practice moderation or temperance. Esau is one that would come to mind. Solomon would be another one. He wrote in [Ecclesiastes 2:10](#) “whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them.” And then finally he said, “All is vanity” ([Ecclesiastes 1:2](#)) — intemperance. The consequences of intemperance. Then we have or we notice the nation of Israel as a whole. They rose and fell largely because of the results of temperance or intemperance. Down through history, since Bible times, we find much the same thing. Nations that paid attention to moral principles, practiced restraint and temperance became strong. And when temperance was disregarded, sensuality, violence were the norm. Then they became weak which became their downfall. It works the same way today as nations, as churches, as individuals. We find it in all segments of society and as I alluded to, even in the professed Christian Church.

Now, bring it closer home. Do you and I personally practice temperance as we should and could? If we have a constant problem with temperance in our personal life, it will affect our homes and our churches. Remember, we had inferred earlier that for the child of God, temperance is self-control in that which is right in itself, rather than being temperate in that which is wrong. We do well at times to bring these things to remembrance as we noticed in our text. We do well too, at times, to evaluate our concepts and practices to determine whether we are truly moderate and temperate in right things. Or, have we possibly been so affected by the spirit of the age around us and though we probably do not run to “the same excess of riot,” ([1 Peter 4:4](#)) or lack of control with them (at least in some things), maybe we are not as far behind them as we think we are at times when it comes to technology, modern conveniences, luxurious lifestyle.

For the true Christian temperance needs to be a deliberate and habitual act which will affect a number of things in our lives. It will affect our manner of speech. It will affect the clothes we wear, the house we live in and how it is furnished. It will affect the vehicles we drive and how many we drive, or own. It will affect what we eat, how much we eat and where we eat at times (at least on a regular basis). It will affect at what we work, and how we work and how much we work.

We immediately notice that these things in themselves are not wrong. They are basically vital to our existence. I am not sure if we could always apply it to our way of life. I suppose you can, but maybe that is open to

debate in relation to the standard that we live. However, it is right and proper to be clothed, to live in houses, to work and to eat, but these can become morally wrong and be a corrupting influence on us as well as others if they are not practiced in temperance.

In light of all this, how do we decide that what we are doing or allow is temperate or even an indulgence? When that does happen then they become sinful in the eyes of God. One thing is sure, we will not find our direction in these things from the world. We consider their goals, their aims, their appetites, we will not find direction from them. For our practices to be acceptable in every area before God, everything must be considered from the premise of the principles of the Word of God. As we consider the misuse of right things, in [1 Corinthians 6:12](#), Paul speaks to that. “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.” Now we recognize that he is speaking here about being temperate in things that are right, rather than indulging in things that are wrong. And we can apply this to the various material things that we use, the things we do and how we do them.

The desire to do things right and have things in proper order, whether it is in our homes, in our clothes, our vehicles, and even in our business, that desire can easily revert to the desire to be seen of men and to the applause of men. When that is our motive, I think we need to be right and proper and orderly, but when that is our motive, to be seen of men, then it would be very difficult to be consistent and temperate in all things. When our motive is not what it should be, then the things we do, and pursue, will dominate us and bring us under its power, though the practice in itself is expedient and lawful. However when it is in control of us rather than we being in control of it, then it is no more expedient or lawful for us.

If any of the simple, everyday acts of life occupy our time and efforts to the point that they rob us of spiritual life, and vitality then they become unlawful to us though in themselves they are right. The fact that we live in a very affluent society, this thing of accumulating material wealth, and the lifestyle that goes with it, is probably where God’s people are affected the most in relation to intemperance. The world is by and large, worshipping at the throne of materialism. Most people are giving almost their whole life, their time, their efforts, their talents, their energy into financial advantage for their own gain. They give little or no thought to their accountabil-

ity to God. Nor, to the fact that to whom these things will be when God says “this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be?” (Luke 12:20) Remember the rich man there. The things that he had and the things that he was doing were not necessarily wrong, when the crops increased it is proper to try and take care of them. But instead of sharing with others, he got this idea that, “Well, now I can sit back and relax and live the good life for a while.” Gold has become their god, the people of the world, because it largely allows them to indulge in the “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life,” (1 John 2:16) or what they consider the good life.

Again, we do not go to that extent in our material pursuits. But, maybe sometimes we almost forget the warning and the admonition in 1 Timothy 6:4 Paul refers to those that are “proud, knowing nothing,” plus other things and he says that they even suppose “that gain is godliness.” (v.5) Now verses 6–12, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.”

Do our material pursuits at times make it difficult to flee these things that can so easily snare and destroy men? Do they at times make it difficult to follow after righteousness? What does it say here, “godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.” Do they at times make it difficult to “fight the good fight of faith,” and “lay hold on eternal life?” Do these material things sometimes make it difficult for us? Do they at times make it difficult to give ourselves to the work of the Lord and the Church? Also, if we are not diligent and temperate in our material pursuits, it can [detrimental to our] witness and testimony in the community, especially when we have almost overextended ourselves with a debt load. It can affect our business dealings in the community. Are we known in the community as one that drives a hard bargain? Now certainly, we should not be careless, but to always

haggle and deal for the lowest price can certainly destroy our Christian testimony, as well as always or almost always being delinquent in paying our bills. If we cannot pay it at the moment, if we have a loan that is due and we cannot pay the interest, the least we can do to maintain our Christian testimony is to go and talk with the person that we owe the money to, rather than avoid those people.

These types of things happen most always when we have a heavy debt load, especially this thing of driving hard bargains. Now I realize there are some people that have money and yet it has become a way of life to them. Proverbs talks about that person who says, “It is naught, it is naught,” ([Proverbs 20:14](#)) it really is not worth it, and then finally when he gets it he goes and boasts about it. Again, while that can happen in those cases, it probably does happen sometimes because of heavy debt load. These things tend to intensify that kind of thing. Also, while people in a financial bind sincerely do not intend to be dishonest but yet it can happen so easily by misrepresenting something. Misrepresenting things on the income tax return. Various things like that. An intemperate pursuit of material things affects family life, affects our availability for the work of the Church. As I inferred a bit ago, it will affect our business and the way we do things. Now while it is important, the Bible talks about the fact that we need to look well to the ways of our flocks. [[Proverbs 27:23](#)] We need to be diligent in business, yet it also says we are to give ourselves “a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is [our] reasonable service.” ([Romans 12:1](#)) And being diligent in business and giving ourselves are both found in the same chapter of Romans 12.

As we consider material wealth, our business pursuits and work need to be tempered by the fact that we are called to be a pilgrim and a stranger in this world as well as the fact that we are called to be stewards of material things including our abundance. Is our motive in life first of all, to love and serve the “Lord [our] God with all [our] heart, and . . . soul, and . . . strength, and . . . mind; and [to love] thy neighbour as thyself?” ([Luke 10:27](#)) Next to all this allegiance to God, and loving our neighbour, our desire should be to work with our own hands to supply our basic needs so that we are not chargeable to others. And then if and when God does bless above our needs for food and raiment, we should be able and willing to supply the needs of others, especially in the time of calamity etc., and church wide we do not need insurances because we help each other in these areas.

By this I am not saying that we should not lay up in store for ourselves — have a savings account for our own needs if something unexpected turns up or even in old age, lest we become chargeable to others in those ways. While the stranger and pilgrim concept truly involves our business life, it also includes the things that I have referred to earlier such as dress, homes, eating, vehicles etc. In [1 Corinthians 9:25](#) we will find a statement there (I referred to it before) being “temperate in all things.” Paul says that the world is temperate at times. The world is at times in a race for a “corruptible crown.” On the other hand, we as the children of God are in a race for an incorruptible crown or the heavenly city. While the world in general is temperate and deny themselves of a number of things, to try and win that corruptible crown they avoid this, they avoid that, they get themselves in shape. But all they attain is a corruptible crown. I will read verses 24–27, “Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain. And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.” And as I think of being temperate for this corruptible crown, there is not just one crown at the end of the road. It is for all of us that are faithful to the end. It does not matter if we get there first or last or anywhere between, whereas in the natural race . . . it must be a disappointment sometimes when just miss it by a couple of inches because someone got it before we did . . . that will not happen in the race for the incorruptible crown as we are faithful.

Two more Scriptures in closing. [Titus 2:1-2](#) “But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience.” We often think of younger people being intemperate, but here the older men are still told to be temperate. In fact it is a part of sound doctrine. Now yet, [Colossians 3:17, 23](#) “And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. . . And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.” Now these verses do not specifically speak to temperance as such, but they certainly are involved and included in temperance. In fact they are probably the key to it. So again, whatsoever we do, may we be temperate in all things.

Forgiveness.

Look upon Jesus, sinless is He,
Father, impute His life unto me.
My life of scarlet, my sin and woe
Cover with His life, whiter than snow.

Deep are the wounds, transgression has made,
Red are the stains; my soul is afraid.
O to be covered, Jesus, with Thee,
Safe from the law that now judgeth me.

Longing the joy of pardon to know,
Jesus holds out a robe white as snow.
"Lord I accept it! Leaving my own
Gladly I wear Thy pure life alone."

Reconciled by His death for my sin,
Justified by His life pure and clean.
Sanctified by obeying His word
Glorified when returneth my Lord.
F.E.Belden.

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