

"Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep..."

THE TESTIMONY

...of thy mouth." Psalm 119:88

— VERSE OF THE MONTH —

"Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another." I John 4:10-11

Vol. XV

February 2024

No. 2

RESCUE THE PERISHING

Fanny J. Crosby

Rescue the perishing, care for the dying,
Snatch them in pity from sin and the grave;
Weep o'er the erring one,
Lift up the fallen,
Tell them of Jesus the mighty to save.

Though they are slighting Him, still He is waiting,
Waiting the penitent child to receive;
Plead with them earnestly,
Plead with them gently;
He will forgive if they only believe.

Down in the human heart, crushed by the tempter,
Feelings lie buried that grace can restore;
Touched by a loving heart,
Wakened by kindness,
Chords that are broken will vibrate once more.

Rescue the perishing, duty demands it;
Strength for thy labor the Lord will provide;
Back to the narrow way,
Patiently win them;
Tell the poor wand'rer a Savior has died.

Rescue the perishing, Care for the dying;
Jesus is merciful, Jesus will save

Selected by
Jessica Bayer

THE TESTIMONY

CONTENTS

FRONT COVER	1
RESCUE THE PERISHING	1
EDITORIAL	3
LOVE IS SACRIFICIAL ACTION	3
GENERAL	4
UNANIMITY—THE FORGOTTEN IDEAL (PART 3).....	4
BIBLICAL BEHAVIOR (PART 2).....	8
THE LIFTING UP OF THE HANDS.....	9
THE TWO PRAYERS OF PAUL IN EPHESIANS	13
PREPARE HIM ROOM	16
FOR CHILDREN	17
BEES	17
QUESTIONS TO PONDER	18
GENERAL ITEMS	19
MEDITATIONS	19
POEMS	20
OBITUARIES	22



EDITORIAL

LOVE IS SACRIFICIAL ACTION

Recently we read an account of young parents who instituted the words above as their family motto. Choosing phrases or verses to repeat and unite around is a very healthy practice to promote family vision and purpose, and this one certainly would be a good one. When faced with decisions, it can help each family member remember the important things in life.

In a world where the focus of love is more about what I can get out of it than what I can do for others, the concept of loving sacrificially is needed more than ever. When we look around us, we see constant instances of the former in the media and daily life. When we look around us in our families and churches, do we see constant instances of the latter?

Of course, the greatest example of sacrificial love is Jesus' death on the cross, and that should be the impetus for His people to love in the very same way. No, we can't give our lives by bodily crucifixion for others, but we can lay down our lives in myriad ways for those around us. Keeping His sacrifice our focus reminds us about daily choosing the same. John 15:13 says, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (Also, John 3:16, Rom. 5:8, and I John 3:16).

Probably the second greatest example of sacrificial love is that of mothers, who seem to be given an in-born trait to think nothing of their own needs and everything about the needs of those they have birthed. From enduring the pain of childbirth itself, through waking without complaint multiple times a night to feed a baby, to a continual care for a child throughout life, mothers are the walking epitome of the title of this article, and thereby leave a lesson for all of us.

To love sacrificially means to not just say or write "I love you," but to allow our love to be shown in action and care for others. In I John 3:18 we read, "My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth." To love sacrificially as Christians, we put others' needs ahead of our own—in the name of Jesus, by His example and power, and for His glory. Self-denial seems to be waning even among believers in this day and in the age in which we live, but is still so much a calling of the born-again Christian. Luke 9:23 says, "And he said to them all, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." By sacrificially loving "the least of these my brethren," we can bless others, shine the glorious light of the Gospel, and by doing so, find true joy ourselves. Even the children know that the meaning of J-O-Y is Jesus first, Others next, and Yourself last.

During this month (when love is celebrated in many ways) and every month, may we, the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, follow the pattern of His incarnate physical body in giving of ourselves in every way from the source of TRUE LOVE. Romans 12:1 says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies

a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.” (Also, Eph. 5:1–2). May we, as one large Christian family, always remember that LOVE IS SACRIFICIAL ACTION! We may not have it painted on the walls of our house, but may it ever be etched on the walls of our hearts.

Tim Deaton

GENERAL

UNANIMITY— THE FORGOTTEN IDEAL

Part 3 (of 3)

The German Baptists: Combining Both Ideals?

The Quakers used unanimity because they wanted to be guided by the Holy Spirit. The Anabaptists used unanimity because they wanted to live together in close brotherhood. Is it possible that the German Baptists, as a combination of both Pietism and Anabaptism, were motivated by both ideals? It is difficult to say conclusively, because the Brethren wrote so little about unanimity. But, as I have perused the writings of the Anabaptists and the Quakers, the themes of brotherhood and Holy Spirit guidance definitely sound familiar to my German Baptist ears.

Most of what we know about unanimity among the German Baptists is conjecture; our forefathers did not spend much time ex-

plaining why they used this method. There were exceptions, however. Oliver Cover was a German Baptist pioneer in the Modesto area. He assisted his father with the editorship of *The Vindicator* and his grandson would someday be editor as well. In a *Vindicator* article titled “Government” in the June 1886 issue, he argues that a unanimous decision is a sign of the Holy Spirit’s leading.

“...The unanimous voice of all the members gives unique power in the decision agreement, and only then can the Holy Spirit give significant utterance through the militant body.”

Writing, as he did, only five years after the Old Order schism, he argues that a departure from unanimous decision-making was a cause of many of the church troubles that they had previously experienced.

“This, dear reader, has in kind been the main cause of all our ‘Church troubles’ for the past thir-

ty-nine years...This usurped authority accounts for the man-made rules, dictatorial decisions and mandatory laws¹ which engender strife, disorder and discord among brethren and sisters in the Lord..."

One of the best explanations for unanimity that I am aware of from German Baptist sources is by Lester Fisher, in the May 1961 issue of *The Vindicator*.

*"...The principle of unanimity with the Word of God and with each other is from Heaven. It is the mark of His people. It is the lesson each generation must learn, and if in our experience we learn this lesson well, it will stand us in good stead in time to come. Sometimes we must move out immediately, but more often expediency is a delusion, and when we place it ahead of unanimity it brings confusion. The apostles, after 'much disputing'² came to a conclusion that **pleased them all**. We are likewise to labor to that end and in that frame of mind the Spirit of the Lord will labor with us and guide us into all truth."³*

Do you see how the writer seems to combine the theme of desire for unity within the broth-

erhood with the desire to be guided by the Holy Spirit? While it is impossible for us to go back in a time machine and talk to the Brethren of previous eras, it seems fairly likely that, if asked to give a reason for their practice of unanimity, that the explanation would have combined both Quaker and Anabaptist ideals.

A Forgotten Past

This leaves us with a perplexing question: Why was unanimous decision-making lost, and when did this happen? And why was there so little awareness of its demise? The answer, at this point, seems to be lost in mists of the past generations. The dramatic case-study that we have from 1932 (Part One in *The Testimony*, Dec. 2023, pp. 8–11.) probably did not continue much longer. The following year, a query was sent complaining about what had happened, and asking that majority rule be used at Conference; the query was laid down (i.e., the request was not granted), but the era of unanimous decisions was drawing to a close.

In 1961, the same year that Lester Fisher had written his excellent defense for unanimity, two queries appear, expressing con-

¹Our forefathers, the Old Orders, spoke against mandatory minutes at the time of the 1881 division. Meanwhile the Conservatives, which would give rise to the modern day Church of the Brethren, favored mandatory minutes.

²See Acts 15.

³It is unlikely that Lester Fisher understood unanimity to indicate a vote that had zero objections. In the same editorial, he speaks of coming to a "general unity." The entirety of his editorial is profitable reading. Copies may be obtained from tabauman@gmail.com. Boldface type is in the original.

cern that consensus was being abandoned, one of them citing: “the disregard of our long-established order of deferring queries when unanimity cannot be obtained.” Both queries were laid down, the reason given being that there were already enough on the subject.

Despite that somewhat vague statement of support, true unanimity in the sense that nothing could pass until there were no objections, had probably almost disappeared. The most likely cause may be a loss of willingness on the part of the members to submit to one another. The record mentions at various times members “voiced three or four times YES or NO,” “loud voicing,” “impassioned speeches,” and “younger brethren” needing to “defer and submit more freely to older brethren.” Unanimity has always depended on members being willing to voluntarily exercise the spiritual discipline of submission. A decreased willingness to submit, combined with increasing numbers attending at conference, probably contributed to a gradual abandonment.⁴

It may be tempting to criticize the Annual Meeting leadership for their abandonment of the practice. However, we need to realize that

they were probably between a rock and a hard place. Unanimous decision-making depends on members being willing to submit. Without voluntary submission, the leaders probably faced the likelihood that the Conference would lose all decision-making ability. As one Evangelical pastor puts it:

“...it is a tragedy when a body of spiritual leaders, or a body of believers in general, give the least mature people the veto power over wise counsel. There is simply nothing in the Bible that says a weak and unspiritual person in the church should be able to paralyze the advance of God’s people.”⁵

This pastor is, of course, writing from a more mainstream perspective, where submission as a value would tend to be less emphasized. Furthermore, he is making an important assumption, which is that the “wise counsel” will always be in the majority. The leadership of our church in the last half of the 20th century probably found themselves in a similar position, in which willingness to submit was declining. As a result, they came to a similar conclusion.

Thus, history shows us an interesting paradox. Strange as it may

⁴While it is impossible to say exactly when unanimity ceased to be used, we may use the number of laid-down queries as a possible indicator of whether or not majority rule was used. In the first half of the 20th Century, 112 queries were laid down. In the second half of the 20th Century, Annual Meeting laid down only 44 queries.

⁵<https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/should-only-unanimous-decisions-guide-the-church>

seem to us, the Old Order church structure, which had emphasized submission so strongly, was actually more flexible in working with a member that truly felt that they could not in good conscience submit. Conversely, a church model that does not emphasize submission so much, but instead relies on majority rule for decision making, will actually have less options available for a member who feels that they truly cannot in good conscience submit. This is a fascinating paradox, and deserves further study.

The shift to majority rule was probably aided by an unfortunate fluke of record keeping. The Annual Meeting decisions that were “laid down” had begun to be dropped from the minute book, probably as a way of keeping the book smaller. Since many of the queries that dealt with unanimity were laid down (i.e., no change made in the traditional practice), they were therefore dropped from the record. This probably decreased awareness of the creeping change in practice. The record is now much more complete thanks to the scholarship of the 2002 compiling committee, who went back to the original documents and re-included the laid-down queries in an appendix. By 2002, however, it was too late. Most members now had a majority rule paradigm, and

the clock would not be turned back...or would it?

It is apparent that our forefathers considered unanimous decision making to be a spiritual necessity. This has now been almost completely forgotten, but is an indisputable historic fact. The reasons for using unanimity are not completely clear, but likely are similar to the reasons given by other plain churches. Probably unanimity was seen as a sign of the Holy Spirit’s guidance, and also served to make sure that the church was truly united before moving forward.

We are now left with one final question: Were our forefathers correct in their rejection of majority rule? If they were wrong, we are probably safe in regarding the practice of unanimous decision-making as an interesting quirk of a bye-gone era. But if our forefathers were correct, then we may have a very likely explanation for why our recent epidemic of church splits has occurred. And may our merciful God graciously grant us revival.

*Remember, Lord, the ancient days,
Renew thy work, thy grace bestow;
And while to thee our hearts we raise,
On us thy Holy Spirit pour.*

Thomas Bauman

BIBLICAL BEHAVIOR

Part 2

“But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

This is a continuation of an article from last month. The purpose of this article is to provoke thoughts as to how we as born-again believers should behave. In doing so, it is not our intent to lose sight of the basis of behavior, which is belief. Belief dictates behavior. I offer the following axioms:

1. All behavior is based on a belief.
2. Lasting behavioral change always starts in the mind.
3. When people genuinely change, it's because their beliefs changed first.
4. Changing your behavior without changing your belief is not true change at all. This is why Paul says, “be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.”

As we mentioned before, the apostles used the word “conversation” to describe behavior. In the Greek it is the word *anastrophe* which means behavior. *Anastrophe* is rooted in *anastrepho* which means to turn, or to turn oneself about. This implies the idea that godly behavior is a turning away from a direction you were once going, and going in a different

direction. This is the essence of repentance—a change of your mind and direction of your life, and turning away from sin, self, and the world, and turning toward Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and heaven.

We are continuing to look at some of the verses that call us to godly behavior and give some practical encouragement for your consideration. Because the Word of God is quick (living), we will, no doubt, only touch a fraction of the depth and meaning of each verse. The next verse we will consider is found in Galatians.

Galatians 1:13: “For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it...”

Obviously Paul’s behavior was misguided and contrary to the Gospel. Let’s dig a little deeper into the idea of religious behavior.

What about religion? Has religion become a four-letter word? The concept of religion has fallen on hard times in many settings because of verses like this one. Paul even refers to his religious credentials as dung. Often religion is pitted against a relationship with the Lord as if to convey these two are mutually exclusive. May I suggest the crux of this issue is that religion cannot make us right before God. Religion plays a role in bringing us to Christ, but it cannot justi-

fy us. This is the essence of Galatians 3:24–25. Religion is a means to an end, which is Christ being in relationship with the believer. Having this relationship, one no longer needs religion to govern one's life, yet one's behavior will look just as religious as the religion that brought that person to Christ in the first place. If we truly have relationship with Christ, we will have "pure religion," as James calls it, and it will produce behavior that controls our tongues, visits the fatherless and the widows, and keeps us unspotted from the world. Religion can impose guidelines and rules upon us externally, but only a relationship with Christ can motivate us to do "pure religion," which is from inside of us. In the New Testament we see this modeled by Paul, whose relationship with Christ became of greater importance to him than the law, though he continued observing many of the rituals of the law. We must recognize the religion of our past served a purpose to bring us to Christ, and our behavior after this, may look religious, even though it is now being motivated from within, and not from without.

Until next time, may God bless us to behave in accordance with this verse.

Grant Fullmer

THE LIFTING UP OF THE HANDS

"And Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God. And all the people answered, Amen, Amen, with lifting up their hands: and they bowed their heads and worshipped the LORD with their faces to the ground" (Neh. 8:6).

"Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle" (Ps. 28:2).

"Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name" (Ps. 63:4).

"Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD" (Ps. 134:2).

"Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2).

"Arise, cry out in the night: in the beginning of the watches pour out thine heart like water before the face of the Lord: lift up thy hands toward him..." (Lam. 2:19).

"Let us lift up our heart with our hands unto God in the heavens" (Lam. 3:41).

"...the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high" (Habak. 3:10).

"I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands..." (I Tim. 2:8).

"Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees" (Heb. 12:12).

"And the angel which I saw stand upon the sea and upon the earth lifted up his hand to heaven..." (Rev. 10:5).

Above are some of the Scriptures documenting the biblical practice of the lifting up of the hands 1) in worship, 2) in reverence, 3) in praise, 4) in adoration, 5) in exaltation, 6) in glorification, 7) in supplication, 8) in time of need. In addition, there are several references in the New Testament where Jesus Himself lifted up His eyes to heaven in blessing, in sighing, and in submission. See Matthew 14:19, Mark 6:41, Mark 7:34, Luke 9:16, and John 17:1.

We have noticed that it has not been the custom of the Brethren to observe this biblical practice so much, although certainly it is not altogether neglected. I have observed brethren lifting up their hands while praying both in our private devotions and in church. (I beg forgiveness for my somewhat irreverent secret glances.) Once in the annual meeting tent, I heard a low murmuring utterance during public prayer and, upon secretive glance, saw an aged brother, in a wheelchair, engaging in his own private murmured prayer with uplifted hands. The Brethren have not been so much demonstrative in their worship. But with the above cited Scriptures, there seems biblical reason to be open to this practice. With the above witness from Holy Scriptures, the practice of looking and reaching up to the God of Heaven seems worthy of some serious consideration.

It has been said that, as a peace-loving follower of Christ, one should never lift up a hand except

in prayer. To lift up a hand against a brother would be wrong according to the teachings of Jesus. So, we would suggest that the lifting up the hand should be to God alone. To lift up the hand in prayer should be “without wrath and doubting” according to I Timothy 2:8, which some would interpret as being “without impatience or complaint.” Lifting up the eyes (as Jesus often did) and the hands is typified by Jesus in John 17 where we read, “These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee...” Thus Jesus assumed a position of submission to the will of the Father. It was not long before He lifted up His hands, and men nailed those hands to the cross.

A prison chaplain once recounted to me the following event which demonstrates one example of lifting one's hands. One day, as he recounted to me, a short, stout man came into the chaplain's office, talking in a very animated manner, obviously very distressed. He was there to plead for his son who was in his late teens and serving a sentence in the prison where the chaplain served. The father, in his thick Italian accent, related how his son was a good boy who had gotten into the wrong company, influenced by bad boys. The son deserved to serve time, but the father was there to plead for help with his relationship with the rebellious son. “Can you do something for my boy? I talk to my

boy, but he will not say anything. He is angry. I plead with my son to be good. I plead with him for his mother. He just sit. He say nothing. I plead more and more. All at once he shpit me in the face. Can you please do something for my boy?" Before the father left the office in tears, the chaplain promised he would do what he could—but he had no idea what that would be.

Some days later the chaplain called the young inmate into his

With the above witness of the Holy Scriptures, the practice of looking and reaching up to the God of Heaven seems worthy of some serious consideration.

office. He was in his late teens and his countenance revealed his pent-up anger. The chaplain tried everything he knew but was not able to get the young man to open up about anything. Finally, he asked him, "Have you ever thought about what you would like to do with your life when you get out of prison?" The young man sat a long time in silence. Finally said, "I always wanted to be a doctor." The chaplain promised he would do what he could—but had no idea what that would be.

The chaplain had a close friend that was a surgeon in a nearby

city. One day he told this story to the surgeon and asked him if there was any way that he could help the boy, perhaps if he could witness a surgical operation. The surgeon said he would see if that could be arranged. It was sometime later, after pulling strings at the prison and at the hospital, that the two were able to arrange for the young man to observe a surgical operation firsthand.

Over twenty years later the chaplain heard that this former inmate had finished serving his time. After his release he was able to finish high school, to go four years to college, four years to medical school, four years of post-graduate training in his specialty, and was finally a surgeon, practicing in another state. The chaplain found himself in that city where the former inmate was a surgeon of reputation. He called him and identified himself. The surgeon remembered the chaplain of years ago and wanted to meet his former mentor. He said the next day he would be performing surgery in a certain hospital. They could meet for lunch.

The reunion was emotional. They brought each other up to date. And then the surgeon expressed a powerful testimony. He said, "God has been good to me. With His grace and with these hands I relieve pain. I reverse the course of disease. I save lives. God has led me to this place. He has done miracles in this place. But I

shall never forget where I was when I met you in your office that day in the prison.

And then he said, "In preparation for every operation, a surgeon must do a surgical scrub. We scrub our fingernails, our hands, our wrists, and our arms. For five full minutes we scrub with a brush and with soap. Then, with hands raised so the water can run down to the elbows and not contaminate his hands, the surgeon enters the operating room to don sterile garb.

"But as I go through that door into the operating room, I never fail to pause a moment. Standing there I raise my hands just a little higher. There I thank God for His grace and for His mercy that He has brought me to this place. And I ask Him to guide these hands. He always does."

It matters not what one's occupation may be, everyone can do the same. I heard once of a farmer who, every fall, "walked the rows" in his corn field. He said he walks among the stalks, now turning brown, the ears beginning to hang down. He lifts up his arms and grasps an ear in each hand. While standing there he raises his voice aloud and praises God for His blessings, His bounty, for the harvest, and that he was able to be a part of feeding a hungry earth.

I once met a man in Southwestern Ohio who had an apple orchard. As we walked with him among the trees, he described each one, calling it by name—McIntosh, Golden Delicious, Winesap, Granny Smith, Cortland, etc. He de-

scribed how this tree bore well last year and this one not so much. Finally, with a sweep of his hand, he said, "I want you to pray for my orchard. There are many hungry people, and this orchard helps just a little to feed the earth."

Let's return to that very angry, very frightened young man in prison. It was the grace, mercy, patience, and power of a merciful God that made a very angry, very frightened young boy into a man whom God could use for His purpose.

Have you ever been "schpited in the face"? We experienced that one time. My father told me that he also once experienced the same. But none of these experiences compare with what our Savior Jesus experienced. In Matthew 26:67 we read, "Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands..." Matthew 27:30 reads, "And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head."

We usually see pictures of three crosses far above us on a hill standing against the sky, the one in the center standing a little higher above the other two. I wonder if it was really that way. Could it be that Jesus' cross was down at eye level. Is it possible that those who hated Him so could walk up to the cross, look Him in the eye, and spit in His face? Just a thought. Isaiah 50:6 reads, "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting."

The life of the young man above was turned from hate and spitting to love and service. From self to others. From rebellion to restoration. From a road to perdition to a life of service to God and to God's people. One of the promises of God is found in Deuteronomy 28:12 and reads like this, "The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand..."

Most readers are counted among a praying people—sometimes in public, sometimes in our private devotions, sometimes in our private closet. In our prayer-closet, if nowhere else, would it not add to our adorations and supplications if we could only raise our hands just a little higher and praise the God who guides these hands? Can you find a moment in the workday, whether a mother at home or a father in field or factory, to lift holy hands to heaven whether in adoration or in supplication?

*Father, I stretch my hands to thee,
No other help I know;
If thou withdraw thyself from me,
Ah! Whither shall I go?*

In Psalm 143:6 we read, "I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah."

Thank you, Jesus.

Marcus Miller

THE TWO PRAYERS OF PAUL IN THE EPHESIAN LETTER

James wrote that a prayer of a righteous man is effective and avails (profits or advantages) much. Prayer is a much-needed practice in the life of a person committed to God. Prayer is often neglected as a first option. Prayer is an intentional habit. The person who knows the benefits and worth of prayer is often engaged in prayer. Paul's prayers, his description of his prayers, and what, why, and how he prayed are worthy of our consideration as he mentors us in faith many, many years after he prays them. Prayers like Paul's, or our parents, or other godly people who pray for us are not bound by time. They (prayers) are still effective as the eternal God to whom prayers are prayed isn't bound or limited at all or in any way. One of the benefits of abiding in the vine and letting God the vinedresser gently work to prune and nurture us is that our prayers will be heard and answered. God gets the glory for our fruitful prayer life.

We should pray more.

Let's take a brief look at the first three chapters of Ephesians. It's in this context that we find Paul's two prayers. (Please have your Bible open and follow along as we look into this context.)

Chapter 1

Verses 1–2, "Salutation from Paul"

Paul acknowledges his calling by the will of God. He addresses

this letter to “the saints” (at Ephesus) and to “the faithful in Christ Jesus” (to all believers regardless of time or place). He requests grace and peace from Father God and Jesus Christ to be bestowed upon us.

Verses 3–6, “Chosen by the Father”

God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings. God has chosen us in Him to be holy and blameless before Him, in (His) love, and His predetermined good will is that we be His children (family, sons and daughters) completely and entirely accepted in Jesus Christ for His glory, pleasure and praise.

Verses 7–12, “Redeemed by the beloved Son”

The riches of His grace are the redemption of our souls, the forgiveness of our sin, and an inheritance of eternal life.

Verses 13–14, “Sealed by the Holy Spirit”

God has given us of His Holy Spirit a down payment of Himself to indwell, guide, teach and seal us as “His” until He comes and takes us to Himself and we experience His fullest transformation in our lives—glorified.

Now we find Paul’s first prayer in verses 15–23. (We’ll come back to it.)

Chapter 2

Verses 1–3, “Our old condition: Dead to God”

God came to “quicken” us (make alive again in Him) who were dead in sin. We walked in disobedience and our lifestyle

was the lust of our flesh by desire and nature.

Verses 4–10, “New condition: Alive to God”

God is rich in mercy and has great love. Even though we were dead spiritually in sin and disobedience, He chose to make us alive (born again), and raise us up, and sit together with Christ Jesus. This shows to His glory, His kindness, and the richness of His grace. This is a real gift that He gives us. He works in our lives as we yield to Him to walk in His ways.

Verses 11–22, “Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles (non-Jews)”

God chose Israel as His people. They had the opportunity to be set apart from the flesh to be His. They had the opportunity to be within God, a commonwealth that had covenants of promise, and hope. Non-Jews had none of this. “But now” in Christ Jesus, we aren’t aliens with God, we are not far off because He came near and bought and cleansed us with His precious blood. He is our peace, and we have peace with Him. We, both Jews and Gentiles, have peace, and we both (by believing and accepting and obeying Jesus Christ) have access by God’s Holy Spirit to God Himself. Not strangers, but citizens, saints, and family of God. God is building us all together upon Jesus Christ to be a building precisely fitted together for Himself to dwell in, a temple (fane) unbuilt by us but by

Him. We are now in His Kingdom and Realm.

Chapter 3

Verses 1–13, “Revelation of the Mystery of the Church”

“For this cause” mentioned here, and in verse 14, is a revelation of a mystery as Paul puts it. This mystery that’s been revealed is found in verse 6. This Gospel age of the Grace of God was not revealed (made known) until Jesus came to bring a new and living way, and the Holy Spirit came to teach (make known by experience) this new way. We now have “fellowship” in this mystery. What wisdom God has!

Now we find Paul’s second prayer in

Verses 14–21.

Paul’s first prayer (Eph. 1: 15–23) was “a prayer of revelation,” and his second prayer was “a prayer of realization” for those of us who believe. And for (more) people to believe. “Revelation” means discover truth that is disclosed that was before unknown. “Realization” means to understand and comprehend as real fact.

Prayer 1 for Revelation

Paul first wanted us to have (as a gift from God), wisdom, revelation, and knowledge of God. He wanted us to have enlightenment, understanding in 1) the hope of His calling, 2) the rich inheritance of grace, and 3) the exceeding greatness of God’s power in us as we believe, obey and yield to Him. He wanted us to understand what

He accomplished in both the work (obedience) of Christ and God’s own work of power in resurrecting Jesus from the dead after His offering and sacrifice. He wanted us to know the exalted position of His Son.

Prayer 2 for Realization

Paul prayed for God to grant (gift) us to be strong in the fellowship and power of the Holy Spirit. He prayed that Christ truly would dwell in our hearts, and that we would be “rooted and grounded” (stable and secure) in God’s love. So that, (verse 18) we would “comprehend” (understand) what has been revealed and made known. He wanted us to understand (experience) beyond “just knowledge” the love of Christ. He prayed for us to be full of God! (Width and length, depth and height—completely full of God.)

What would be realized in our life if we prayed like this? (Both for ourselves and others we prayed for?)

I think Paul says it best in verse 20... “Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we may ask or think, according to the power (Holy Spirit) that worketh in us...”

God help us to pray more, surrender/yield more, seek Him more, understand Him more, and ask Him to show us more.

To God be Glory!! (verse 21)

Aaron Garber

PREPARE HIM ROOM

This past Christmas Season, how much room did your heart have left in it, for our baby Jesus, the Lord, and our King and Savior? Was your heart so full of other things that there was hardly enough room left for Him? There are so many other things that can plug or stop up our hearts, that there is hardly enough room left for Jesus.

For many, though, there is more room for HIM at Christmas, even though throughout the year would be the best. All of the other things that fill our life and systems is what Satan really wants. He is the king of STUFF in this world. All of this can snuff out a lot of room, so there is little room for Jesus. Won't it be nice when we can prepare HIM room totally! That day is coming! As we prepare HIM room, He is also preparing us room!

On May 9, 2024 we will acknowledge Ascension Day; the Thursday, 40 days after Easter, observed in commemoration of Christ's ascension into Heaven (Acts 2:32–33). "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses. Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear."

John 14:2–4: "In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.

And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know."

When we have much ROOM in our hearts for HIM, our advocate, we can wholeheartedly agree and have within us the Holy Spirit also, understanding what He told His disciples in John 16:16. "A little while and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me, because I go to the Father."

"These things have I spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: But be of good cheer. I have overcome the world."

In John 17 as Jesus prayed and glorified God in Heaven, He prayed that He should give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him, and "this is eternal life, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou has sent."

It all started here on earth, with a gift sent down from above, as a babe in a manger (Luke 2:7). "And she brought forth her first born son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."

There was no room for them in the inn, but with an open heart we can PREPARE HIM ROOM!

L.D. Flory

FOR CHILDREN

BEES

Now it came to pass in those days that there lived a poor family that moved a lot. Sometimes they moved just a few miles and other times they would move a long distance.

This is about the adventure of a boy that was born into that family.

Now as it happened, the family of this boy lived in a land where it became very cold and the boy's father was the owner of a sheepskin coat. This coat was very thick. This coat traveled several hundred miles with this family as they abode in different parts of God's moral heritage. There were several children in this family. This one boy made his own toys for entertainment. He also tried to help the family by doing chores.

And so it was in those days that this family moved to a part of the world that was very attractive to bees and their ability to make honey.

Now, it so happened the neighbor man, whose name was Mr. Warren, was a beekeeper and a honey producer. He took a liking to this neighbor boy and invited this young lad over a few times to help in the process of spinning out honey. He had a lot of bee hives and every once in a while, he would drive out of their driveway with a trailer load of bees to help farmers pollinate their crops. Then Mr. Warren and his lovely wife would return with a trailer load of honey to be processed.

The Bible tells about a few instances of honey. Children, have your parents read you the story about Samson and his experiences with the Philistines (Judges 14–16)? Or the story about the lion carcass

and the honey? Another one is about John the Baptist living out in the wilderness eating locust and wild honey (Matt. 3:4). The children of Israel were promised a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod. 3:8).

How God gave bees the ability to make honey is so intriguing. Somehow bees ingest some liquid from a flower and then carry it back to their hive, then deposit it into a compartment that they had prepared for it.

Now back to the son and his experience as a young lad.

It so happened that his place of abode had several locust trees and one of them had a hollow spot near the ground.

One day as the young lad was walking up their driveway, he noticed some bees entering and exiting this tree. Several days went by and the boy stopped and got on the ground and looked in the hollowed-out tree only to discover a large batch of honeycomb with lots of honey in it. His mind started working and forming an idea how to collect the batch of delicious spread.

His family was poor and honey would taste good on his mother's homemade bread.

Now therefore he made the decision to retrieve this free honey. First of all, in so doing he had to equip himself with an armor so that he might ward off the fiery darts of the enemy (bees) (Eph. 6:11–17).

The Bible says to put on the whole armor. So he did the best he could. A sheep skin coat would work for a breast plate and also for his loins gird about. His feet could be shodden with some gum-

boots. Also heavy mittens. Do not forget that a helmet was also needed. (A paper sack with two narrow slits so he could see). And so it was that a large pie plate from his mother's kitchen was used to hold the honey.

Now therefore when the boy was ready he knelt beside the tree and proceeded to remove a large portion of honeycomb. Of course the bees became aware of an unwanted disturbance and started to protest the intrusion of the hand with the mitten. The bees started flying about. A large portion of honey was removed to fill up the pie plate.

And so it was, as the boy stood up and admired his bounty, he could see the bees flying about him, hitting his sack.

Somehow one bee crawled through one of the slits in the sack. The boy believed that this particular bee heated her dart seven times hotter than normal (Dan. 3:19), and the bee shot her fiery dart right between the eye and nose. Now therefore this made for an immediate change of plans. Please note that only female bees have fiery darts.

The Bible says to lay aside every weight which doth beset us and run (Heb.12:1). So now the plans called for the shedding of the heavy coat, the paper sack, the gumboots and mittens, and run

with speed for shelter. Well, the milkhouse was about two hundred feet away. Now just imagine one hundred bees going after a twelve-year-old boy.

The milkhouse door was located on the correct side with a screen on the upper half. Fortunately, when the boy ran he zigzagged. When he zigged the bees raged. The screen door never had an individual open it, enter, and then close so fast before. The boy could hear the bees hitting the screen and not doing any more fiery dart throwing. About twenty minutes in the milk house and the bees flew away.

In the meantime, the eyes started to swell and by morning they were small slits making it hard to see. Every once in a while, someone would ask what happened. The answer was always the same. "A bee stung me." In a few days the swelling was gone.

We are not sure the family members ever knew about the method of retrieving them some nice honey.

The "school of hard knocks" is still in session today.

The young lad,
Marshall Dutter

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

This section offers some questions to think about, or for Sunday afternoon discussions, or to prompt future articles from our readers, etc. Readers are encouraged to offer questions.

The Bible speaks of love that is "unfeigned" (sincere, not pretended) (II Cor. 6:6), and also of loving "with a pure heart fervently" (I Peter 1:22).

Questions we may ask ourselves:

1. Have I ever been guilty of just

"pretending" to love?

2. Have I expressed "love" to others or about others, but it really was not true?

3. What can be done about this?

4. What steps can I take to renew a genuine love in my heart?

GENERAL ITEMS

BAPTISMS

Dec. 31, 2023; Mt. Zion, PA
Douglas Leshner

NEW MEMBERS

Dec. 10, 2023; Mt. Zion, PA
Aaron Benedict

COMMISSIONS

Jan. 4, 2024; Mt. Zion, PA
Levi Hess (with wife Maria)
Called to the Ministry
Chris Filbrun (with wife Amy)
Called to the office of Deacon

COMMUNIONS

Jan. 27, 2024 Pine Grove, FL
Feb. 3, 2024 Living Epistle, NM
Feb. 24, 2024 West Modesto, CA
Mar. 2, 2024..... West Manchester, IN
Mar. 2, 2024..... Morning Star, OH
Mar. 9, 2024..... Dallas, OR
Mar. 30, 2024..... Fall Creek, IN
Mar. 30, 2024..... Modesto, CA
Apr. 6, 2024 Cascade Valley, WA
Apr. 6, 2024 Fair Haven, KS
Apr. 6, 2024 Mt. Zion, PA
Apr. 13, 2024 Salem, OH
Apr. 20, 2024 Caldwell, ID
Apr. 20, 2024 Shiloh, OH
Apr. 27, 2024 Bear Creek, OH
Apr. 27, 2024 Cutler Ridge, IN
Apr. 27, 2024 Sugar Grove, OH
May 26, 2024 A.M., Cedarville, OH
Jun. 22, 2024..... Mission Valley, MT and
Mountain View, ID, held jointly in ID
Nov. 2, 2024..... Bethel, OH

HARVEST MEETINGS

July 14, 2024..... Lower Twin, OH
July 21, 2024..... Bethel, OH
July 28, 2024..... Shiloh, OH
Aug. 4, 2024..... Maple Grove, OH
Aug. 11, 2024.... Covington/Sugar Grove, OH
Aug. 18, 2024..... Salem, OH
Aug. 25, 2024..... Stillwater, OH
Sept. 22, 2024..... Bear Creek, OH
Nov. 28, 2024..... Pleasant View, OH

DISTRICT UPDATES

Mt. Zion District Chambersburg, Pennsylvania

We at Mt. Zion have been making plans and working through permitting to add an addition and to remodel our existing building. We expect to have the permitting finished in the next couple of months. We anticipate beginning construction sometime in the spring of 2024, depending on availability of funding.

We would like to thank everyone for their continued prayers and support. If any feel to contribute financially to this project, please send donations to:

Mt. Zion Building Fund
c/o Keith Garber
2890 Guilford Springs Rd.
Chambersburg, PA 17202

We desire your prayers, that the Lord would continue to bless and build our district both naturally and spiritually. May all we do be to His Glory and the building of His Church.

In behalf of the Mt. Zion District,

Leslie J. Bowman
Building Committee Secretary

MEDITATIONS

We are brothers and sisters because we have the same Father.
There are three sides to every story—God's, yours, and mine.
After looking into the night sky, how big is your God?
Such an abundance of things we can do without!
The Bible is the heart of God, in words.
Moderation bridges two extremes.
One result of Faith is Peace.

POEMS

LORD, GIVE ME FAITH

Lord, give me faith,
Enlightening faith,
That I may see
The things unseen,
With vision clear
And crystalline.

Lord, give me faith,
Far-seeing faith,
That I may tell
My soul at night,
That in the sky
The stars are bright.

Lord, give me faith,
Assuring faith,
That when I pass
Deep glades of fear,
I'll realize
That thou art near.

Lord, give me faith,
Outreaching faith,
That I, when tried,
May flee to Thee,
And find Thy strength
My victory.

Lord, give me faith,
Revealing faith,
That when I go
Through cloud and storm,
I'll hear Thy voice
And see Thy form.

— *Dwight Edwards Marvin*

COMMIT THY WAY

Commit thy way to God.
The weight which makes thee faint;
Worlds are to Him no load,
To Him breathe thy complaint.
He who for winds and clouds
Maketh a pathway free,
Through wastes or hostile crowds,
Can make a way for thee.

Thou must in Him be blest
Ere bliss can be secure;
On His works must thou rest
If thy work shall endure.
To anxious, prying thought,
And weary, fretting care,
The highest yieldeth naught:
He giveth all to prayer.

Father, thy faithful love,
Thy mercy, wise and mild,
Sees what will blessing prove,
Or what will hurt thy child;
And what thy wise foreseeing
Doth for thy children choose
Thou bringest into being,
Nor sufferest them to lose.

Hope then, though woes be doubled;
Hope and be undismayed,
Let not thy heart be troubled
Nor let it be afraid.
This prison where thou art—
Thy God will break it soon,
And flood with light thy heart
In His own blessed noon.

Up! Up! The day is breaking;
Say to thy cares, Good night!
Thy troubles from thee shaking
Like dreams in day's fresh light.
Thou wearest not the crown,
Nor the best course can tell;
God sitteth on the throne
And guideth all things well.

— *Paul Gerhardt*

THE STORM THRUSH

There's a sweet little bird in a far off isle—
The isle where the shamrocks grow;
And of all the birds in that dear old land,
He's the dearest that I know;
He is dressed in a suit of sober brown,
And a speckled breast has he;
But his eyes are bright and his voice is tuned
To heaven's minstrelsy.

He sits and sings when the sun shines fair
To his mate in her downy nest,
But the topmost twig of the tallest tree
Is the place where he sings best!
When the rain pours down and the floods are out,
And the wild winds rage and roar,
Then, clear and high, o'er the shrieking gale,
The storm thrush sings the more.

That frail little bird on the swaying twig,
As his clear voice pierced the gales,
Dropped a message sweet at my faltering feet,
Of a Love that never fails:
Though many a storm has crossed my life,
And many a grief and fear;
Yet with heart and voice did my soul rejoice,
For my Lord was always near.

So when dark clouds are about *your* path
Like the storm thrush, learn to sing;
For from topmost height of a lofty faith
You can always see the King!
And with eyes that gaze on His blessed face,
You never need fear or fail,
The gales may prove, but cannot move,
The anchor "within the vail."

— *Mrs. C. L. de Cheney*

OBITUARIES

BALSBAUGH — Douglas Allen, son of Donald and Bonnie (Miller) Balsbaugh, was born in Lafayette, Indiana, on January 21, 1972.

During a fishing trip at Twin Lakes in Bridgeport, California, on October 9, 2023, Doug suffered an aortic tear and aneurysm. He was immediately taken by helicopter to Reno Renown Hospital, but soon transferred to Sutter Medical Center in Sacramento. The Lord granted his wife and children a moment to see, communicate, and pray with Doug before he underwent extensive surgery to save his life. He never regained consciousness after surgery, but the Lord was gracious to give the family four days before calling him home on October 13, 2023, at the age of 51 years.

Doug's early life was in Flora, Indiana, where he attended Carroll Elementary, Middle, and High Schools, graduating in June 1990. At the age of 18 he moved to Ohio where he met his future wife. He married Karen Arlene Crawmer on August 14, 1993. They shared five years of married life together in Ohio. In 1998 they moved to California where they were blessed with two children, Skyler Judy, and

Dylan Douglas, and where he spent the remainder of his life.

Doug received Christ as his Savior and was baptized on March 5, 1995, and became a member of the Old German Baptist Church. Since 2017, he worshipped at Calvary Chapel Modesto and made many new and lasting relationships there. He remained faithful to his Lord throughout his life.

Doug used his God-given talents as a carpenter to bless many people with quality workmanship. He established a close and lasting relationship with his subcontractors and clients as they worked together on many projects. He greatly appreciated and valued their friendship.

Doug was active with "Trail Life USA," a Christ-centered boys adventure and discipleship program. His quiet and steady demeanor was an example to many young boys who learned fishing skills, outside cooking skills, or other projects they were working on. Doug was a great encourager. One of his close friends described Doug with two words: humility and encouragement. Doug was also involved with the Bike Shop, a bicycle repair ministry for the homeless

community serving with the Modesto Gospel Mission and at The Church in the Park.

Doug was very effective in organizing and taking the lead in carpentry projects at Camp Peaceful Pines in the Clarks Fork area. He was currently working on building a new cabin for all to enjoy. Many have expressed their appreciation for his valuable suggestions and workmanship.

Doug leaves behind his faithful wife of 30 years, Karen; his children Skyler, 22, and Dylan, 21; his father, Donald Balsbaugh and wife Marty; sisters, Reta Etter, and Shirley and Brian Hahn; and brother, Dean and Annie Balsbaugh; brother-in-law, Alan and Rosanna Strike; father- and mother-in-law, Dan-

iel and Ann Crawmer; brothers-in-law, David and Kathy, Dale and Jeanette, Dean and Amy Crawmer; and many nephews, nieces, friends, and loved ones.

Preceding him in death was his mother, Bonnie June Balsbaugh; sister, Judy Kay Strike; brother-in-law, Winter Daniel Etter; and his grandparents.

Our loss is his eternal gain. We rest in His perfect will for our lives.

Visitation was held Saturday, October 21, at Calvary Chapel in Modesto.

A funeral service was held on Sunday, October 22 at the Brethren Heritage School on North Dakota Avenue in Modesto.

The burial followed at nearby Wood Colony Cemetery.

The Family

Terms

Subscriptions should be made through the congregational contact or through *The Testimony* office. Subscription price is \$30.00 per year. New subscriptions should be paid (prorated) through the remainder of the current year. All renewals begin at the first of the calendar year. Newly married and those unable to pay for a subscription may receive a free subscription through the agent of their local congregation.

Contributors

Authors of essays, devotionals, poems, etc. are asked to review the Statement of Purpose on the back page of this periodical. Articles should

be based on Scripture. References are appreciated. Shorter focused articles are more desirable than articles that move from one topic to another. Selected material will be considered. Original writings are preferred. It is recommended that writers submit themselves to the Spirit, which reveals the will of God to the Church in every age, according to the varied needs and circumstances.

Written articles should be legible. Typed material is preferred and should be double-spaced. Electronic transmission or CD will be accepted. The author's name and address must be included on all material. An attempt will be made to contact the author of articles that are not accepted.

Old German Baptist Brethren
Church—New Conference

THE TESTIMONY

353 Billman Rd.
New Paris, OH 45347-9102

The Testimony is a Christian publication intended for those who desire nourishment in their spiritual walk, and for writers who wish to express witness to the Truth of the Gospel as experienced in their own lives. It holds the Holy Scriptures to be its only Creed. Its purpose is to bear witness to the Truth of God's Word as it is applied in the daily life of committed Christians. It supports the anabaptist and pietist foundations of the Brethren of Schwarzenau, Germany (1708) including the biblical principle of the community of believers bound by a confession of faith in the Lord Jesus confirmed by adult immersion baptism (Mark 16:16). It strives to promote a life of true living piety among all who confess Jesus as their Lord. It seeks to restore and

maintain a fellowship of true primitive Christianity through the communication of all good things.

Send all communication to:

The Testimony
353 Billman Rd.
New Paris, OH 45347-9102
Phone: (937) 604-9464
thetestimony@emypeople.net

The Testimony Committee

Lowell Miller, Editor
Dean Kinsley
Phil King
Tim Deaton

Associate Editors

Marcus Miller
Darryl Filbrun