

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

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

From The Editor's Desk

What a glorious and joyous occasion when we come to Christ our Saviour in repentance whether it be as a young person or one in later years there are things that we regret having done or not done and in true repentance those things are forgiven by Christ and we are washed whiter than snow in the blood of the Lamb. So glorious and joyous in fact that even the angels in heaven rejoice as Jesus Himself says in Luke 15:10.

For those who were older and perhaps married with families or even beyond that stage when they came to Christ there are a great many things that can and do bring regrets even though we know that we have been forgiven, born again, are now in Christ and a new creature, that old things have passed away and all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17) we still do reflect at times on our past life and consider how much more our families would or could have benefited if we had made the choice to follow Christ as His disciple at a much earlier age.

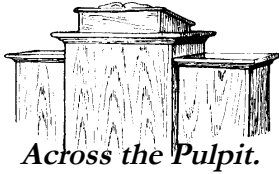
There are two ways we can deal with those regrets, we can firstly dwell on them and allow Satan to bring us to a stage that we become so despondent about them that we forsake the way of Christ because we live in the past and suffer defeat instead of gaining the victory.

The only other way is to follow the example of Apostle Paul, and he had much indeed to regret (Acts 22:4-20) but he determined to do this one thing and that was forgetting those which are behind and reaching forward unto those things which are before or ahead of us.

In this month's edition we have included a message on Dealing with Regrets as all of us doubtlessly have things that we do regret even though we know that we have been forgiven we still have to deal with those things because what we sow we reap from and that can be a lifelong regret. We do however have the promise of our transgressions being removed from us as far as the east is from the west by God Himself (Psalm 103:12) and neither will He remember our sin any more but forgives our iniquities - our past ungodly behaviour (Jeremiah 31:34).

Why therefore should we then continue to dwell on that which God has forgiven and forgotten? Remember that is Satan's ploy to draw us away from God and deny us the victory that overcomes the world and gain the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

JvL.



Dealing With Regrets

*Bro. John Wiens,
Danskin Mennonite Church, 2006*

We greet you in the name of the church builder, the Lord Jesus Christ. I am often impressed in a new way how God is building His church and always feel privileged when I see a group of people together that have chosen to be part of a body of believers that are purposing to serve the Lord and to live for Him.

It is an encouragement to me as I think of the tremendous privileges that we have through that but also the faithfulness of brethren and sisters.

I would like to think tonight not on looking ahead as much but somewhat looking back or maybe we could more accurately say forgetting those things that are behind, forgetting the past, and when I think of our lives and how often times, speaking for myself, I have failed and certainly come short of God's eternal provisions and his purposes. (*Philippians 3:13*)

The Scripture that came to my mind is that it is because of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed because His compassions fail not. (*Lamentations 3:2*)

Where would any of us be if it were not for the mercy of God? Even after we were saved none of us are in a perfected state yet, we are still in this body. Often times you look back at and at least for myself I can hardly believe some of the things I've messed up in already and I'm embarrassed, I told a brother not long ago when he was sharing something with me and I said: Well I would have to confess a very similar happening and I said I was ashamed of myself, I thought it strange that I could behave myself that way.

I would like to look tonight at how we can deal with the past or how we can deal and let go of our regrets, things that have happened.

And I think we are all human enough to know that we have regrets, we have made mistakes, and we have said the wrong things, we have said hurt-

ful things, we have hurt others, and I am sure we could mull over our regrets tonight and there would be many that we could look at but we want to see more of how we can deal with our past regrets and how we can overcome those.

Turn to Philippians chapter 3, when I think of regrets I think of something that we dwell on, the unchangeable happenings and doings of life, that is regret when you dwell on that, things that you cannot change and that is a painful thing isn't it?

You know there are many individuals that have missing limbs and because of carelessness they reached in somewhere, they did it maybe many times, they knew they shouldn't do it but because they got by with it they kept on doing it till one time they got caught, and are now less an arm or a finger or whatever, and those are regrets.

But you know life goes on and they can live with that but there is a lot of other things that are far more painful than simply losing a limb and those other things that we want to think of God that we learn how to get over those regrets and not dwell on the unchanging happenings and doings of life. I think along with that is a deep feeling of the wrong choices, the mistakes of my own or that of others, controlled or uncontrolled, and that can be very painful.

We can never change the past but the regrets of the past can change how we face the future.

And I guess that is the burden of my message that we cannot go back and change the past but unless we deal with the past and the regrets you know we won't hardly be able to face the future and there is a lot more things we could say about that in relation to changing or how we change or how we look at the future.

The thought also came to my mind that if we could, suppose pick up from here or maybe go back should we say, and relive our whole life over again, do you think that we could come to this place in life without any regrets?

Well I don't think so because we are still human. We would still make some mistakes, maybe we wouldn't make the same ones, it is possible that we would make some of the same ones but we would still make mistakes

and we would still have regrets and so there would still be those painful things but how to let go of our past is certainly what we want to look at tonight.

We want to look at two areas;

First of all I'd like to look at some of the dangers of regrets and then on the positive side how to deal with our regrets.

Some no doubt have far more regrets than the others but I do believe that for everyone there is ample grace for every child of God to be able to deal with past regrets and leave the past behind and to move on with life. If that were not so the Christian life would certainly seem like a very futile thing, very hopeless thing or plan. God has not said: Well I'll save you but you have to live the rest of your life with these regrets.

Philippians chapter 3, verse 13,

"Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

That is where I would like to draw our thoughts from that forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth.

Now you must remember who wrote this, it was the man that no doubt had a lot of deep regrets. If you would go back to Acts in chapter 8 it says that he was still consenting unto the death of many, and this was right after Stephen's stoning, he had been consenting to Stephen's death.

It was him that held the coat and heard the voice of the one they were stoning and he heard that voice crying out saying: Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. (*Acts 7:54-60, Acts 22:20*)

He went on it says in chapter 7 of Acts that he made great havoc of the church. He was going from house to house, it says he went into every house and sentencing them to death because of their faith and their belief.

I am sure that the Apostle Paul lived with a very graphic picture of some of the things that he did to the Christians, tore families apart, children, it doesn't give us a lot of details but I'm sure there was a lot of things that the Apostle Paul regretted. (*Acts 22:4*)

And then he comes to his senses and finds the Lord and his desire to win Christ, that I may know Him, and one more thing of being found in Him. But then he writes on that he is endeavouring to forget the past and to move on.

Now picture with me how useful Paul would have been if he would have kept dwelling on what he did back there when he persecuted the church, even though he said he had a zeal and he did it in his own righteousness, but if he would just have stayed there we wouldn't have the letters of the Apostle Paul and his faithfulness and how he was so useful in the Lord's work and many things that are written by him, a tremendous, tremendous testimony.

But I think it is all related to the fact that he was able to forget the past and to leave those things behind and to move on into the future.

We are coming out of the first point: The danger of regrets.

The first one I think of is that our regrets become more and more a way of life. You just live in regrets, it is like a big sinkhole you swim around and you swim around and you swim around and you never get out of it, or like a Ferris wheel that just goes around and around and around, it becomes a way of life. Or like an endless belt that has no breaking it, you can't find an end to this thing, that is one of the dangers of living in regrets that our minds become like they are locked into a mould and therefore we destroy the usefulness of our mental faculties God has designed. God has designed our mental faculties to be able to launch out.

One of the brethren gave a Scripture yesterday in Colossians chapter 1, he gave this one and in that phrase the Apostle Paul talks about the knowledge of Christ and then he says so that he may increase in the knowledge of God, increasing in the knowledge of God (*Colossians 1:10*).

When a person dwells on the past you limit your mental faculties so that you can't broaden out and expand your mind in spiritual things or as it were explore the vastness of our God but you are captivated with the past and God wants us, all of us, to know a whole lot more about Him than what we do and we could.

I'm not saying that we are all guilty of dwelling in the past but that is one of the hindrances if we can't get above that and therefore while we should

be thinking on present things in the magnitude of God in relation to all His doings and His provisions, here we can be thinking of the past and we just can't get any further and God certainly wants us to explore new territory and new things about Himself and find out, not only find out new things but keep those things new in our lives, and that is part of it.

There are a lot of things that we do and believe, they are not new to us as far as knowledge goes, but we keep the new alive by not dwelling in the past.

Years ago there was a song that was written by an ungodly man, no doubt it was born out of frustration no doubt of the past and so on but the song went, part of the phrase was: "Stop the world and let me off, I am tired of going around and around."

It becomes a way of life you know and it is not a refreshing way life it is one that just bogs you down.

In the second place living with guilt, your guilt or blame.

God has not designed the Christian life to be under a load of guilt or blame, that when we are washed in the blood of Jesus Christ and if truly He cleanses us from all unrighteousness then we cannot dabble in the things of the past. And often times our guilt when we find no release is shifted into blaming others. When we live with a load of guilt from the past and you live long enough in that finally a shift in that guilt is shifted into the blaming of others.

In the third place the danger of regrets is that the provisions of God, the intentions, the design, the desired potential of God doesn't become a living reality to an individual that lives in the past.

In other words the things that God has so richly given us to enjoy, the things that He has provided for us, the individual who always lives in the regrets of yesterday finally gets to the place where he says: "Well, it just doesn't work for me, it works for others but it doesn't work for me."

We said it becomes a way of life and these intentions that God has for us they don't become a reality.

The Scripture says: "If the Son shall make you free you shall be free indeed." *John 8:36*.

It does not matter what the past is we shall be free indeed, little or great, small or much sin in our lives, we shall be free indeed.

But you know those things, those Scriptures don't become a living reality as long as we hang on to the past failures of our life. Faith loses its power when we cannot let go of yesterday's regrets doesn't it. If we can't let go of yesterday's regrets faith loses its power because we cannot claim the Scriptures of being free and free indeed.

And consequently regrets reduce the power of God, God's forgiveness, to the level of our regrets.

In the fourth place the danger is that we loose even our usefulness of today and again the designed potential that God has for every child of God.

If you want to hinder God's usefulness in your life just hang on to the past and it destroys that usefulness and the power that God wants us to experience in our lives.

The ironic part about regrets is that you keep hanging on to the very thing that you regret.

Did you ever stop and think of that? The very things that you hate, the things that you regret you keep hanging on to that. And I suppose we would have to say that is certainly not the work of God.

It reminds me of a story I heard years ago and some of you might have heard me give this illustration before, the story went on to say how to catch a monkey and that is: You tie a cookie in a jar, you tie it down and then you make sure that the opening is no bigger than what the monkey can slip his hand into. Well when he slips his hand into the cookie jar and gets a hold of a cookie and of course his hand is enlarged or his paw or whatever he can't pull it out. Well he won't let go of the cookie and he is caught, he is trapped.

And that is a little how our regrets are and how they can finally trap you.

They can trap you, the very thing that you should let go off you keep hanging onto, that very thing is your trap. You know that if only he had let go he would have been free.

Well that is the fifth point: Being trapped.

The ability to love and to enjoy life just isn't there and having a tendency to even resent those who are living in victory. Now when an individual lives long enough with and in past regrets he finally gets to the place of not only being trapped but it isn't in reality leading the Christian life and you finally get to the place that you resent those that seem to be really enjoying the Christian experience and finding victory in the Christian life.

Instead of forgetting that list just gets bigger.

You know if we don't by God's grace, forgive and forget the past and reach forward we will only go backwards, we have graphic minds and we have an enemy of the soul that is very good, he is a master at bringing past failures back into our lives even after we have experienced the forgiveness of God. We have an enemy of the soul that brings those things back.

I talked to a widow lady not too long ago, we were sharing about the loss of Charlene and then we went on to some other things and then she said: "Shortly after her husband passed away the devil was right there and brought all kinds of little things into her mind, things she said when her husband was still here, little things, things that they took care of just on and on."

Well that's just how it works if we don't let go of the past, and instead of getting rid of it the list only gets bigger and bigger and bigger.

Well I think along with that being trapped is that regrets can turn into a deep resentment and bitterness. Many individuals have done that because they did not let go of their past regrets and it finally turned into that resentment and bitterness.

Along with that it taxes the mind when you live in the regrets, it taxes the mind and consequently could affect others, it can affect others in home life, it can affect family life, it can affect people in the church, it affects our whole outlook on life and all those that we have to do with.

Unresolved regrets limit our victory in Christ, we have to find our forgiveness and then move on from there, and it causes an inner turmoil.

Number six is the danger of losing our self-worth.

An individual that lives in past regrets, it doesn't matter what degree, some more than others, but you know finally if you steep yourself in that long enough then finally you become worthless. The Bible says that we ought not to think more highly about ourselves than what we ought to think (Romans 12:3) and you wonder sometimes how we ought to think about ourselves?

Well I don't think that God ever intended for any of us to feel like a nobody after He has cleansed us, washed us, and made us one of His children and then make it that we should go around feeling like we are nothing.

We are something, we are something special to God and the only reason that we are special is because of what He has done but I do believe that God wants to have each one of us to find a self worth in Him, and not to feel cast down and feel that, I don't rate, I don't measure up to others.

Well a lot of that can stem back to when we don't let go of our past regrets.

But you know the Apostle Paul said he presses on. I suppose he could have spent a lot of time giving us all the details of how he went into this house and right in the middle of when they were having their family worship how he moved right in and scattered them abroad and destroyed the whole thing, maybe he took the father out of the home and destroyed him, he could have spent a lot of time but he didn't, he said I press on, I'm moving on and I press toward the mark, I'm pressing on toward the mark for the prize (*Phil.3:14*) and that is what we need to do.

Well in the second place we want to look at dealing with our regrets. And that again is found in verse 14 where he says: I press toward the mark. (*Philip. 3:14*) And that is there is a purpose and lesson to learn from our failures and faults, that is one thing but to hang on to them we durst not do that. The song that we often sing, I am pressing on the upward way, new heights I am gaining everyday; that is what we need to do.

But you know as long as you hang on to the bottom rung of the ladder you will never climb to any higher heights in your Christian life and so we have to let those things go. And I think the Apostle Paul who was a master of turning his trials into triumphs, and no doubt of those trials he was speaking when he said forgetting the past.

In the second place dealing with our regrets and that is being honest.

Being honest with ourselves, taking personal accountability and responsibility where it applies as we face the past, we can't just say the past is that and I am rid of it, I'm just going to put it out of sight, out of mind and it is forgotten. But we have to deal with it in the right way, we have to be honest with ourselves if we are going to leave the past under the grace of God and the provisions that God made for us. Taking that personal accountability and responsibility.

You know we could look at our past and how many times could we have and how many times did we say: If this or that person would not have done that then I would not have done this.

And on the other side is we do not take responsibility for the wrongs of others doings and knowing the difference.

And I'm not sure if I can make myself clear but I think of home situations where fathers and mothers have gotten into a cycle of disagreements and the way of life in the home become broken and shattered and those poor children they start to take on the blame of why parents are separating, or the home that has an alcoholic father, sometimes the children can blame themselves. And we have to be discerning in knowing that we do not take the responsibility for the wrongs of others.

Well in the third place how can I deal with these regrets?

I think one of the most effective ways is finding a faithful friend that you can share your innermost struggles with. You know not the whole world has to know what your life consists of, not just the small regrets, but then the thing that you are trying to get rid of becomes more magnified if you hold onto it, but find an individual that you can feel close to, that keeps confidences, where you can share your innermost struggles with that individual and one that can help you walk through the some of the past hurts.

You know sometimes individuals may hardly even know what they are struggling with in past hurts and what they really are, and I have been told and I have no way of proving it, that even little children that have been abused in different ways there is something in the back of their minds even though they do not know what it is but it has to be cleared.

And sometimes there are things that others can help you walk through and help you get a fresh hold by faith and to move on and to find victory over those struggles.

I said be honest, get down to the point of regrets and let that closest friend know what they are.

I think sometimes in life, I would say in many cases, there are individuals that struggle with some ugly things and they think it is too ugly to mention to anyone but finally we have to find somebody that understands and wants to help us through this.

I talked to someone just recently she was telling me of a woman, and most of you would know her, that lost two of her daughters some years ago, but she said this woman would call her and then she would go over and visit and she said and we would just cry together.

And the woman that called her said: I could cry alone but that is not like crying on somebody's shoulder.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ. (*Galatians 6:2*) there are times when we simply have to do that rather than struggling under the load of something that we seemingly cannot find release from and sometimes it helps, it takes others.

Well in fourth place and that is: Learning to detect the early stages of what I call mind rehearsal.

When the mind starts going back, back to what has been forgotten by God, then we need to detect that.

In second Corinthians chapter 10, while this is an exercise of faith I think it is also an exercise that we have to learn, learning to detect, and this goes for many things in life whatever our struggles may be, whether it is anger, whether it is lust, whatever it is, that we learn to detect the early, early stages of that.

Now I want you to look at these, verses four and five

"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; ⁵Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, [and here it is] and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" *2 Cor. 10:4-5*.

I'm not sure what all that means but I would like to think that bringing our thoughts into the obedience of Christ is bringing our thoughts into the pro-

visions of Christ in that here we have to detect the early stages, when the mind starts going back again where it has no business dwelling and we learn that pattern very, very quickly.

Well chapter 4 of Philippians verse six, somehow we must break the thinking pattern and I think here is another very effective way and that is in verse six where he says:

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication [that is one of them and then he goes on and says] with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God, and right after that he says: And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. *Philip. 4:6-7.*

I think that is what it takes, that we focus on something that breaks the old habitual thinking pattern.

And very closely related to that and that is number five: Filling your mind with positive and spiritual things. Notice in chapter 4 verse eight,

"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." *Philip. 4:8.*

We have to fill in our minds.

The emptiness of the house is a dangerous thing. You know we have that Scripture where the house was garnished and swept and then seven other evil spirits came and overtook. *Matthew 12:44-45.*

We have to fill our minds.

You know we often try to keep out the evil without the house being filled, you know when the house is full, when the mind is full of good things you can keep that out, you could go to verse one of chapter 3 where he says: Finally my brethren rejoice in the Lord, rejoice in the Lord (*Phil. 3:1*). That when our mind is filled with good things, positive things, spiritual things it is not nearly as hard to keep something out.

But you know when you have something that is empty, vacant, there are a whole lot more dangers there, don't dwell on your failures and faults but on the positives.

We can never rise above yesterday's regrets as long as we focus on the negative things today. You know negative thinking will never release me from the regrets of yesterday. I have to fill my mind with spiritual things, powerful things, powerful things that are able to resist the past.

The Scripture says: No man having put his hand to the plough and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God. *Luke 9:62*.

Then you know whenever we look back at our past we reproduce the very thing that we regret and you no longer see what is ahead when we look at the past. The man that is looking back at the furrow that he just ploughed, he looks back and sees how wobbly and weaving it is, he certainly isn't in a position to plough a straight furrow, it produces the same thing in our lives by looking back.

So we have to look ahead as the Apostle Paul said, forgetting those things that are behind and reaching forward, pressing forward, looking at something more and more positive.

Then I was going to say along with that when we look back it is sort of like sitting on ice and spinning wheels, it doesn't matter how fast you are spinning you are still sitting on the spot and only wasting time. And looking at things of the past is the same thing.

And in the sixth place, experiencing the ultimate and that is delivery is through forgiveness.

If God be for us who can be against us? *Romans 8:31*. Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? *Romans 8:33*. Who is it? Who can accuse you of what you did and what you were?

Paul said such were some of you at one time. It is God that justifieth. *1 Corinthians 3:11*.

The past is gone, the past is forgotten, the past is forgiven.

And who are we after God forgives us, who were we to hang on to some of the things of the past?

Can we move on in victory? Can we experience forgiveness?

Ponder this thought: Can we experience forgiveness if we do not accept forgiveness?

Accepting forgiveness is an act of faith that I believe that God has forgiven me, I reach out and take that pardon, if I don't reach out and take it then really I am not accepting it and God can't grant forgiveness because He doesn't grant something if we don't accept it by faith.

All our provisions are through the operation of faith and if I don't believe that God has really forgiven me how can I then be free and delivered and how can God really forgive?

It is only granted when we humbly accept that pardon.

In the seventh place and that is the exercise of forgiveness.

And that is forgiving ourselves.

I often think that it is hard for us to forgive others and sometimes it may be hard for us to accept God's forgiveness but even then when we get to that place where we say: Yes, I accept that.

But then we have a hard time accepting or forgiving ourselves and that takes a lot of humility to forgive ourselves.

Behind that is a very subtle form of pride when we cannot forgive ourselves.

Now each one here tonight your mind can very quickly reel back I don't know how many years, anywhere from 40 to 60 years, maybe not quite that long, things that have happened but you know somewhere not only do we have to accept the fact that God forgave us but somewhere we have to forgive ourselves, and I think that is one of the hardest things, it doesn't matter what we did and when we messed up.

I did want to say this yet: You know if God forgives and the Scripture says your sins and iniquities will I remember no more. *Hebrews 8:12, Hebrews 10:17.*

Our regrets of sin and the wrong choices were never categorised by God.

There is none here that is any closer to the Kingdom of God by virtue of status. All have gone astray, all were lost, we were equally lost and it took the same power to save every man and woman.

Should we not then forgive ourselves?

It doesn't matter what the issue may have been. It doesn't matter what the sin may have been, to what degree.

Men categorise sin.

God categorises the sinner and God categorises the saint.

But He doesn't tonight say: Well this person here you know he is a little more special than this person over here because this is what they did and all they ever did was this!

It isn't that way and when it is all said and done shouldn't we then be able to forgive ourselves?

If God doesn't put a categorisation on our wrongdoings then we must simply give ourselves to God and accept that forgiveness.

While there is so much at stake to hang on to past regrets, all our righteousness does not lie in what we did or did not do, it is reflected, our righteousness is simply found in the grace of God.

It is not because of what we did or what we didn't do, our righteousness tonight is simply in the realm of God's forgiveness and God's provisions.

May God help us to be a people that believe in the forgiveness of God and that we believe in the grace of God that He has as far as the East is from the West, so far has He removed our transgressions from us, our sins, and our iniquities He remembers no more. *Psalm 103:12.*

Let us rejoice in that.

Let us make every day a new page in life and when we blotch the page let's seek forgiveness but let's not keep turning back the pages and let us press on and reach on for the prize.



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.

HEALING FOR OUR SORES

The minute details concerning sores related in Leviticus 13 will likely be passed over by casual readers of the Bible. But when an earnest seeker of truth takes an overview of what God is saying there, he will find inspiration and direction for the Christian life.

Of particular note is the carefulness that the priests exercised in examining the nature and appearance of a person's sore. Minor details were important, and small changes were significant. Those little things could make the difference of whether one was pronounced clean or unclean. For that reason, the Israelites surely expected an unbiased and thorough examination of their malady.

"For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Rom. 15:4). What are some of the things Christians should learn from God's instructions in Leviticus 13?

Sores appear on the surface of the body, in a way, they are superficial but they say something about what one has been exposed to, his activities, hurts, or wounds, or even his general state of health. Sores are often symptomatic. But there are sores that may be life-threatening in their own right. Applying all this in the spiritual sense, no sore of the soul and spirit should be ignored as inconsequential.

A person is a Christian by virtue of becoming a new creature in Christ Jesus (2 Cor. 5:17). The heart and mind are changed by the power of the Holy Spirit working regeneration (Titus 3:5). This change is an inward remaking. A Christian is not a put on, but becomes a different person from the inside out. However, this new creature in Christ does have a surface that shows—he or she projects an image that leaves impressions. Those outward appearances and manifestations of spirit undeniably say something about how that person is faring inwardly.

A swelling, eruption, or unnatural growth in the skin is noted with uneasiness. When a sore continues to fester and does not heal, it isn't long until one consults a reliable medical source. Often in contrast, the unseemly sores that want to afflict believers' spiritual lives may be justified and their significance minimized. This seems strange when one considers that these sores of the never-dying soul bear on one's eternal hope. It's as though there is a disconnection from spiritual reality; it is proof of how earthly man is by nature.

The primary responsibility and accountability for one's spiritual health lies at

one's own feet. When he or she detects any sign of a disorder, it is for that one to come to the Great Physician for healing or restoration. Ours is a personal salvation through a personal relationship with Christ. However, there is too much confidence placed in self-diagnosis in Christian circles today. When the Israelite noticed a particular type of sore, he was to come to the priests for examination, not just pass his own judgment.

God forbid that we should become so accustomed to one another's lesions, boils, and eruptions that they no longer register a concern in our spirits. We run the danger of this happening when we do not care enough to speak with each other regarding persistent inconsistencies seen and felt on the outside. It is a duty (not a grudging task) of the priesthood of believers (1 Pet. 2:9) to examine with charity and carefulness the sores of fellow disciples. Is any believer so complete or healthy in Christ that he can make it all alone without others' help?

In Israel, one purpose of examining those sores was to contain the malady. So it is in the Israel of God in the gospel dispensation. The church of God is a body comprised of intimately connected and mutually dependent members. What is tolerated in one member affects the whole of the body (1 Cor. 12:26).

Truly born-again believers, brought together by the Spirit on the common ground of one faith and one baptism (Eph. 4:5), form the united, undivided church of God. The care and wisdom that is found in this body causes the heart to rejoice. Here is hope that one's sores will be rightly diagnosed and a true remedy prescribed. With spiritual perception, the church ponders one's spirit or examines the varied angles of one's manner of living. She does not do this just to be intrusive but because she loves with the love wherewith Christ loved us.

Where would one go for a more trustworthy examination of his or her sores? The blessing of being under watchful and earnest care is no doubt beyond what we realize. Think for a moment about other possibilities. Would one trust the proving of his soul's sores to a Christianity that cannot judge perversion and immorality as being sin? What about a body that may have a historical name but forsakes keeping the doctrine of the Word? Other groups are satisfied when one keeps the rules and regulations of their religion. Would they rightly prove the subtle spirits, which are only perceived by the unction of the Spirit? Do all these really care for the soul? We answer, No. When it comes to a diagnosis of our sores that will agree with Heaven, we must have the truth, even if it hurts.

Jonah said, "They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercy" (Jonah 2:8). To spurn or depreciate the grace of the church to interpret the significance of our sores is to forsake our own mercies. Some today are grievously afflicted with ulcerous sores, but they resist the solicitous care and wisdom of the gospel priesthood of believers. God surely feels about the church as Paul said of Timothy, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state" (Phil. 2:20).

It appears that the devil has unleashed a pervasive contamination of bacteria that wars against the soul. These bacteria are spirits of self and are anti-God and pro-flesh. Characteristically they do not immediately bring spiritual death but a swelling of reluctance to bear the cross on the strait and narrow way. The fervent spirit and zeal relating to the faith once delivered to the saints wanes or, in the case of youth, may never develop. There is something about this sinister attack that squelches conviction of right and wrong and thus the spiritual immune system is weakened. In this condition, sores begin to appear. Unless afflicted church members heed the counsel of the brotherhood, their sores may be terminal.

The true church of God will never knowingly neglect to frankly warn her members of the sores that appear in one's life. She will not allow any brother or sister having a cancerous sore to go into eternity unwarned. Surely, a great responsibility rests on all brothers and sisters, both the ministry and the laity, that this will always be true. If the church would begin to neglect this charge, she would no longer be a safe haven for the soul. May she never lose this grace and spiritual discernment, for then she would not retain the candlestick (Rev. 2:5).

According to Leviticus 13, there were those sores that were pronounced clean. Although there was a sore, the raw flesh was not uncovered. What a comfort that verdict must have been to the person! Likewise, there are those things that the Lord does not impute as sin to an individual (Ps. 32:1-2). Such sores are humbly admitted and confessed, not defended or justified. The believer's spirit is such that his sore is not contagious, nor will it spread and overtake his spiritual immune system.

God is to be praised for the grace in the church to rightly prove and understand the nature of our sores. Let us strive for that "perfecting of the saints ... unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph. 4:12-13).

THE FEAR OF THE LORD

The dictionary describes fear as uneasiness or anxiety, or to feel reverence or awe. It is this latter fear that I would like to lift out in this essay: reverence of God and for God.

Looking up these three words, awe, reverence, and fear, we find some deep thoughts contained in the Scripture.

The Psalms is the only book of the Bible that uses the word awe, and all those verses refer to God. Psalm 4:3-4 says, "The Lord will hear when I call unto him. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still." Lastly, Psalm 119:161 tells us, my heart standeth in awe of thy word."

Reverence has a special meaning, and one that we do well to note. It denotes a feeling or attitude of respect, love, and awe. The word reverence occurs thirteen times in the Bible. It is used in many ways: from us to God, from a lesser to a greater, from a wife to her husband, and from children to their fathers.

These two words, awe and reverence, combine to make what we call "the fear of God." There are extensive references on the word fear in Strong's Exhaustive Concordance. I would like to group the applicable scriptures under four main headings:

- (1) What the fear of the Lord is.
- (2) How we are to use it.
- (3) What it produces.
- (4) How God reacts to it.

1]. The fear of the Lord

- It is the beginning of wisdom and understanding (Ps. 111:10; Prov. 1:7).
- It is clean, enduring forever (Ps. 19:9).
- It is God's treasure (Isa. 33:6).
- It is also the whole duty of man (Eccl. 12:13).

2]. We are to use the fear of God in several ways:

- To serve Him (Ps. 5:7)
- To perfect holiness (2 Cor. 7:1)
- To do His work (Ps. 2:11)
- To bless Him (Ps. 135:20)

- To keep us from envying sinners (Prov. 23:17)
 - To trust (Ps. 115:11)
 - To apply our hearts to wisdom (Ps. 90:11-12).
- Our awe and respect for God has many beautiful results. They produce:
- Freedom from sin (Exod. 20:20)
 - Respect for the infirm and aged (Lev. 19:14, 32) Reverence from our youth up (1 Kings 18:12) Provision from God (2 Kings 4:1)
 - A heart that is united with the brethren and set in God's ways (Jer. 32:39; Ps. 119:79)
 - Causes us to sanctify His name (Isa. 29:23).

3]. The fear of God also produces:

- Instruction (Zeph. 3:7)
- Joy (Matt. 28:8)
- Freedom from terror (Luke 1:74)
- Godly sorrow for sin (2 Cor. 7:11)
- Submission to one another (Eph. 5:21)
- A proper work ethic (Eph. 6:5)
- Obedience (2 Cor. 7:15)
- Kindness (Lev. 25:17)
- A search for wisdom (Prov. 2:1-5)
- Perseverance in our Christian life (Phil. 2:12)
- Chaste conversation (1 Pet. 3:2)
- Praise (Rev. 19:5; Ps. 22:23)
- Joyous declaration of what He has done for us (Ps. 66:16)
- It helps us give a prompt answer to those who ask about salvation (1 Pet. 3:15)
- Makes us leave evil (Prov. 3:7; 16:6; 19:23; 8:13)
- And gives a whole and united heart (Ps. 86:11)
- Gives joy in our brethren (Ps. 119:79)
- And contentment (Prov. 15:16)
- It is a fountain of life (Prov. 15:16)
- Gives us a hatred of pride and arrogance (Prov. 8:13)
- As well as strong confidence and a place of refuge (Prov. 14:26).

4]. The Bible also tells us how God reacts to our reverence and respect:

–He gives the heritage of the brotherhood (Ps. 61:5)

–Promising to prolong our days and that all shall be well with us (Eccl. 8:12)

–He gives life and peace (Mal. 2:5)

–Healing (Mal. 4:2)

–Much mercy (Luke 1:50; Ps. 5:7; 188:4; 103: 11, 17)

–Comfort (Acts 9:31)

–He sends His angels to guard us (Ps. 34:7)

–He causes us to be satisfied (Ps. 22:25)

–And will give us a kingdom which cannot be moved (Heb. 12:28).

God further promises:

–That He will honor us (Ps. 15:4) and lay up goodness for us (Ps. 31:19)

–That He will hear our cry, will save us, and fulfill our desires (Ps. 145:19)

–And that He will watch over us carefully (Ps. 33:18; 111:5), helping and shielding us (Ps. 115:11)

–He takes pleasure in us (Ps. 147:11).

Finally, I believe Psalm 60:4 has a beautiful thought. "Thou hast given a banner to them that fear thee, that it may be displayed because of the truth." From my own personal experience, this banner is the love and purity of God displayed through His people. It is an unmistakable and glorious one that shall never be removed.

In conclusion, I would like to quote from Psalm 25:14 "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant."

And Hebrews 12:28: "Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

By a sister in the Lord.



THE DAY OF RECKONING

Extract from a Daily Devotional

"After a long time, the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them."-- *Matthew 25:19.*

THE THREE parables recorded in this chapter are of vast importance.

Each contains a striking contrast, and in each there is the possibility of supreme joy or the inevitable sentence of deprivation and rejection. In each there is instruction and encouragement on the one side, and on the other we are solemnly warned.

In the parable of the Virgins, we learn the necessity of having adequate reserves; of possessing more than the lamp of profession, however chaste and rare; and of procuring without money or price the oil of the gracious indwelling and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. That religion is entirely valueless which is not due to His kindling and maintenance.

In the parable of the Talents, we learn that the gravest peril in Christian experience attaches not to the highly, or even the moderately-gifted people, but to the poorest and humblest one-talented folk! Because they can do so little they often do nothing. The one talent, which it is death to hide, is lodged with them as utterly useless. But with God the smallest things count! He does not crush the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. He chooses the foolish things of this world to confound the wise, and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty.

In the Judgment of the Nations, we learn that the ultimate test of Christianity is not in profession or doctrine, but our care for those with whom our Lord has always identified Himself--the outcast and helpless, the sick and sorrowful, the stranger and prisoner. Love to God has for its reverse Love to man. Even now the nations are standing before His judgment-bar, and some are being cast on the rubbish heap before our eyes.

PRAYER

Let me not be put to shame, O my Lord, but make me to love and fear Thee with all my heart. Help me to be faithful in the very little things, and to hear Thy well-done at the last. AMEN.

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