

Be ye doers
of the Word
and not hearers
only...
James 1:22

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

- "LET FREEDOM RING" - MICHAEL STRITE
- "WHEN KINGDOMS COLLIDE" - WILMER HORST
- "THE PROMISE" - MENNO KNIGHT
- "I LOVE PROTESTANTS, BUT ..." - BRYCE GEISER
- "KICKED OUT" - ABRAM NEUFELD



Letter from the Editor



Sunday afternoon June 6, we experienced a five-inch downpour in two hours that broke our mini-drought. Now the flowers are responding. This week we have seen the first blooms of several flowers—canna lilies, lotus, hydrangeas, day lilies, hollyhocks, sunflowers, and the summer star of our gardens, the crepe myrtles.

A pair of ospreys chose to build a nest in the top of the cell tower adjoining our water storage pond. They do not appear to be the most tidy nest builders, but I am not planning to climb 230' in the air to inspect it.

A thoughtful granddaughter offered to bring her boyfriend over on a Saturday and help us work in the gardens. One of the activities we engaged in was the symbolic planting of a tree; ours was a Japanese Emperor Red Maple. I called it symbolic because planting a tree exemplifies placing effort, work, and money in the future. It is the exact opposite of instant gratification, where one eats in a restaurant and consumes what has already been produced. Doris and I were very pleased to have such ready students present for our object lesson.

In April, we journeyed southwest to the (8,000' msl) high desert country of Cuauhtémoc, Mexico. The excited country bustled with thousands of acres of blooming apple orchards. Orchardists stood ready to combat dipping temperatures in the wee hours of the morning with firepots and giant fans. We enjoyed the frost excitement, the stay with friends, and attended two Spanish-speaking services at Pedernales.

During our visit to Mexico, God led us to three great writers who share their stories with us in AV22. This issue offers a close look at two much celebrated US holidays - Memorial Day and Independence Day. AV22 takes another look at how Anabaptists should live amid the ongoing war that exists between the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. We have more discussion on Christians and the military and more on a pure and disciplined church. In AV22, we think more about when to expect Christ's promised return.

Until then,

James G. Landis

Send all responses, articles, and questions to:

AV Editor

5282 Highway 56 South
Waynesboro, GA 30830
editor@anabaptistvoice.com
www.anabaptistvoice.com









Send donations and/or subscription info to:

AV Production Team

243 Partridge Road
Olar, SC 29843
subscriptions@anabaptistvoice.com
www.anabaptistvoice.com

Table of Contents

The  symbol indicates a recurring feature in *Anabaptist Voice*.

	Letter from the Editor	2
	About <i>Anabaptist Voice</i>	4
	Our Readers Write	5
	When Kingdoms Collide	6
	Rubies & Diamonds	12
	The Battle is the Lord's.....	13
	I Love Protestants, But... ..	15
	Let Freedom Ring	18
	Glorious Freedom	23
	Kicked Out and Adopted In	24
	Seek and Find	26
	Early Writers Describe Christians	27
	Bribed	28
	The Promise	29
	Books Worth Reading.....	32
	Round Table Discussion	33
	The Practical Side	38
	The Practical Side: <i>The Rest of the Story</i>	38
	The Practical Side: <i>New Stories</i>	40
	Upcoming Events	42
	Circulation & Financial Statement	43



Statement of Copyrights & Credits

Anabaptist Voice is not copyrighted, let no one do so. It is to be used in any way that builds the Kingdom of Christ. If any material is reprinted, recognition should be given to *Anabaptist Voice* and the writer or artist.

All images & drawings contained herein are labeled for unrestricted use, free of copyrights under Creative Commons CC0 or used with permission from the creator.

Listed below are credits to various Bible translations used in producing this issue of *Anabaptist Voice*.

AVU — Authorized Version Update, Public Domain

CEV — Contemporary English Version, Copyright 1995 by American Bible Society.

GW — God's Word Translation, Copyright 1995 by God's Word to the Nations.

ICB — International Children's Bible, Copyright 2015 by Tommy Nelson.

KJV — King James Version, Public Domain.

NASB — New American Standard Bible, Copyright 1968. New Century Version of NASB, Copyright 2005 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.

NIRV — New International Reader's Version, Copyright 2014 by Biblica, Inc.

NKJV — New King James Version, Copyright 1982 by Thomas Nelson.

NLT — New Living Translation, Copyright 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation.

WEB — World English Bible, Public Domain.



About Anabaptist Voice

Our Mission Statement:

We want *Anabaptist Voice* to be a servant to the churches of Jesus Christ. We choose the name “Anabaptist” as a fitting term to describe an obedient “people of God” in our generation. We follow the *example* of the historic Anabaptists who sought to obey the teachings of Christ and the apostles, but we do not idolize Anabaptists nor historic Anabaptism. We follow Christ.

Our Purpose:

To interpret Scripture in a simple childlike way, and to apply Bible teaching to the lives of living saints.

Our Tone:

The tone of the magazine shall be positive in that:

- it presents the right way when it decries the wrong way.
- it presents the truth when it warns of the untruth.

Our motto shall be words from Isaiah 30:21.

Whenever you turn to the right hand
 Or whenever you turn to the left,
 You shall hear a voice behind you, saying,
 “This is the way, walk in it.”

Our Bible Translation Policy:

All Scriptures quoted will be in either the KJV or the NKJV translations unless otherwise specified.

We respect the specific preference of a writer who wishes to use other translations for his article.

Our Finances:

There is no set subscription price for *Anabaptist Voice*. We appreciate donations from those who wish to support the work.

To assure an informed supporter base, each issue will contain a statement giving the number of copies printed and distributed, the total costs for the previous issue, and the amount of donations received.

Our Organization:

The AV Editor is responsible for assuring that *Anabaptist Voice* adheres to the stated purpose, securing writers, and proper copy editing. The AV Production Team is responsible for design, layout, printing, subscriptions, and all financial matters.

At present, *Anabaptist Voice* is choosing to be free of government regulations and control as much as possible. We are not registered with any federal or state government body. We are not a 501(c)3 organization; individual contributions are not tax deductible. Those who give to *Anabaptist Voice* through the local church may obtain a tax deduction.

Our Audience:

Our primary target audience is anyone associated with an Anabaptist church. We define an Anabaptist church as one that practices a follower-of-Jesus baptism, maintains actual applications of Bible truths, and one where a close-knit, disciplined brotherhood exists among the believers.

Our secondary target audience is those not familiar with Anabaptist churches but are searching the Scriptures for truth.



Some Historic Tenets of Anabaptism:

In order to provide clarity about who we are, *Anabaptist Voice* lists some historic Anabaptist beliefs and practices we believe are still valid today.

1. God accepted Jesus’ death on the cross as an atonement for the sins of the whole world. Thus the blood of Jesus enables each person to be acceptable to God when he repents of his sin and surrenders himself to King Jesus. This initial commitment is followed by obedience to the commands of Christ which gives the disciple assurance of his right standing before God. “Salvation” is not just a one-time event but a life-long experience.
2. Adult believer’s baptism signifies a commitment to follow Christ as His disciple in His Kingdom.
3. The teachings of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament are to be put into practice. The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are the heart of Christ’s Kingdom teaching for His disciples.
4. Anabaptists recognize the church as Christ’s Kingdom on the earth.
5. Faithful obedience to the commands of Christ often brings persecution upon us.
6. The world (*all who do not obey God*) is evil and under the sway of Satan.
7. Our earthly conduct determines our eternal destiny. True faith must result in obedience that will be rewarded in heaven. Evil works prove a lack of faith in God and will result in eternal punishment.
8. Kingdom disciples do not participate in the civil government or “serve” in the military.



Our Readers Write

Policy Note: Email letters to *Anabaptist Voice* are encouraged. All letters must be accompanied by the writer's full name and physical address (not a PO Box). If the letter is printed in the magazine, only the writer's initials and state will be attached to the comments. If you send AV a letter, we assume the right to use any part of the letter we deem of interest to our readers. Not all comments by readers express the thoughts of *Anabaptist Voice*, but we think they may have some merit in showing counter points of view.

AV Editor

No Wonder!

In response to "The King Is Coming," AV21, page 18, Mark 11:16 says Jesus did not allow anyone to carry a vessel through the temple. This would essentially have shut down the temple worship. We know He taught in the temple every day from the triumphal entry until His arrest. Jesus said, "I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me" (**Matthew 26:55**). If He kept the temple on "lockdown" that whole time, it is no wonder—with Passover coming—that the temple establishment was ready to resort to murder.

A. V. S. | *Michigan*

Good Literature

The AV issues have been arriving at our home for several years due to someone's consideration to submit my name as a possible interested reader.

In the 50-plus years of our homemaking efforts, the amount of good literature that has come to the surface is indeed a blessing enabling more readers to benefit and prepare for the "rich day" of the Lord's return.

Please find enclosed a gift to help forward your printing efforts.

I. W. | *Ontario, Canada*

Put to Best Use

I read with interest the "Our Readers Write" letter in the 2021 Winter Issue (AV 20, page 6), "No Free Handouts." Obviously there are varying views on the government's stimulus payments. Now I have no argument with those who choose not to cash them. (More difficult, if not impossible is a direct deposit). I do, however, have an alternate suggestion which the writer hinted at in his last paragraph.

Instead of sending the check back, or destroying it, why not use it to help the destitute? It could be sent to CAM (Christian Aid Ministries) or to a person's local charitable outreach. I am of the decided opinion that we, as God's people, know better how to distribute money more efficiently and effectively to the needy than does our government. Instead of allowing the government to waste it with their inefficient programs, why not put it

to Kingdom use?

Above all, let's be charitable with divergent views and what we can do for God's program.

P.S. I appreciated the article, "More Than Nonresistance" (AV20, page 28).

D. L. B. | *Virginia*

Using Our Sanctified Minds

Reply to "Usury Condemned" (AV20, page 39, "The Practical Side").

Just a simple question: Would it make a difference if the loan was to help get a brother through a rough spot or to expand a money-making business? We certainly need to be responsive to our brother's needs, but it doesn't seem necessary to me to put oneself in financial jeopardy in order to help our brother prosper.

God has given us minds to sort out life situations in conformity to His Word and will. Let's use our common sense in all relationships.

D. L. B. | *Virginia*

Trust Medical Science

I read what reader A.V. S. wrote about concerns of *Anabaptist Voice* dispensing medical advice. I agree with him/her.

There is evidence that ivermectin is not helpful for COVID-19. One article I read on the internet at the website of "Science-Based Medicine" says, "Ivermectin is the new Hydroxychloroquine."

In the early days of the coronavirus, many things were tried to combat the virus. As time is progressing, medical science is finding out what works and what doesn't work with this new virus in humans. This is still a work in progress for various treatments.

It would be best for *Anabaptist Voice* to stay out of things that we do not have the education or skills to give good advice on. Medical science figures these things out; we should wait until they have completed this process before we report.

R. Z. | *Pennsylvania*

[See "Round Table Discussion," *Testing the Spirits*, page 34]

When Kingdoms Collide

by Wilmer Horst

Texts:

Mark 13; Matthew 10, 13, 24; Acts 4; Romans 13.

Purpose Statement:

To show how the New Testament church lived in the midst of their culture and age and how it relates to the way we live in the midst of our culture and time.

Conclusion:

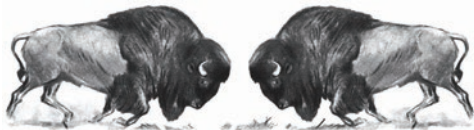
The Kingdom of our Lord is in direct conflict with the kingdoms of this earth.



Introduction

As I read through the book of Acts, I find a number of things that trouble me. I am stirred by how the church lived in the midst of their culture, and grew and prospered in the midst of suffering. I believe we ought to live in our own time as they lived in theirs. The same Holy Spirit they had can empower us with a holy boldness and fearlessness that can conquer the world.

We can learn a lot of history from the Bible, but I want to look at the *Martyrs Mirror* for some history not included in the Bible. We could look at the death of James, or of Stephen, or of hundreds of other accounts of witnesses to Jesus in its 1,100 pages.



A Collision Course for Andrew

I want to focus on the apostle Andrew's story as told in the *Martyrs Mirror* (pages 87-88). Andrew was inspired as Jesus went back into glory and, being filled with the Holy Spirit, Andrew went about and preached the gospel plainly. The law of the land was such that one should not teach and preach there, but the wife of one of the local governors (Aegaeas) became a Christian through the preaching of Andrew.

Well, now what are you going to do? There is havoc in the home and who are you going to blame? You are going to blame Andrew.

As the account given here says, it enraged the governor against Andrew and he threatened Andrew with the death of the cross.

The apostle then said to the governor, "Had I feared the death of the cross, I should not have preached the

Themes to Develop:

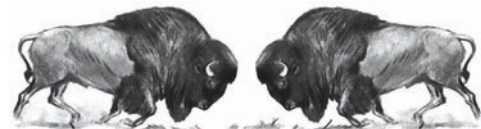
1. A Collision Course for the Apostle Andrew
2. A Collision Course for the Apostles
3. A Collision Course with the World
4. A Collision Course with the Jews
5. A Collision Course with Governments
6. A Collision Course for Us

majesty and gloriousness of the cross of Jesus. If I was so afraid, I would have quit a long time ago. I do not fear the cross."

To quote the *Martyrs Mirror* further: "The enemies of the truth having apprehended and sentenced to death the apostle Andrew, he went joyfully to the place where he was to be crucified, and, having come near the cross, he said, 'O beloved cross! I have greatly longed for thee. I rejoice to see thee erected here. I come to thee with a peaceful conscience and with cheerfulness, desiring that I, who am a disciple of Him who hung on the cross, may also be crucified.' The apostle also said, 'The nearer I come to the cross, the nearer I come to God; and the farther I am from the cross, the farther I am from God.'"

What do you suppose would happen if our churches would have that type of understanding of what it means to follow Jesus Christ—to truly take up the cross of Christ and follow after Him all the way to death?

Andrew knew that the kingdom he was serving was on a collision course with the kingdom of this world and it was not going to mesh very well at all. After hanging on the cross for three days, he said, "Lord, I want to come to you." He then committed his spirit into the hands of his heavenly Father.



A Collision Course for the Apostles

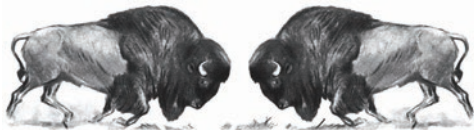
Where did these men and women who were recorded in the *Martyrs Mirror* get this type of zeal? Where did they get this type of understanding? They got this vision direct from Jesus.

In Mark 13:9, 12-13 Jesus warned his disciples, *“Take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them ... Brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”*

These were some of the last words Jesus Christ had with His disciples; they remembered His words. They knew that as they would walk into the course of regular business and into discourse with other people, their message was going to be completely opposite of those to whom they were speaking. The disciples came from a completely different background, a completely different country, a completely different drive than lay behind the people they would meet. Christ wanted His disciples to know about the hostility they would soon face.

These are unpleasant forebodings. But coupled with the forecast of scourgings and trials by governors and kings yet to come, Jesus gave His disciples assurance of the presence and power of the Holy Spirit to guide them.

Christ foretold to His disciples the collision course for the kingdoms of this earth and the Kingdom of God even before He inaugurated His kingdom.



A Collision Course with the World

Let’s go to Matthew’s gospel and find out why Jesus’ followers will not be liked. In Matthew 10, Jesus is sending His disciples on a missionary journey and gives them some particulars in verses 5 through 15. He wants His disciples to be prepared to face animosities as they announce the soon coming of His kingdom. *“Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them” (Matthew 10:17-18).*

“For a testimony against them.” The life and witness of Jesus’ disciples would be a convicting testimony against the Jews and Gentiles they encountered. This message has not changed for us today in 2021.

As followers of Jesus Christ, our lives are a testimony of condemnation to the evil governments of this world.

How many of us like to be accused of something, rightly or wrongly?

Maybe a brother or sister comes to us and gives some type of accusation, some words of admonition, or some correction. They may tell us that we did not do the right thing or say the right thing or say it in the right manner or with the right attitude. We do not like to have accusations brought against us, whether they are true or false.

The Jews and the Gentiles of the early church era did not appreciate the accusations brought against them by the lives of holy people; they reacted harshly as Jesus said they would. It has been the same through the following centuries. It is the same today. Our lives, as people of God, are an accusation against the ungodly around us and they don’t like it very good.

Therefore, we should expect accusations to come against the church. The Apostles did. The New Testament Christians and the early church leaders expected the judgment to come against them. Their witness was a testimony against the unbelieving Jews and against the Gentiles—*“they shall scourge you in the synagogues and drag you before governors and kings” (Matthew 10:18).*

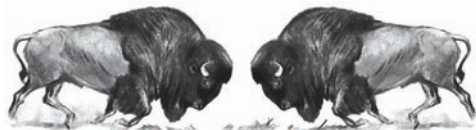
As He sent His disciples forth, He said, *“What has happened to me will happen to you.”* It was not just the accusations and the persecutions that would come against the Master, a teacher, or a leader; persecutions will also come against His disciples. Jesus said (in my words), “As they have persecuted me and as they have falsely accused me, they will also falsely accuse you. They will not like your message that you will have to say to them.”

Jesus continued on in Matthew 10:25, *“It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub ...”* That was their accusation against Jesus- He must be Beelzebub or He must be filled with Beelzebub, the chief of the devils. If they said that about Jesus Christ, in the same manner they shall call them of His household (Matthew 10:25).

It should not surprise us at all if we have people accusing us of being filled with the devil—they did against Jesus. I expect it and you should too because Jesus said it’s going to happen.

That is one of the litmus tests that we are following after Him. We can expect troubles and persecutions.

So how do we live when these kingdoms collide? How do we live in the midst of our world cultures with the kingdom culture on a complete collision course with the teachings of Jesus?



A Collision Course with the Jews

In Acts chapter three, after Peter and John through the power of God healed a lame man and a crowd gathered to witness the miracle, Peter preached a sermon with some direct accusations: “**whom you delivered up and denied ... and you killed the Prince of life.**”

In Acts chapter four, the religious leaders called these disciples in for questioning. Then Peter lifted up his voice and accused his accusers, “**whom you crucified ... the stone which was rejected by you builders.**”

Oh, come on Peter, you know that’s not going to work very well! Why don’t you use some tact Peter, your life would be a little bit easier? You did not have to be so bold. Can you not learn when to speak and when to be quiet? Come on Peter, you are not just making trouble for yourself; you are making trouble for the rest of the church.

I think Peter would have heard some of that if he had been around today, don’t you? I believe he would have.

But what does it say in verse eight? It says Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost.

What did Jesus say would happen when you are brought before governors and authorities? He said (in my words), “Do not worry about what you are going to say because the Holy Ghost will fill you and tell you what to say.”

Peter was filled with the Holy Ghost. It was not a matter of tact; it was a matter of being filled with the Holy Ghost. He spoke truth to these men who had no desire to hear truth and it was condemnation to their souls. They were filled with indignation. They wanted to beat them and keep them from spreading the message. The authorities threatened them and told them not to speak in the name of Jesus. What did Peter do?

Did Peter say, “Okay, we are going to quit having church, we are going to stop teaching and preaching in the name of Jesus? We are not going to cross the rulers, we will do whatever they say.” That is not what Peter and the followers of Jesus did.

So now we have to figure out why. Why were they filled with the Holy Spirit to go completely against what the authority figures of the Jews had said?

Then we go to Acts chapter 5, and Peter preaches some more. They are thrown into prison. The angel of the Lord lets them out of prison. They go right back to

preaching and they get rearrested and dragged before the Council. Still filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter has this message, “**We ought to obey God rather than men**” (Acts 5:29b).

In the last year I have heard that verse taken out of context so many times. I have heard that preached by very well-meaning Bible-thumping pastors.

We do have to obey God rather than men, but we must also obey God in everything else He has to say. I am sorry, but you cannot just pull this verse out whenever you think it is going to suit you. Be careful, brothers and sisters.

Peter said, “**We ought to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you slew and hanged on a tree.**”

Come on Peter, you didn’t have to say that—“**whom you slew and hanged on a tree, God has raised Him up and He is sitting at the right hand of the Father as a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are his witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost, whom God has given to them that obey him**” (Acts 5:30-32).

Where did the apostles get this kind of idea? For how many years had they been mentored by Jesus Christ? If we do a very quick review through some of the Gospels, we will find that Jesus Christ was a lawbreaker.

Let us go to Matthew and find a couple of these places. I want us to understand why and when the apostles used this phrase “*We ought to obey God rather than men.*”

Where I live in Pennsylvania, there is a large smorgasbord of Mennonite churches. I am burdened by the number of people within the Kingdom of Jesus Christ who no longer know where they stand on the separation of the two kingdoms. Through deception, they have been sucked into the nationalism of America, “Make America Great Again.”

Instead of searching the Scriptures to see what Jesus Christ had to say about this, they became overly involved in the politics of the prince of this world. “**According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience**” (Ephesians 2:2).

Why? How could they follow this deception? Many of them wanted to point out that we need to obey God rather than men, but they were not living in obedience to the Scriptures in the rest of their lives—militarism, immodesty, hatred, divorce, unequal yoke.

We want to study a few cases of how Jesus related to the law and the rulers. Look first at Matthew 12:1-2.

At that time, Jesus went through the fields on the sabbath day and his disciples were hungry and began to pick grains of wheat and eat them. **“But when the Pharisees saw it, they said to Jesus, ‘Look, Your disciples are doing what is not lawful to do on the Sabbath!’”** The disciples broke the law.

The Jewish rulers—not the Roman rulers—in essence told Jesus, “Jesus, it is time to get your disciples in line here, they are lawbreakers.”

What did Jesus say? Jesus told them that the law they had made was not in keeping with what God had intended for them to make; it was a bad law. This law was law that was completely against what God had determined from the time of creation.

Jesus asked, “Have you not read the Law? Do you not know what God’s intention actually was in the Law?” It was to have a people preserved unto Himself.

We continue on to verse nine. On another sabbath day, this crippled man is there; Jesus heals him. To try to make a public spectacle of Jesus, the rulers ask, **“Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath?” (Matthew 12:10).**

They asked Him this question and He turns it back to them: “Well, what would you do if one of your sheep or cattle got hooked in the fence? Would you rescue it on the Sabbath? Your law says you shouldn’t, but of course you would do it. You see, you have made laws outside of the Law and outside of the will of God.”

The Pharisees (verse 14) went out and held a council against them to decide how they might destroy Him.

In verse 24, Jesus is accused of being filled with Beelzebub.

Jesus told His disciples, “They accused me of being from the devil and they are going to accuse you of it.” Expect it. Live in that expectation.

In chapter 15, they come and accuse Jesus. **“Why is it that your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they wash not their hands when they eat bread” (Matthew 15:2).**

This was not about when His disciples came in dirty from fishing all night; this was a ceremonial washing.

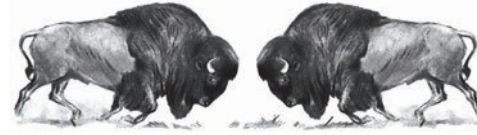
Jesus says in essence, “You have transgressed the commandment of God.”

These laws the Pharisees upheld were laws that were outside the Lawgiver’s permission. You see, many books that were written and many laws that were created by other elders were in addition to the law of God that He gave to Moses—they were in addition to.

And Jesus said, “No, you do not have to keep laws *contrary to the spirit of God’s law.*”

“But Lord, what about divorce and remarriage?” they asked.

Jesus says, “What did God intend at the beginning? Go back to creation to find God’s desire.”



A Collision Course with Governments

What do we do whenever our laws or ideas come in conflict with the laws of the land? It is difficult at times to know what to do. I recognize that. But as I searched through all these Scriptures, and many others, I came to this conclusion: when the authority of the land does not rest on the authority of the Lawgiver, then you honor the Lawgiver.

In Pennsylvania, we had a governor and a department secretary who made no bones about it—they were against God and against the Church of Jesus Christ. They were not ashamed of it.

I go into New York City almost every weekend. The governor of that state made it plain that “even God is not going to get you out of this pandemic, don’t even pray.”

Brothers and sisters, if the authorities of this land have made it very plain that they are not in tune with the authority giver, then their laws become suspect at best. You and I, as kingdom followers of Jesus Christ, have to determine who we are going to obey.

The Apostle Paul himself defied the worship of Roman deities and rulers. Consistent with his teaching found throughout the book of Acts and the epistles, the Apostle Paul condemned idol worship and taught new Christians to abandon this practice. When the people of Lystra tried to set Paul and Barnabas up as gods and worship them in Acts 14, Paul completely rejected the notion of idol worship.

In the end, Paul gave his life for faithfully following the laws of Christ above the laws of the land. Many other Christians since that time also denied the laws of the land and suffered because of it. You can read their inspiring accounts in the *Martyrs Mirror*.

Now I want you to know that what I am saying does not conflict with Romans 13. Romans 13:1 says, **“Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.”**

Make no mistake of what the Scripture says—government officials are retained of God.

Romans 13:2-5 goes on to say, “Whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of God, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.”

So I ask, “For what purpose are the authorities of this land given their authority?” They have one authority and that is to bring God’s judgment to the evildoers—to the *evildoers*.

If the church is not composed of evildoers, you have nothing to fear; the authority they have been given is not against you. If they, however, come against you because you have defied their laws, even though their laws and their personal lives stand in disobedience against the authority-giver, then you can expect what Jesus had to say in Matthew 10 and 24; you live in the expectation of persecution.

A number of years back I had the privilege to speak with Brother Moussa. Brother Moussa was a church leader in Nigeria when Boko Haram came in and destroyed his church; the enemy burned it to the ground. They also kidnapped quite a few young ladies.

Brother Moussa spoke at length of their experiences, along with a few of the parents of these young girls who were kidnapped. Even a couple of the young girls who had been released bore testimony of faithfulness to Christ’s teachings in the midst of these horrible experiences.

I asked Brother Moussa, “What was your message? What kept you going? What was your drive?”

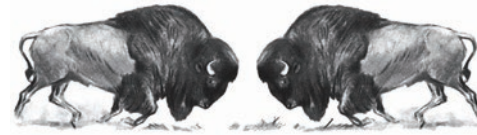
You know what his answer was? “Jesus said it would happen, we were expecting it.”

Next I asked, “How does this work out in everyday life?”

Here is the answer Brother Moussa gave me: “Well, whenever you are a Christian and you have to go to the doctor’s office and they recognize you are a Christian, you might have to wait all day. It does not matter that you had a 10 a.m. appointment; you are going to wait to the end of the day and then if they do not want to see you, they just will not see you.

“We live in the expectation that we will suffer persecution,” he said.

Such faith, such resolve that the words of our Master may be fulfilled in us by those who come against us. Persecution is what we expect.



A Collision Course for Us

What happens today?

In churches throughout our land, here is often how we think: I want to make sure that I have everything satisfied with the state, we can’t meet together unless we have a charter that is approved by the state and the Secretary of State that gives us the right to meet. We also have to have all of our tax numbers correct with the Department of the Treasury so that we can get our 501(c)3 status or charitable contributions deducted from our income taxes. We want to be sure to qualify for all the Social Security and Medicaid benefits as well as “free loans” and stimulus payments to keep our businesses going. We have our hands outstretched to get everything we can from the government.

That mentality leads us to be shackled to the government. Many big churches are finding their way about this, and the government is saying, “We do have the right to tell you what to do or not to do.”

Now I am not saying that I oppose having your gifts given for charitable purposes and so forth. I would much prefer that our money go to honest charities rather than to the wasteful and evil government.

These are hard decisions that stand in complete contrast to the way we have always done things. Maybe we need to do a deep dive into the Scriptures and find out what the Scriptures say.

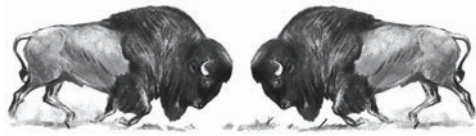
Jesus was the example of saying that there are moments to disregard the laws of this land. Whenever the lawmakers of the land are not living under the authority of the Lawgiver we must decide whose law we will follow. This was Jesus’ example.

The disciples were just simply following their Master and following His teachings. It can be hard.

That is why we have a body of believers to work together and that is why we have elders who are called to lead the local church. Sometimes, as a church, we don’t always get it right and sometimes our elders group does not get it all right either. Then they answer to God and you and I answer to God for how we conduct our lives and the things we say.

And now, more than ever, I think it is important for us to recognize that the Kingdom of Christ is on a collision course with the kingdoms of the earth. The atrocities

that we hear of and the evil done against Christians—none of that should surprise us. We should live in that expectation.



Conclusion

Our Father in heaven, we thank you for the moment and the opportunity that we have to live in this land, in this place, in this time. And God, it is difficult for us in connection to what we have been used to doing. Now we see even more clearly that the Kingdom you have asked us to be a part of is in direct conflict with the kingdoms of this earth and the spirit of the age. These earthly kingdoms stand on a collision course with the Holy Spirit that You have given to the Church.

Oh God, help us to open our Bibles and to read and

to dig and to learn. Give us wisdom, Lord, to know how to walk in this time, and then give us a holy boldness that we might fearlessly live out the gospel today.

Oh God, help us to carry out your Kingdom work while you give us life and breath and health even when it causes us to be misunderstood and falsely accused.

Help us to live in the example that Jesus Christ showed for us because it is in Jesus' name that we pray. Amen.

W. H. | *Pennsylvania*

Study Questions

1. What evidence do you see of the two kingdoms colliding?
2. When should Christians disregard government laws?
3. Why do you believe a Christian cannot be a part of government?





Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“The size of your cross is never greater than the grace God gives to carry that cross.”

– Nate Nissley at Farmington Mennonite Church, MO



“Some people abandon clear Bible teaching because they get to be like the people with whom they surround themselves.”

– Norman Yoder at 2021 AIC conference, OH



“We need enough unction for our orthodoxy to function.”

– Virgil Heisey, Newburg Mennonite Church, PA



“The best love a parent can show their child is to say, ‘I love you, but I will not tolerate such behavior in this home.’”

– Tom Byler at Carlton Old Order Amish, PA



“God has given man many strengths, but if a man is self-employed, those strengths become weaknesses.”

– Wendell Yoder at Carrier Mills AM Church, IL



“Obedience is faith activated.”

– Delbert Schlabach at Still Waters Church, OH



“To go from barrenness to fruitfulness requires obedience.”

– Austin Hege at Burkeland Mennonite Church, GA



“Your usefulness in God’s kingdom depends on how much of what you have that the Lord controls.”

– Anthony Martin at Texter Mountain Mennonite Church, PA



“Am I serving God because I have benefits coming, or am I serving God to build up His kingdom?”

– Merle Beachy at Faith Mission Fellowship, VA



“Great victories always have fine print.”

– Aaron Stoll at Caneyville Christian Community, KY

Share your rubies and diamonds with AV readers. Send in the quote followed by the name of the speaker and the name of the congregation or church where it was given. Just for our records, we also would like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.

The Battle is the Lord's

by James G. Landis

"The Lord does not save with sword and spear; for the battle is the Lord's."

– I Samuel 17:47

From beginning to end, the Bible uses the imagery of warfare to describe a great battle going on between God and Satan. From the assault on Job to the Battle of Armageddon, the war continues.

Warfare throughout the Old Testament challenges man with the power of God compared to the puny power of man's armies.

We should never forget David's battle shout against the Philistine Goliath: *"I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty ... It is not by sword or spear that the Lord saves; for the battle is the Lord's."*

When the Lord appeared to Joshua outside Jericho, He had His sword drawn. Joshua inquired of Him, *"Are you for us or for our enemies?"*

"'Neither,' he replied, 'but as commander of the army of the Lord I have now come.' Then Joshua fell facedown to the ground in reverence and asked him, 'What message does my Lord have for His servant?'"

"The commander of the Lord's army replied, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy.' And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:13-15 NIV).

How astounding! The Lord told Joshua he was on neither side. I always thought the army of Israel was the Army of the Lord, but it was not. The Army of the Lord was much larger and stronger than the army of Israel. The Lord's army knocked down the walls of Jericho in minutes. The Israelite Army could have marched around Jericho for years and if the Lord had not been in it, the walls would *not* have suddenly fallen down.

When Joshua asked what message the Commander had for him, the message was, *"Take off your sandals for you stand in a holy place."* Taking off his sandals meant complete submission to God, and Joshua willingly did so. God did not require Joshua to perform some great feat to prove his worthiness as the commander of Israel's army; He only required worship and complete submission. Too often we think that the battle is ours. We think we must do some great feat so the Lord will help us win the battle against Satan and his hosts. We must learn from Joshua and David; the battle is not ours, the battle is the Lord's.

When a great multitude from Ammon, Moab, and Syria came against King Jehoshaphat and Judah, the cause looked hopeless (II Chronicles 20). They cried out to God for help with this plea: *"We have no power against this great multitude that is coming against us; nor do we know what to do, but our eyes are upon You."*

Then the prophet Jahaziel stood up and declared, *"Thus says the Lord to you: 'Do not be afraid nor dismayed because of this great multitude, for the battle is not yours, but God's ... You will not need to fight in this battle. Position yourselves, stand still and see the salvation of the Lord, who is with you.' ... Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem bowed before the Lord, worshiping the Lord" (II Chronicles 20:15-18).*

As a result, God set the three segments of the opposing army against each other. The enemy wiped itself out so completely that it took Judah three days to gather up the spoils. Again we see the phrase, *"the battle is not yours, but God's."* Once again, worship of God proved far superior to swords and spears.

The psalmist King David, a man of war, summed up his feelings in Psalm 20:7: *"Some trust in chariots, and some in horses; But we will remember the name of the Lord our God."*

Yesterday was Memorial Day. America declared this day a national holiday to honor those who fought in America's wars. Prayers were said and God's blessing invoked on the nation. Here is a typical "Christian" attitude toward America's soldiers who died or fought in America's wars:



Much of what we enjoy we owe to the fighting men and women who were willing to give up their lives for our country.

On this Memorial Day weekend, I think it would be appropriate for us to pause for a moment to remember and honor all the men and women who lost their lives fighting for our country. ... Honor all veterans who risked their lives to serve our country.¹

“If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and forgive their sin and heal their land” (II Chronicles 7:14).

I think it would also be appropriate to thank God for the many blessings we have as Americans. Ask God to continue to guide, direct and bless America. Pray for those young men and women who are currently working and living in dangerous situations as they bravely and unselfishly serve their country.

This statement and prayer holds quite a number of beliefs that contradict each other and are not supported even by Old Testament standards. The biggest fallacy, however, is that it does not recognize Christ's new and higher standard in the New Testament. Today, God does not want His servants to cheat, destroy, lie, murder, steal, or do any of the other evils associated with warfare. We are not commanded to do evil that good may come of it.

But the imagery of a battle between those who serve the living God and the demons of Satan continues on in the New Testament. The New Testament pictures soldiers of Jesus Christ clad in battle array, armored and ready to fight with the Sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God (Ephesians 6:12-18). Our commander, Jesus, is in direct opposition to the forces of the world ruled by Satan. Yet we must remember that the battle is not ours but the Lord's.

Jesus continually taught what God wanted of His people and gave His disciples

the authority and power to overcome the forces of evil. He taught them the difference between good and evil. He warned His disciples that the forces of evil would violently oppose them in time to come.

Paul publicly preached in Ephesus that the God of heaven was not a god that could be made with human hands ... and caused a riot. Peter and John preached Jesus risen from the dead to those who crucified Him and wound up in prison. They recognized the battle as the Lord's and did not bow in humble obedience to the gods of this world or to its ruler Satan. Neither should we.

The battle between God and Satan continues today in the USA. It confronts us in many ways. Instead of bowing in submission and worship to the Creator God, openly anti-God forces under Satan worship the trees, the bears, the wolves, and the creatures in the swamps. These same people murder their own children; the state and national governments pay them to do it. In this country, wealthy people pay to kill babies and force sterilization upon people in other countries to decrease the population on the globe. By God's standard, this is evil.

These same governments amass huge armies and materiel to destroy millions of people in the name of keeping the peace and freedom ... and place allegiance to country above their allegiance to the God of Heaven. By God's standard, this is evil.

If we look around at the seeming advance of Satan and his host of evil spirits right here in America, we may be misled into thinking we can take down the walls of Jericho by helping pass laws to fight evil, or by looking to the military. We ought not. We, like Joshua, David, and Jehoshaphat, ought to recognize that the battle is not ours, but the Lord's. When we see the enemy forces threatening us, we ought to fall at our Lord's feet in complete submission ... and worship HIM.

J.G.L. | Georgia

New Writing Challenge!

Identify the things in the above quote that conflict with New Testament teaching.

Give reasons for your answers.



¹ Kit Pharo. Sabbath Day Devotions, 29 May 2021.

I Love Protestants, But ...

by Bryce Geiser

A few years ago I ate lunch with a minister in another plain church. When I inquired about some families who had just joined his community, he became quite animated. “Why, they did not even know how to be born again!” he exclaimed. He went on to explain in detail how those families had grown up Amish, taken instruction classes, and joined the church. For years they were obedient to the church, took communion, and raised their families—all without (he raised his eyebrows) being born again!

I wonder what he thought of my silence. Perhaps he began to wonder if I, too, was ignorant of the new birth. At any rate, he began to explain that all such works as baptism or “joining the church” are simply dead works and thus, filthy rags to God. The new birth, in his mind, required a recognition of our complete depravity and refraining from any effort to gain salvation. If God wishes to save us, He will bring us out of darkness in His own time and the resulting light from heaven will be so dramatic that no one will be able to doubt it.

My minister friend was very sincere; he had no idea that he was promoting almost perfect Calvinism. Calvinism is the practical outworking of basic Protestant thought. It is sometimes expressed in mathematical terms: Faith + zero = salvation. Almost everyone knows that this theory was ardently promoted by a man named Martin Luther, who launched the Protestant Reformation. Before I go further, you must understand, I love Protestants but I hate their theology.

Today Protestant concepts have worked their way into virtually every Amish, Mennonite, and German Baptist congregation. Those

ideas impact how we feel about much more than simply the new birth. It affects our feelings about outreach, missionary work, legalism, church rules, and perhaps most importantly, our own self-image. In the traditional plain churches I detect a nagging suspicion that perhaps we are falling behind. We seem to be plagued with doubt about our teachings on obedience and faithfulness and we stumble over ourselves to sound very Protestant when we preach and write.

At the very heart of this issue is the question of how a person is “saved,” “converted,” “justified,” or made right with God. What follows is the most important sentence in this writing. Many people will not absorb it in their haste to contradict me: the traditional plain churches that my minister friend criticized do not have the false belief that good works can save us without faith.

Oh well, at least I tried. Let me develop this further.

You see, the idea that faith is somehow divorced from good works is tremendously bad theology. It is incredible that people can read their Bibles and then contend that faith plus nothing equals salvation. How could the apostle James say it any clearer? Faith plus nothing is heresy! It is entirely dead. It is not faith.

I will try not to insult your intelligence by giving a listing of the many Bible verses that declare this to be true, but I want to point out that Jesus himself said, “This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent.” Belief itself, according to Jesus, is a work.

An avid Protestant once told me that such works as this are “non-meritorious works.” Ahem. Belief in Jesus is non-meritorious? Such are the depths to which we descend if we



are determined that faith and works do not work together harmoniously for our salvation.

The belief that salvation is received by faith alone without works comes from an unbalanced reading of Romans four and five. The context here is that Paul is trying to explain how it could be that a faith/obedience relationship with Jesus (the righteousness of God apart from the law) could result in salvation. Faith and works are contrasted in this chapter to bring out the glorious truth that our futile attempts to keep the law (Moses' Law) only brings us to the awful realization that we are unable to gain God's favor in such a way. This, in fact, was a primary purpose of the law. Works alone cannot gain salvation. Please understand that this theme of faith and works in Romans four and five is not about our obedience to Jesus. Obedience to Jesus is not dead works. It is folly to caution someone not to obey Jesus under the assumption that he might be trying to gain salvation by works. This is brought out so clearly in the story we love so well about the short little man in Jericho who belonged to the equivalent of our modern-day Mafia.

The story is preserved for us by the apostle Luke in chapter nineteen. Zacchaeus was empty inside, and he badly wanted to see this Jesus who promised so many wonderful things. We are not given any insight into what his thoughts were as he waited above the crowd in the sycamore tree. There must have been sorrow as he thought over his past life, and his alienation from the persons around the tree. Perhaps there were taunts: "Hey, Publican, who do **you** think you are? Jesus will not want to see **you**."

To everyone's surprise, Jesus did indeed want to see Zacchaeus. He invited himself over for dinner and Zacchaeus could hardly contain himself for joy. The crowd gasped as Jesus made His way to this sinner's house. But Zacchaeus was elated. After listening to Jesus for a while, he could contain himself no longer. He rose and said: "*Look, Lord, I give half my goods*

to the poor; and if I have taken anything by false accusation, I will restore it fourfold."

This is not Protestantism. Protestant theology would say, "Whoa, Zacchaeus! You need to get this straight. Those are dead works! You cannot get salvation like that."

Yet to our astonishment, Jesus said, "Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham."

Salvation did not come to Zacchaeus' house only because he did good works, but because his faith in Jesus blossomed into completeness. This is salvation: that we turn from our sins and believe in Jesus. This is important, and we need to examine it further.

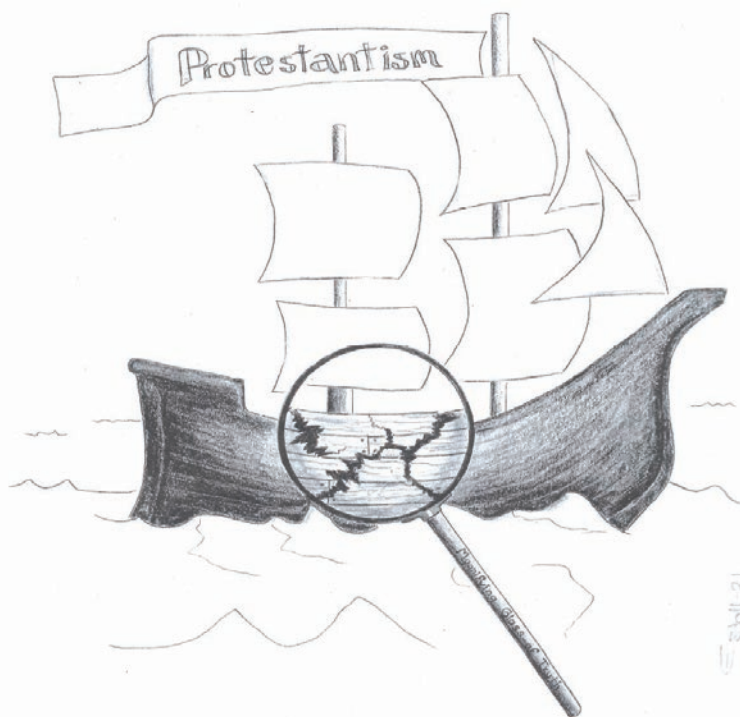
I once heard a preacher tell a crowd of listeners,

"God's salvation is free! He wrote you a million-dollar check. Just cash it!" This is awful. It makes Jesus into a Santa Claus who goes around handing out "GET OUT OF HELL FREE" cards and looking on sadly as the traditional churches walk away. But I say, if someone offers you a "GET OUT OF HELL FREE" card, run away from it! Jesus is not simply trying to get us out of hell; He is

wanting to do surgery on our hearts and eradicate sin. The Christian life is a life of surgery and of suffering, and "he that has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin." Our willingness to participate in this purging, as we pursue a love/faith relationship with Jesus, is salvation. We follow. We obey. We trust. We fail.

Yes, of course we fail. Does that place our salvation in jeopardy?

Well, I am not God, and I do not want to give a false assurance to anyone. I am, however, a father. I know what it is like to have a little boy who wants to please me. He almost never does as good a job as I could have done myself. He paints outside the lines. He plows a crooked furrow. He takes shortcuts.



Sometimes we fathers scold our sons and admonish them to do better. Usually, though, we are pleased with their attempts to follow instructions, in spite of their mistakes. If I, being human, can have such grace with my children, why would it seem strange to believe that God accepts my faltering steps of obedience? He knows our frame, and salvation does not switch on and off with the passing moments—unless we are willfully turning our backs on Him and no longer wish to obey. Even then, if we confess our sins in repentance, He is faithful and just to forgive us.

The Great Evangelical Disaster

A Protestant by the name of Francis Schaeffer once wrote a book with the above title. The sadness of the book is palpable, and he summarizes that “in the most basic sense, the evangelical establishment has become deeply worldly.” Please take note: the people who tried to tell us that faith + zero = salvation have made shipwreck. The fruits of this movement are divorce, abortion, women pastors, war, violence, and deep worldliness.

If we, the Anabaptist people, are trying to copy their spiritual-sounding rhetoric, what makes us think that our results will be any different? Ministers who teach that the new birth has nothing to do with our obedience or our works need to be exposed as misled at best, and false teachers at worst. In either event they are false prophets. There is no question that our spiritual forefathers saw obedience and baptism as the only possible results of faith. Faith is to obey. Obedience is evidence of faith.

I have read many books by Philip Yancey, Max Lucado, and other Protestant writers. Often I have gained inspiration. Sometimes they have helped me wrestle with difficult issues of how God deals with men. I am glad for the faith they inspire in people. Protestant literature finds its way into almost all our homes in one form or another. This literature should be treated with great caution. The reader should realize that the authors do not have the same concepts of grace and salvation or of obedience as the Anabaptists do. Many books end with the invitation to receive salvation by doing a few mental exercises. Yet mental exercises alone will not ensure our salvation, and unless they propel us toward obedience to Christ, are empty and destined to be repeated over and over with each new revival and each new book.

This misunderstanding, or cheapening, of the grace of our Lord is the fuel that drives much of the modern missionary movement. If we do not need to follow up with practicing obedience and a changed life, soul-



winning becomes quantifiable; we can simply count the number of souls who prayed the sinner’s prayer.

Not that I wish to disparage the sacrifice and labor of sincere mission work, yet when I see the paganism and deep worldliness of my evangelical neighbors, I cannot for the life of me understand the need to go preach elsewhere. The battle is here in America. The battle is here in the Bible Belt. The battle is here in our Plain churches.

Let us gird on the battle armor furnished us and fight well with the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

B. G. | *Kentucky*

Edited reprint from the May-June issue of *The Vanguard*

Used by permission

Let Freedom Ring

by Michael Strite

“If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

– John 8:31-32

Text: Galatians 5:1-26

Each year on the 4th of July, America celebrates the signing of the Declaration of Independence that supposedly secured the United States freedom from the tyranny of Great Britain. One of the favored songs of the nation, *My Country 'Tis of Thee*, uses the words “free” and “freedom” four times. Truly, being a free people and experiencing freedom is a cherished part of the national heritage.

I wonder if any country in the world prides itself more on its freedom than the United States of America. But what does freedom mean when it is bandied about on the streets and in the July 4 celebrations of America? I suggest that to the average American, being “free” and “freedom” involves three aspects: the absence of rules and commands, independence meaning “I can do it my way,” and a selfish focus on “me.”

In contrast to the American vision of freedom, the Christian vision of freedom is quite different. I want to look at four aspects of what freedom means to the Christian: freedom from the tyranny of laws and performance, power to live holy lives, the desire to serve others in love, and the restoration of our created role.

We will base our message on Galatians, chapter 5. As we look at this topic, we will see that freedom is one of the most important gifts we have. At the same time, I hope we also come to understand that Christian freedom is diametrically different from the freedom that is espoused and lauded by so many of our countrymen.

Galatians was written largely to Gentiles in order to refute the Judaizers. This faction of the church was teaching that in order to be saved, a Christian needed to follow the Levitical laws of the Old Testament as still binding on all Christians. The whole book of Galatians is Paul’s response.

In Galatians 5:1 Paul states the purpose of what is to follow: “It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery” (NASB). This verse makes it sound as if freedom is the ultimate reason for Christ’s work. Paul says that Christ came to set the Galatians free from



the bondage they had been in, under sin and Satan’s rule. As Christians the Galatians were truly free. He did not want them to go back into slavery by a futile attempt to be right with God by keeping the whole Law of Moses (Galatians 5:3). Paul tells them they ran well. “Now stand firm!” he urges them, “your freedom is at stake.”

The American Vision of Freedom

Let us examine three generally-held American beliefs about what freedom means and see how they differ from the Christian concept of freedom found in Galatians chapter five.

The Absence of Rules and Commands

In light of the July 4 celebrations, the meaning of “freedom” can be defined as, *the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants without hindrance or restraint*.

Any reasonable person would understand that this definition, taken to its extreme, would make for an untenable situation. What one person wants often completely opposes the wishes of another. For instance a number of years ago some folks in my local town wanted the latest and best model of cell phone. Their method of gaining what they wanted was to throw a block through the front window of my store and then help themselves to whatever they wanted. Obviously, their freedom to do whatever they wanted conflicted with my desire to stay in business and also with the laws of the town. So in America, one’s individual freedom is often restrained by laws that look out for the desires and rights of others.

But particularly for a Christian, God’s laws are not removed. In Galatians 5:19-21 we see a long list of actions that God sees as repellant and against His nature—sexual immorality, impurity, debauchery, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and the like. Paul makes it clear

that those who do these things will have no part in the Kingdom of God. God's moral law is just as applicable to the Christian as it was to the Old Testament Jew.

Jesus was very clear. In John 14:15 He told His disciples, "If you love me, keep my commandments." In I John 2:4 John tells his readers, "He who says, I know God, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

The very same Paul who wrote this passage extolling the freedom of Christian liberty gave many commandments—applications for his readers to obey. If the law of commandments was completely done away with, if the only thing that mattered was the Holy Spirit within us, then why does Paul list command after command in all of his letters? If you want an exercise sometime, go through one of Paul's letters and jot down each command he gives. You will have quite a list.

Christian freedom is not the absence of commands or rules. The difference between the free Christian and the free American is that the Christian's love for God and his fellowman makes him not want to do evil things, while the free American refrains from following his passions for fear of being caught and punished.

Independence Means I Can Do It My Way

On July 4th America celebrates independence, and for most people this independence is equated with freedom. The Declaration of Independence points out in detail the perfidies of King George of England and also of the country of England who knew of the injustices of the King and yet did nothing. Because of this mistreatment, the founders signed their names to

this Declaration of Independence.

From then on, down through history to our day, America has promoted independence. America has come a long way from being under the thumb of England or any other country. Yet this emphasis on independence lives on in America's idea of liberty and freedom. To most Americans, being free means they are not controlled by anyone. (Interestingly, the United States has dropped out of the top list of free countries. Increasing regulation and taxation has dropped the U.S. to anywhere from seventeenth to thirtieth in the world.)

But Christian freedom does not mean independence; it means just the opposite. As a Christian, I cannot just hoe my own row. The way I understand the Bible and the way I interpret it is dependent on the Holy Spirit and the brotherhood.

No, Christian freedom is not independence. Ultimately, Christian freedom is derived from the fact that we are not independent. We are not the ones calling the shots. Look at Galatians 5:16-18. "So I say, Walk by the Spirit ..." . It is only as you are living in and being led by the Spirit that you are free. Ultimately, Christian freedom is dependence, and the more dependent you become on the Holy Spirit's leading, the more free you will become.

Everything Is Focused on Myself

Benjamin Franklin furnishes a well-known example of scheming to promote oneself. In his autobiography, he extolled his own efforts and his own achievements. He says that he began with nothing and basically pulled himself up by his own bootstraps.



Walt Whitman is another good example of self-exaltation. He wrote, “I celebrate and sing myself. You can be anything that you want to be.” In this writing, the “I” becomes all important. The American dream embodies the idea that if you set your mind and heart to it, you can be anything you want to be. Everything focuses on “self” and “me.”

Paul makes it clear that *me* is not the focus of Christian freedom. Go again to Galatians 5:13-14. Paul warns us that our freedom—our liberty—is not to be used for our desires and our flesh. Rather, freedom is bound up in love for one’s neighbor and his well-being. **“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”** If you celebrate your Christian freedom because it allows you to do the things that your flesh always wanted to do, be very skeptical. Christian freedom is not, and never will be, a license for us to follow our own carnal and fleshly desires.

True Christian Freedom

We as Christians are certainly thankful for much of the freedom we have in America. I don’t want to seem ungrateful for the tremendous blessing of religious freedom we have—freedom to educate our children, freedom to have jobs and businesses with minimal government interference, freedom from military conscription. I grew up during the Cold War with horror stories of life under communist governments. What a blessing by contrast to have freedom and a somewhat free market economy.

While it is not wrong for us to appreciate these blessings, I have at times fallen into the trap of equating political freedoms with Christian freedom. There are many evangelical Christians, and I would even say Mennonites, who almost equate American freedoms, both political and economic, with Christianity. They are not the same thing.

True Christian freedom can exist even in the most ungodly societies.

Let us look at the qualities of true Christian freedom that grant peace of mind and

heart to the Christian while the pseudo-freedom of the 4th of July celebrations leave one as empty as expended fireworks.

What Christian Freedom Is

Now that we have considered some false ideas of what Christian freedom is, let us look at what Galatians 5 tells us Christian freedom actually is.

Freedom from Tyranny of Laws

In Romans 7, Paul shows us the bondage of trying to gain our salvation by following the Mosaic law. Ina Sue, my wife, and I recently read through Leviticus and Numbers and noted all the requirements for sacrifices, cleansing, and keeping themselves undefiled. I wondered how anyone could possibly keep track of all the different offerings and detailed instructions on each one. If your salvation were based on a perfect following of these commands, what a chore it would have been! Here in Galatians, Paul talks about circumcision as the sign of the law. Yes, I’m sure the rite of circumcision would have been difficult and hard for the Gentile believers, but it was just a symbol of the whole Old Testament ceremonial law with its sacrifices, dietary laws, and cleansings. Who would choose to exchange their freedom for that?



Our right standing with God must come from His work and from His love for us. Jesus gave His life and His blood so that we could be freed from our guilt and our sin. He gave his life so that we not only could be cleared before God but also so that God himself could come and live within us. It is for this freedom that Christ has freed us!

Okay then, you may argue, if Christ has done everything that is needed, why then do we have to obey His commandments? If He has paid the price and given us grace, why do we bother with the rules? Why does the Bible give us so much direction as to how we, as Christians, are to live?

The crux of the matter involves the motivation and the purpose for the law. When we are brought to God by the gift of grace and forgiveness and given the Spirit of God in our hearts, then the law, instead of being a harsh taskmaster, becomes a gentle guide and a map for our steps. Do you see the difference?

Imagine, if you would, being married to a spouse who finds it very hard to communicate. You love your spouse with all your heart but you never know how to please him or her. When you go to make a meal, you can only guess whether he likes green beans or hates them. Can you imagine the frustration of trying to love and to demonstrate your love without knowing what pleases him or her?

Imagine the pagans cutting themselves, leaping about, sacrificing, doing everything in their imagination to placate gods that they can only imagine. Such would be our state without God revealing Himself and His will to us. God's commands are not arbitrary. They reveal His nature and His holiness. They show us what God is like and what God wants us to be like.

Power to Live Holy Lives

Look at Galatians 5:22-26. Here is the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. I asked you earlier to sometime consider one of Paul's letters and all the commandments that are contained in just one letter. Now I ask you to also consider how many of Paul's commands are contained within these fruits of the Spirit.

What did Jesus mean when He taught His disciples He was coming to earth, not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it? Jesus came to fulfill the law in our lives here and now. We know that when we try to do all the right things in ourselves, we find only frustration. But when we allow Him to rule us through His Spirit in our hearts, then His Spirit will work in our hearts, in our lives, and

in our actions to fulfill the law. We can be loving, kind, good, faithful, self-controlled, and even more. The Spirit's power truly frees us from the slavery of sin and death.

The Ability to Serve Others in Love

We pointed out earlier how our Christian freedom should never be an opportunity to satisfy our own flesh. Let us look back at that same part of our passage, Galatians 5:13-14. Here is how we are to use our freedom; it is to serve one another in love.

Is serving others freedom? Here is a big jump from the world's freedom to the freedom that Christ offers. The world tells us that we deserve this new car, this handbag, the trip to the Bahamas. You work hard, you get the vacation. In contrast, Paul writes that our freedom is actually tied in some way to our love and service for others.

If we are truly going to fulfill the law, we cannot just avoid it; we cannot say it does not apply to us. Somehow we must move past it. Love, Paul says, is the answer because the whole law can be encapsulated in this one word, "love." As we practice true love for our spouse, adultery will not be a problem. We would never steal from a brother we love. Why covet something our brother has when love makes us want only the best for him. All of the commands in the Bible on how to relate to each other can be contained in this one word, "love." And love, remember, is a fruit of the Spirit.

But you may ask, "What about the laws relating to God, like keeping the Lord's day, and having no other gods?"

If you remember Jesus' teaching, you will remember that love is also the fulfilling of our relationship to God which brings me to the ultimate aspect of our Christian freedom.

*Love,
Joy, Peace,
Forbearance,
Kindness, Goodness,
Faithfulness, Gentleness,
Self-Control*



The Restoration of Our Created Role

Think back to the Garden of Eden. Remember Adam and Eve walking and talking with God in the Garden? God created man to love Him, to fellowship with Him, to bring Him glory. For our earliest parents, this was their experience. Life was not without rules. For them, one rule was not to eat of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil.” I often wonder what it would have been like for Adam and Eve to live in a perfect world with full communion and fellowship with their Creator. We are all created with this purpose. Yet since the fall we all are fallen; we are twisted, corrupted by sin, and incapable of relating to God.

The very freedom that our world lifts up as an ideal becomes, instead, a path into bondage. The world lifts up the one who lives by his own rules, who doesn’t let rules and expectations bind him. But in America, a false notion of freedom is exalted. At the same time, it is also an era of increasing addiction to alcohol, drugs, pornography, sex, and a general lack of self-control. With greed and materialism, whatever one has is never enough. There is thus a bondage to things, a kind of incapacity to live without endless things and creature comforts. Therefore, we also see increasing bondage to credit, both personally and nationally. We simply “cannot” stop our runaway spending. American society continues to hold up this “free-thinking” as an ideal.

Yet this freedom to follow our own desires and to make our own choices ends up for each of us in making us less free, and more addicted. While we may not be addicted to drugs as so many modern celebrities are without help we will all be addicted to sin—enslaved. James 1:14-15 makes it clear. “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own lusts and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived it brings forth sin, and sin when it is finished brings forth death.” Ever since

the fall, this has been the progression of our “freedom.”

The entire story of the Bible is the story of how God is restoring His people to that original perfect state, of redeeming and remaking us again into men and women who are free and able to love and worship God. That process is not complete. We still are in that process. Most of you know that we still struggle with our flesh; we must still crucify the old man daily. But while we recognize that there is an aspect of redemption and restoration that is ongoing, we already are given the privilege and blessing of being able to relate to God.

When Paul wrote, “It is for freedom that you have been freed” (**Galatians 5:1**), I believe he spoke to the restoration of true freedom in the lives of blood-washed saints.

It is for freedom that Christ has saved us. As this country celebrates its pseudo-freedom, let us appreciate the measure of political and religious freedom that we enjoy, but let us also remember that we have so much more to celebrate. Our freedom is a true freedom—freeing us for holiness, for service to our fellowman, and ultimately for that relationship to God for which we were created.

M. S. | South Carolina

Question for AV23 “Round Table”:

Why do you think being part of a church where one is held accountable for one’s actions and commitments is not living in bondage?

Once I was bound by sin's galling fetters;
Chained like a slave, I struggled in vain.

But I received a glorious freedom
When Jesus broke my fetters in twain.

Freedom from all the carnal affections;
Freedom from envy, hatred, and strife;
Freedom from vain and worldly ambitions;
Freedom from all that saddened my life!

Freedom from pride and all sinful follies;
Freedom from love and glitter of gold;
Freedom from evil temper and anger;
Glorious freedom, rapture untold!

Freedom from fear with all of its torments;
Freedom from care with all of its pain;
Freedom in Christ, my blessed Redeemer—
He who has rent my fetters in twain.

Chorus:

Glorious freedom! Wonderful freedom!
No more in chains of sin I repine!
Jesus the glorious Emancipator—
Now and forever He shall be mine.

Haldor Lillenas



Kicked Out and Adopted In

by Abram Neufeld

Introduction:

While traveling through Mexico, God directed Doris and I to stop for pizza in Jagueyes. At the same hour, God directed Abram Neufeld to stop by and make our acquaintance. Abram invited us to visit their family. A week later, we did visit their godly home. They willingly agreed to share the story of their lives with Anabaptist Voice readers.

—AV Editor

“The Scriptures say, ‘God commanded light to shine in the dark.’ Now God is shining in our hearts to let you know that His glory is seen in Jesus Christ.”

— II Corinthians 4:6 (CEV)



Abram Neufeld at a young age

Greetings in Jesus' name. May God be praised for His goodness! I am so thankful for the way in which He brought me out of darkness into His marvellous light.

My journey in life began in the state of Chihuahua, Mexico, just a few hours south of the US

border. I was born to an Old Colony Mennonite couple in Cuauhtémoc in 1985. Many from my background have no understanding of a personal relationship with God. With God seeming so distant and teaching being given in High German (not Plautdietsch, the language they speak in day-to-day life), many are in darkness as to what the Bible really teaches. Consequently, there are troubled marriages, addictions and so forth. My parents' upbringing and youth life had been full of drinking and immorality. Being used to such a life, these problems were brought into their marriage. With time, my dad became an alcoholic. When I was two, my mom left dad and moved to Canada with her parents.

During this time without dad, I would sing a little song, “Daddy Isn’t Coming Home Any More.” My dad stayed in Mexico for some time after mom left, but

he later came to Canada too. Just because they were together again did not mean the issues were resolved. The marriage continued to be rough, especially because of dad’s drinking. They lived together again until I was 14.

In my early teen years my parents had started partying together regularly with another couple. At this point, mom had started drinking with dad and they had all-night parties with this other couple. It was a challenging time for me. Our home life was a mess. I would stay up late and listen to their conversations and the fights and arguments tore me apart.

As Old Colony churchgoers, I was brought up thinking we were God’s people, but we did not have the assurance of salvation. We were taught not to read the Bible too much or we would be accountable for more. So without God and without being able to share with others, we went through some very hard times. When I was 14, my mom left my dad for the man they had been partying with as couples previously. My relationship with my mom had been closer than with my dad until this time; when she left, my world was shattered. At that time we began to share with others everything that had been happening in our home. Dad tried to convince us that he was better and that we could trust him. I wasn’t convinced as I continued to observe his life. He would leave us at night when he thought we were sleeping. I knew where he was heading. His phone calls gave it away. After a time, my mom returned home. They tried to patch things up, but the relationship was never the same. For the next several years it was a cycle of living together for a time, separating, and getting back together, over and over.

I started hanging out with friends and began drinking and dating. There was a need in my life for someone who I could love and be loved by. I went to parties and got drunk, dating one girl after another. Oh that I hadn’t done these things! I sincerely regret the life I lived. I was taught at home that the youth years were your time for sowing wild oats so you wouldn’t do those things later.

At age 17, I met a girl at a party. We ended up dating for about a year. Although during this relationship I didn't really party, I still lived in great sin. This girl did invite me to church. I would on occasion say "yes" and go. Once we went to some tent meetings and the gospel was clearly preached. But that did not stop the sin in my life.

The elders from that church talked with us and I argued against what they believed. Over the years I had accepted various teachings of men to combat what the Word of God says. These people preached believer's baptism. This really bothered me. I'd say, "Those that do these things are lost." Then I used human reasoning to show why I thought these things were NOT wrong.

Despite the warning from the church elders, this girl and I continued dating.

During this time, I came home one night and decided not to say my traditional evening prayer. As I dozed off, I had a vision of hell fire. It felt like flames were closing in around me. I awoke with a scream and quickly got on my knees to pray. But nothing changed.

After almost exactly a year, the relationship with this girl ended. It seemed that neither she nor I wanted to live for God. Eventually she married someone else. After we broke up, I felt very alone in the world. I was a heartbroken, lost sinner.

I began to go to parties again and live a wicked life. Several months of this went by. I would go to a party, drink, come home, and weep. I grew tired of this life of sin. On March 22, 2004, while at work, the Lord drew me to Himself and I yielded.

The weekends prior to this I had been under much conviction. When I surrendered to the Lord, I was in a greenhouse literally counting bugs (doing what is called bio-control). Finally, that day in the greenhouse I said, "From now on I am going to follow You." The pressure was gone. The sin was dealt with and washed away. God gave me a new life.

God called me to a different life. Everything changed. When I chose to follow Him, joy came over me and He filled me with peace and love. God is so good. To this day I am amazed what He did in my life. Thank you Jesus!

A. N. | *Jagueyes, Mexico*



Seek and Find

by Elisabeth Neufeld

"Ask and it will be given to you."

– Matthew 7:7

I was born in June 1985 in Michigan, almost 2,000 miles away from where Abram had been born in Mexico a few weeks earlier.

My ancestry is Irish/Scottish. I am from a non-plain background with everything from Catholic to Charismatic to Baptist influences. Both of my grandpas had served in the army and there was a strong element of patriotism in my family.

I grew up with the Bible, but it had very little practical application to our daily lives. My dad had studied to be a priest before becoming disillusioned with the Catholic Church.

Dad left the Catholic system for Charismatic circles in the 1970s. There he met and married my mother. They did the best they knew to raise us and there are many things I am grateful for in my upbringing. We had the Bible and amid all the confusion it was a beacon of light and truth for me through the years to show me the way to God.

We had challenges in our home because of knowing, yet not obeying, the Scriptures. Nearly all my relatives would have said they were Christians of one sort or another. I used to wonder why we say we are Christians and yet our lives were not much different from the rest of the world who did not profess faith in God. When I was growing up, I witnessed a lot of strife between my parents. Questions filled my mind. I wondered, why cannot the faith we have make a difference in our home?

People around us also had troubled marriages, and for all the profession that my parents had of faith in God, it did not bring them any peace in their relationship. Profession without possession of Christ in one's life is a miserable existence. There were fights about money, beliefs, and many other things. There were times the police were out at our home and I would wonder, if my parents split up, who is going to keep me?



Elisabeth Neufeld at age 16

I am the oldest and I have a sister and brother who were born later. Growing up I wondered many things. Was there a church anywhere that didn't just talk about Bible stories and pray sinners' prayers to get what was called "fire insurance" from hell? Were there people out there whose faith changed their lives, people who actually lived the Word of God instead of explaining it away? If there were true Christians out there, I wanted to find them. As a young teenager I began to read the Bible in earnest.

I was surprised at what I found. I read through the New Testament with an open heart. Prior to this, I had been taught that a number of books in the New Testament were not for us, such as Matthew, Hebrews, and James. I learned many things that Jesus taught—loving our enemies, His kingdom not being of this world, His teachings on the permanence of marriage, and about abiding in Christ versus eternal security. All of this was counter to what I had heard in the Baptist church.

At age 15, I came across the teaching on the covering in I Corinthians 11. Since I wanted to obey the Bible, I began wearing a covering. Before I did this, I asked my dad what he thought about wearing a covering. Dad did not think it was necessary, but he figured I was a teenager who was trying to find herself and that I'd outgrow this stage. Dad said, "I know there are some people out there like nuns and Muslims and Amish that think they have to do this, but if you want to wear a veiling, you may."

The next Sunday, the pastor of the church we had been members of for many years called me into his office. He told me, "I will not have someone wearing that rag in my church." That was God's way of moving

me on to another church, but it was very hard at the time.

Dad had stopped attending church many years before, but after this happened, we as a family visited many different kinds of churches. It was quite a journey.

After several years of unsettled church life, we stopped going to any church. Sunday after Sunday we sat at home. During those years I made a lot of changes trying to obey the Scriptures. When I started wearing a covering I wore it with earrings. As I came across where it says, "not with gold or pearls," I threw away my jewelry. I began to learn to sew my own clothes since I couldn't find much in the stores that was modest apparel. The relatives really began to wonder what was happening to me.

A strange thing still puzzled me. With all the changes I was making, I still had this lack of peace with God. I was trying so hard to obey God's Word, and yet it had not occurred to me to wonder if I had ever truly been saved.

I was seeking for truth. My parents had told me they prayed a prayer with me when I was three and had me baptized. I thought I was a Christian. The Spirit of God began to open my eyes to the truth that even though I had been seeking for several years, I had never yet been born again. That was why I didn't have peace with God! I needed Him.

Late one night, after months of struggle about what repentance is, I knelt by my bed and wept and gave God my heart and life. He showed me I was a sinner even though I had been seeking for so long. What I needed was a new heart and my sins washed away by His blood. God put His Spirit within me and helped me

give up my pride. I feared what people would say who thought I had been a Christian all along. The thought came to me clearly that in the judgment no one else could stand up for me and say, "Oh yes, she was saved." If I had been truly converted or not would be between God and me alone. Then it didn't matter to me anymore what people would say. It only mattered that I follow the Lord totally.

E. N. | *Jagueyes, Mexico*



The Neufeld family - September 2020, Los Jagueyes, Mexico

Note: Find out more of the amazing story of how God melded these two hearts together in AV23.

Early Writers Describe Christians

by D. Brattston



Celsus – a Greek philosopher and an opponent of early Christianity. He is known for his literary work, *The True Word*, which survives only through the extensive critique by Origen.

In the second century (between AD 175-177), the pagan writer Celsus compiled an extensive criticism against Christianity, especially against the day-to-day behavior of ordinary Christians, such as refusing to serve in secular government and its army.

Celsus criticized Christian nonresistance: “If all were to do the same as you, there would be nothing to prevent [the emperor] being left in utter solitude and desertion, and the affairs of the earth would fall into the hands of the wildest and most lawless barbarians; and then there would no longer remain among men any of the glory of your religion or of the true wisdom.”¹

Other Christian writers of the period gave reasons Christians should not be involved in government. Thus Celsus’ charges furnish additional evidence that Christians did refuse to enlist or fight in the army.



Origen – a Christian ascetic, scholar, textual critic, and theologian (about AD 184-253). Origen answered Celsus’ charges against Christians when he wrote a comprehensive criticism, *Against Celsus*.

According to the church father Origen in the AD 240s, believers do not leave the government without support and aid. Instead, Origen explained, “Christians constitute a powerful army for the preservation of their secular government through intercessory prayer, piety, and good works; the more anyone excels in piety, the more effective help does he render to kings, even more than is given by soldiers.”²



Tertullian – a prolific Christian writer from the Roman province of Carthage, Africa (about AD 155-220). He boldly taunted the might of the Roman empire, courageously defended oppressed believers, and harshly reprimanded compromising Christians.

Addressing the “rulers of the Roman Empire” in AD 197, Tertullian articulated that Christians uniformly abstained from all aspects of public life. He argued, “As those in whom all ardor in the pursuit of glory and honor is dead, we have no pressing inducement to take part in

your public meetings; nor is there aught more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state. Christian involvement in public affairs would involve us in idolatry and thus deny Christ’s divine lordship.”³

Tertullian cited the example of Jesus Himself. “He exercised no right or power, even over His own followers to whom He discharged menial ministry. Though conscious of His own kingdom, Christ shrank back from being made a king. In the fullest manner He gave His own example by turning coldly from all the pride and garb as well as dignity and power. ... Therefore what He was unwilling to accept, He has rejected; what He rejected, He has condemned; what He condemned, He has counted as part of the devil’s pomp... . Therefore we are not only alien to all the powers and dignities of this world, but also enemies of God.”⁴

A manual of Christian life, *The Didascalia*, was produced in Syria at the time the writing ministries of Tertullian and Origen overlapped. The manual ranks among the worst of sinners “Roman officials, who are defiled with wars and have shed innocent blood without trial,” “dishonest tax-collectors,” and “soldiers who act lawlessly.”



Hippolytus of Rome – In AD 217, Bishop Hippolytus in Italy compiled a church manual similar to the *Didascalia*. It excluded many categories of secular office-bearers from the church. The first were public officials involved in gladiator shows⁵—naturally enough, because such events involved putting to death for public entertainment people who had committed no crime.

Hippolytus also excluded the following from candidates for baptism:

1. A military man in authority who executes men.
2. A candidate for baptism must not take a military oath.
3. If someone is a military governor, or the ruler of a city who wears the purple, he shall withdraw or he shall be rejected as a candidate for baptism.
4. The applicant for baptism or faithful one who wants to become a soldier is to be rejected, for he has despised God.⁶

D. W. T. B. | Nova Scotia, Canada

¹ *Against Celsus* 8.68.

² *Against Celsus* 8.73.

³ *Tertullian, Apologeticum* 38.

⁴ *Tertullian, On Idolatry* 18.

⁵ *Hippolytus, Apostolic Tradition* 16.7.

⁶ *Apostolic Tradition* 16.9–11.

Bribed

by Trent Loos

Introduction: *Anabaptist Voice* has repeatedly mentioned the danger of Christians taking direct government payments. Here is the perspective of a sixth-generation Nebraska farmer and his insights into what subsidies are doing to the country. His appeal to the individual is, “Wake Up!”



When the opportunity presented itself in 2012 to speak in Dublin, Ireland, I thought that would be a good deal. Little did I

know that it would be the one trip of my life that has had the longest tentacle.

The trip to Ireland created in me a tremendous awareness of the European thought process and how ideas created in that cubicle were driving farm policy.

As I visited farmers in Ireland, I would see construction ideas or certain fencing or even how land was being utilized and ask, “Why did you do that?” The answer was always the same, “If I didn’t, I wouldn’t get my check.”

Yes, a huge chunk of the EU (European Union) farm policy is driven by how to get a subsidy check. Building a feedlot, or even just farming, requires a certain number of trees or hedgerows and if you don’t comply, you don’t get your payment. I will not go into great detail about that because that is not the moral of this story, but rather I want to point out what I witnessed that affected my thought process.

I am starting to see a rapid progression of the same exact process happening right here at home. I realize we have had some level of that for quite some time. How many times have you been told that you cannot lease soybean stubble to graze your cows because it would mess up your Farm Service Agency or Natural Resources Conservation Service plan?

I first heard about the impact as I was told that towns like Emporia, Kansas, have so much CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) money they had to find places to spend it. In the process, all farmers and landowners in Lyon County have been put on notice that the community needed some of the farmland for town folks to walk on for a wilderness trail.

Jay Truitt, who has been a lobbyist in D.C. for nearly 30 years, shares the breakdown of the latest \$1.9 trillion COVID stimulus package. It has been widely reported

that only 9% of those funds will actually find its way to the hands of the taxpaying citizens. But 75% of the monies will go to states and other government agencies likely to create problems, especially for farmers and landowners. This is a government creation to create more government.

In the past week I have been shocked at the number of friends and people who I have personally talked to who tell me they got a nice Paycheck Protection Program deposit. If the money keeps coming, “why fight them?” I even talked to western federal lands ranchers who tell me they have been getting such big checks they have stopped fighting for property rights because it isn’t as important as it used to be.

People, wake up! We are being bribed into socialism. Control of your life is coming at you harder than ever right now and it’s not coming like we expected. We are being poisoned with sweet rewards that take away the **sting of reality**. We are getting a direct deposit of socialism and nobody seems to be turning it away. Is spending that free money worth sacrificing the future of your children and grandchildren?

A reprint from the March 15, 2021
High Plains Journal
“A Check for the American Dream”
by Trent Loos
Used by permission

Questions for the AV23 “Round Table Discussion.”

1. *What Scriptures might apply to taking direct government payments?*
2. *How do direct payments affect your school, church, and personal life?*
3. *How do government payments affect your business?*
4. *What consequences do you foresee for the issuing of trillions of dollars of bogus money?*

*Remember the Monkey trap
where the monkey is caught
because he will not let go of
the fruit in the box.*

The Promise

by Menno Knight

“This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.”

– Acts 1:11

Jesus, over a period of 40 days after His suffering, appeared to His disciples and offered many convincing proofs that He was alive. He gave them instructions by the Holy Spirit and taught them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

Jesus led His disciples out near Bethany where they must have sensed that something very special was about to take place. They gathered around Him and asked a question very close to their hearts, *“Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”* Jesus parried the question and, instead, gave them assurance of coming power when the Holy Spirit would come upon them.

A Promised Return

Then Jesus lifted up His hands and blessed them. While He was blessing them, He was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid Him from their sight. In amazement, the apostles He had chosen stood staring up into the sky, wondering what would happen next. Would an all-powerful King Jesus, wearing a crown and holding a golden scepter, soon drop through the cloud with 72,000 angels to reignite the glorious reign of King David? With such power He would surely drive off the Romans. And what positions of prominence and glory in His kingdom would they enjoy?

But while they stood there imagining what a glorious kingdom on earth would be like, two men in white stood beside them. “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven,” they promised, “will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”

The ascension marked the culmination of Christ’s first coming to the earth. The promise of the two men dressed in white did not refer to some distant event whereby earthly death would be averted and Christ’s glorious kingdom would at last be installed to reign on the earth. No, the promise meant the time when Jesus would return for each of the apostles and take them directly into His presence.

Holding that promise firmly in their hearts, the

apostles returned to Jerusalem with great joy. There is no reason to think that Jesus did not keep that promise to each of His apostles when he returned for them at their death. After all, He had promised them, **“I am going to heaven to prepare a place for you. I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am” (John 14:3).**

Stephen, at his own stoning, certainly saw the Lord welcoming him into His immediate presence. He said, **“Look, I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 7:56).**

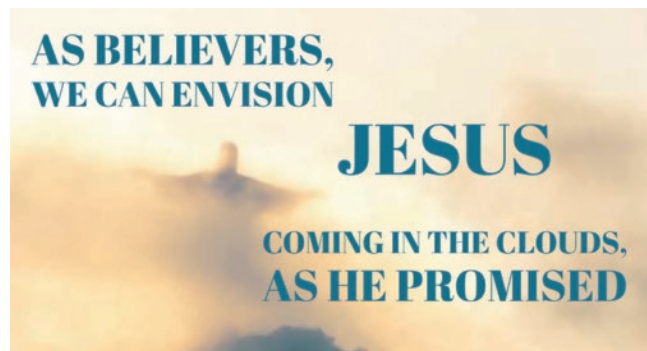
The apostle Paul expected that at his death he would be welcomed into the presence of the Lord. He wrote, **“I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is necessary for you that I remain in the body” (Philippians 1:23).**

Jesus said to the thief on the cross, **“Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).**

The Promise Clarified

When Jesus told the story of the rich man in the torments of hell and Lazarus in the bosom of Abraham (Luke 16:19-31), He did not picture this as taking place in the distant future. Luke 16:22 pictures the rewards and the punishments as taking place immediately at death **“So it was that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels to Abraham’s bosom. The rich man also died and was buried.”** The rewards and the punishments both depended on how they had conducted their life on earth. And there was a great gulf fixed between the two places that no one could cross.

Four times in the New Testament, Jesus plainly said that all of the things prophesied would be witnessed by some of those then living. In Matthew 23, Jesus foretold the terrible judgment to come upon Jerusalem because of the wickedness of those who murdered the prophets and would still commit more atrocities against God’s



people (including His own death). Jesus did not leave the timing of this punishment to some unknown time in the distant future. He said, **“Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation” (Matthew 23:36).**

In Luke 11:37, after a scathing denunciation of the Pharisees, scribes, and lawyers, Jesus declared, **“I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they will kill and persecute, that the blood of all the prophets which was shed from the foundation of the world may be required of this generation. ... Yes, I say to you, it shall be required of this generation” (Luke 11:50-51).** “Of this generation” cannot be construed to mean some future generation. It meant to the people who were then living.

In Matthew 16:27-28 Jesus spoke specifically about what His kingdom would be like and when it would come. **“For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to His works. Assuredly, I say to you, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.”** Jesus said when He comes He will reward “each man according to his works.”

This statement plainly says that some of those present would still be living when Jesus would inaugurate the beginning of His kingdom. In His kingdom each person would be rewarded according to his works. Luke 9:27 also says, **“some standing here shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God.”** That was a promise clarified.

In Matthew 24:3, Jesus’ disciples asked Him three related questions: **“When will these things be? What will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?”** Jesus’ answers have often been divided up in such a way as to classify some of them as unfulfilled prophecy that is yet to occur in our day. Some teaching would apply parts of this chapter to events that would precede a spectacular second coming of Christ—great

tribulation, evil increasing, antichrists, wars. Such events have happened numerous times in the 2000 years since Jesus uttered this prophesy, but that is not what He meant.

The year when Jesus foretold these things was between AD 30-33. In AD 70, the Roman general, Titus, destroyed the city of Jerusalem. This triumph was memorialized by the Arch of Titus in Rome; it still stands today. At least some of the things foretold in this chapter clearly refer to the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus even quoted the prophet Daniel as referring to events that fit what happened at this time (Matthew 24:15).

Jesus did not leave His disciples in doubt as to what He meant by some of the figurative language. In Matthew 24:34 he said, **“Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things are fulfilled.”** Jesus would not have said “all” if He meant only some of His response to the disciples’ questions. He would not have said *“this generation”* if He meant fifty generations later.

Neither would Jesus have told His disciples the parable of the fig tree if He meant that these happenings were to be 2,000 years later. **“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near” (Matthew 24:32).** The point of the parable was that the events He foretold were close at hand; at least some of those listening to Him would live to see them take place.

At His trial, Jesus told the high priest Caiaphas, **“I say to all of you: from now on you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:64 NIV).** The high priest and all those standing there were going to see Jesus coming in the clouds and sitting at the right hand of God. This began immediately after Jesus’ ascension when each of those standing there died.

*“Blessed is the one
who keeps the words
of the prophecy
written in this scroll”
—Revelation 22:7 NIV*

We should not discard the straightforward meaning of Jesus' teaching—*this generation and those standing here and the time is near*—in favor of speculative interpretations that are not clear—the sun will be darkened ... and the stars will fall from heaven Thus, we can determine with confidence that all the events foretold in Matthew 24:1-35 had been fulfilled by the time that generation had all died.

Thinking Soberly About Death

Jesus had more to say about a future event of importance to everyone, not only to those who heard Him at that time, but to everyone since who believes in Him.

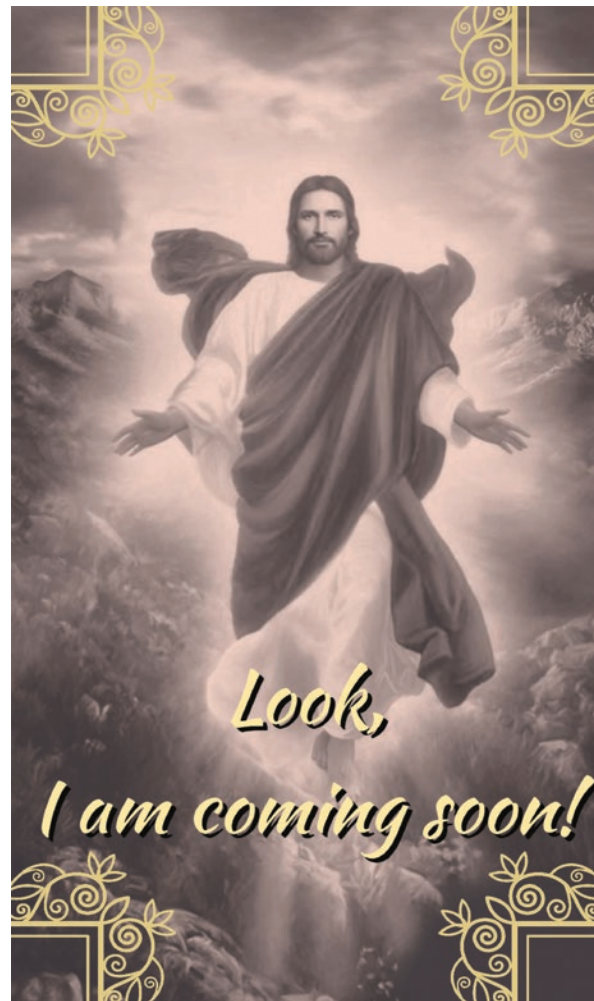
After ending His response to the disciples' questions, Jesus goes on in a long discourse (Matthew 24:36 to 25:46). He did not speak about the importance of the signs of the end times one should watch for, but on the importance of always being ready. The parables of the unfaithful servant, the ten virgins, the talents—all had one primary message. **"Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming" (Matthew 25:13).**

This admonition agrees with all the New Testament teaching in regards to Christ's second coming, "watch and be sober." I Thessalonians 5:5-6 states it well: **"You are all sons of light and sons of the day. We are not of the night nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober."**

Everywhere, the admonition to be living a righteous and holy life fits the text. In every text the message is that one must have his life under the blood of Jesus before he dies. At the point of death, one's eternal destiny is already sealed; one's name must be written in the Lamb's Book of Life if he is to enter into the actual presence of the eternal God (Revelation 21:27).

Another sober observation we can make about the second coming conveys a shortness of breath, a sense of closeness about the Lord's return. Truly, in James' words and in God's timetable, **"our life appears as a mist for a little while and then vanishes" (James 4:14).** Our life on earth is very short.

We ought also to think soberly about the warning given to the Thessalonians. **"You turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers from the wrath to come" (I Thessalonians 1:9-10).**



Lastly, there should be a sense of anticipation when thinking of Christ's promise to return. Paul writes in Romans 8:23-25 about **"eagerly waiting for the redemption of our body. ... If we hope for what we do not see, then we eagerly wait for it with perseverance."** We look forward to the redemption of our imperfect mortal bodies that are subject to aging and decay. No matter how tired we become of the sin and suffering we endure, we can hope for deliverance when we receive a new body. **"That's how it will be when our bodies are raised to life. These bodies will die, but the bodies that are raised will live forever" (I Corinthians 15:42 CEV).** In this new body, we will not experience death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain,

for the former things have passed away. He who sat on the throne said, **"Behold, I make all things new" (Revelation 21:5).**

As believers, we can envision Jesus coming in the clouds, as He promised, to welcome us into the eternal presence of God. May we never lay aside that hope within us.

Books Worth Reading

“Whatever things are true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report; think on these things...”

(Philippians 4:8).

Last week I received a call from a 25-year-old Amish man. “The Amish are not reading enough,” he declared. Now he is setting out to promote good books among the Amish.

The young man had it right. But the Amish are not the only ones who do not read as much as they ought. Busyness with work, hobbies, games, screen time, travel, church meetings, and vacations steal away hours from many people, and consequently they lack the time to read the Bible and good solid books.

Christian Light Publications, TGS International, Pathway Publishers, Sermon on the Mount Publishing, and Plough Publishing are some of those with extensive catalogs of books that may be of special interest to Anabaptist readers.

Anabaptist Voice took on the audacious task of building a list of challenging books that more Anabaptists and their young people ought to be reading.



Brother Chester Weaver started it off with a list of books for young boys. A sister asked if I had read all the books on the list and then proceeded to give a super-short evaluation of each book. Elijah Gray wrote a book report for *One Man's Wilderness*. Brother Chester Weaver has added three books to the list. But in short, the idea has not caught fire.

Now we want to change our focus. What book beside the Bible excited and inspired you? Write a short review (350 words) and tell why many Anabaptists ought to read the book.

Meanwhile, here is Brother Chester's list of books he suggests boys ought to be reading. Brother Chester adds this comment: “Who will do solid thinking tomorrow if a whole list of solid books have not been digested by the time a young man (or woman) comes of age? Addictive electronic games, social media, and entertainment movies are no preparation for the future.”

Appropriate for ages 12 - 16

1. *Coals of Fire* by Elizabeth H. Bauman
2. *Light from Heaven* by Christmas Carol Kauffman
3. *The Hiding Place* by Corrie ten Boom
4. *Gifted Hands* by Ben Carson
5. *Little Britches* by Ralph Moody
6. *Where the Red Fern Grows* by Wilson Rawls
7. *The Yearling* by Marjorie K. Rawlings
8. *Black Like Me* by John Howard Griffin
9. *Stories from the Old Squire* by C. A. Stephens

Appropriate for ages 16 - 20

10. *His Name Was John* by Barbara Coffman
11. *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne
12. *The Insanity of God* by Nik Ripkin
13. *Ben Hur* by Lew Wallace
14. *The Robe* by Lloyd Douglas
15. *How We Got to Now* by Steven Johnson
16. *The Labyrinth of the World and the Paradise of the Heart* by John Amos Comenius
17. *The Holy War* by John Bunyan
– A simplified version, *The Story of Mansoul*.
18. *Footprints* by Deborah Beachy
19. *Rascal* by Sterling North. (ages 12-16)

A reading sister's evaluation:

1. Good
2. Good
3. Good
4. Good
5. Good
6. Good
7. Bought but haven't read yet
8. Still reading but wouldn't give to my boy until 25 (if then!)
9. Haven't read
10. Haven't read
11. Read long ago. Don't know.
12. Good
13. & 14. Haven't read. I don't like to mix a lot of ideas with what is actually in the Bible.
15. Good (with strong evolutionary overtones)
16. Haven't read

Numbers 16 and 17 are classical allegories which every young man (ages 16-20 ought to read)



Round Table Discussion

by AV Readers

The following pages are meant to encourage interaction between Anabaptist Voice and our readers. If you have questions or thoughts and would like to hear a response from AV, this section is for you. Write to us.

– AV Editor

Morbid Reality

I enjoyed the article, “When Kingdoms Clash” by Mike Atnip in AV21. The account of Timo Miller’s experience and the ensuing conversation on social media (referred to as a modern-day Mars Hill) should reveal to us the trend American society is following.

After reading the article, I was contemplating the account. My thoughts took on a sinister note when I considered the much-too-true accounts of child molestation cases within groups under the Anabaptist umbrella. This paints a picture of inconsistency that hinders witness efforts such as Atnip’s on social media; these will be regarded with ridicule and give reason to “ROFLOL”! We cannot expect to curry sympathy or leniency from society, or from the courts, when there are such cases among our own groups.

I support Atnip’s “Mars Hill” efforts but lament morbid reality.

AV Editor:

A charge of sexual molestation by one’s enemies cannot be equated with the actual practice of such sin among Anabaptist people. As Mike makes clear, known sexual sin is usually not tolerated among us and is most often dealt with by excommunication. We ought to make no attempt to shield sexual sinners from exposure and the judgment of the church (I Corinthians 5:1-5). Where cases are unknown or known and tolerated, it is certain that God’s wrath will be poured out on the perpetrators; they will not get to heaven. Victims or accomplices of sexual sins should make every effort to see that sinful practices are confessed and stopped; they should not stop crying out if rebuffed or ignored at the first complaint. Repentance, forgiveness, and restoration is available to all.

God will deal with unrepentant sinners who have not confessed their sins on earth. Nevertheless, sinful practices by professing Anabaptists are an embarrassment to the people of God and discredit the purity of the church. But that does not affect the standard of holiness God requires of His people, nor do sinful practices among some confessing Anabaptists incriminate those who are living by God’s standard.

The early Anabaptists had to deal with charges by their enemies of common sex among them. That did not make the charges true. Also, the embarrassment of the Anabaptist Münsterites who did have sinful sexual practices and used violence caused much confusion in the eyes of the onlookers about the holiness and purity of the peaceful Anabaptists.

Let us not fall into morbidity over charges of hidden sin among us. That is not God’s standard nor the standard of the true church. Known sin must be dealt with by the church as a group and not hidden away to fester in the souls of the wounded. In that way, the testimony of the church can remain pure before God and the world around us. Charges by enemies do not make them true and we should recognize that. But teaching and preaching God’s standards of holiness can bring conviction of sin into the lives of sinners and they often react with bitter hatred against the people of God. We should understand that fact.



Non-aggressive Resistance

D. H. L. made an excellent point supported by Scripture (AV21, page 36); yet you, the editor, dismissed this with, “Let us not be carried away with technical terms.”

Technical terms help us come to the real meaning of the gospel message. Rejecting technical language reveals a dogmatism that is unwilling to consider any alternative to your assumptions.

AV Editor:

Yes, D. H. L. made a good point. I have lived and practiced that kind of non-aggressive resistance for many years. I did not sue in court. I did not strike back. But I resisted. I like to resist error and injustice. It suits my nature very well.

When I used Jesus' cleansing of the temple as an example of justified resistance, my wife pointed out a simple truth to me, "You are not Jesus."

James 1:20 reads, "For the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God." I am afraid this passive resistance does not work the righteousness of God, either in me or in the aggressor.

I believe God has forgiven my past transgressions where I failed to honor him by my inner and outer non-aggressive resistance. A fine line separates God-honoring non-aggressive resistance and selfish non-aggressive resistance.

Let us seek to practice aggressive love. That means going overboard with kindness to others in all circumstances. Aggressive love is stronger than non-aggressive resistance. But if you do resist aggression, I pray it will be of God and not of man.



Testing the Spirits

Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

— I John 4:1

I would really like to know the truth about the coronavirus and the vaccines, but I do not know who I can trust to tell me the truth.

At this time, I am asking myself some questions: Should I accept a coronavirus vaccine if it is offered to me? What if it is made obligatory by the government? How much of what we hear about the coronavirus vaccine is true? We have been praying that God, through His Holy Spirit, would lead us to the truth in this matter. Jesus told His disciples, *"When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority"* (John 16:13).

I have witnessed that "appropriate recommendations" for the control and treatment of COVID-19 are given and in a relatively short time, those recommendations are shown to be useless or damaging. The leaders and supporters of what were once highly respected voices, namely, the WHO (World Health Organization), CDC (Center for Disease Control), FDA (Federal Drug Administration), NIH (National Institutes of Health), and others have constantly changed their findings and recommendations.

The same God who calls us to love, peace, and submission to authority also calls us to faithfulness with what He has entrusted to us. Faithfulness with both our spiritual and physical lives, careful protection of a blood-purchased communion, faithfulness with the well-being of our wives and children—these are all considerations when coming to a decision about whether or not to accept the coronavirus vaccine.

AV Editor:

The truth about the coronavirus vaccines is that governments have funneled billions of tax dollars to several pharmaceutical companies to develop a suitable vaccine for COVID-19. The vaccines may be effective against COVID-19, but we simply do not know the long-term effects.

We do know that the recommended treatments of masks and isolation and iron lungs have often failed to prevent the spread of the virus or restore health.

On the other hand, treatments such as ivermectin, budesonide, dexamethasone, and hydroxychloroquine have been used to successfully treat COVID-19. Sometimes they are accompanied by an antibiotic. Some reports indicate intravenous treatments of Vitamin C to be successful. One friend says that garlic has been very successful for their community. These drugs have been around for forty to fifty years and have been used to treat millions of people safely and often successfully.

The "formerly respected authorities" on diseases and control have become politically-directed and money-motivated. The Christian should be aware that "science" does not mean being truthful. If a person does not believe in God and a judgment after death, they have no fear of telling lies nor a desire to be honest if it does not suit their agenda. The Scripture says, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom" (Proverbs 9:10).

Do not be deceived by dishonest "scientists" promoting what they are paid to promote about the coronavirus or the vaccines. Your policy of waiting on divine direction in the matter is a good one. There is no need to be stampeded into using a vaccine. Give it time to prove itself harmless with no side effects and at the same time effective in preventing the disease.



Sowers of Seed

I am writing in response to the Round Table Discussion on "Christian Books in the Pentagon"

(AV21, page 33). In the article you made the comment, “Neither do I believe the literature on the book rack in the Pentagon contains any books that say one cannot serve in the military and still be a Christian.”

I would like to report to you that two different translations of the Bible are on display on our Choice Book racks in the Pentagon. It feels to me that when I read stories of people who began to develop convictions about not being able to serve in the military and be a Christian, they were reading the Bible, not some other book that says one cannot serve in the military and still be a Christian.

God has called us to be “Sowers of Seed.” What better privilege than to be able to place Bibles on all of our Choice Book displays and let God take care of the rest.

AV Editor:

Christian book racks with Bibles on them can be a good thing everywhere, including in the Pentagon. The issue under discussion was whether a “Christian” can be in the military, not whether or not it was a good thing to have Bibles in the Pentagon.

People who have read God’s message in the Bible and left the military because they saw the inconsistency and sinfulness of being in the military have been a blessing to all followers of Christ. However, in many cases their decision has also been made with the reinforcement of books and the godly lives of other Christians.

Bibles are available everywhere in America. Owning a Bible or carrying one in battle is no assurance that one is putting it into practice. If God chooses to honor ignorance of His Word or innocence as to what He requires, then we may just as well give up all our teaching and let every man find out the truth by reading the Bible. By the same logic, we can stop printing books and preaching and teaching that one cannot be in the military and be a Christian.

If we say we believe it is sinful to be a part of the military, but others can be part of the military and still be Christians, what other sin should we bother teaching and preaching against?

If living in sin and one’s standing before God, is all a matter of the heart, then we can stop teaching a Christian cannot be in the military.

Otherwise, God will be the judge of our unfaithfulness if we fail to denounce this prominent sin in the world today.



Christians in the Military

I do not salute the flag. I also reject employment requiring an oath of allegiance to the United States.

I have served as an army infantry soldier in Vietnam, having been drafted. I could not avoid service as a conscientious objector because I did not belong to a denomination that registered as pacifist.

If having been in the military condemns people to hell, surely you imply that we lost our salvation. This is quite serious. If this is so, surely this should have been directly taught in the Scriptures; but it is cryptic [mysterious or obscure] enough to be an interpretation instead.

I was in error to accept military duty instead of jail time, but this service is expired.

Jesus sustained me and other Christians through the military. And surely there are Christians in the Pentagon. I am confident that their library of Christian books contains the Gospel of Luke, and the words you quoted from it.

AV Editor:

One does not “lose” his salvation. One may lose out in a relationship with God. But thankfully, as long as one is living on the earth, repentance and forgiveness are available to those who are in the military or have been a part of the military.

It sounds like you have repented of your sin. Like all other sins, murder, lying, stealing, pledging allegiance to national gods, and all other sins of the military are Bible teachings. We do not send anyone to heaven or hell. We simply proclaim God’s message to the people.

I would understand I Corinthians 6:9 as including the actions of the military. “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God?”

This message is not cryptic: “Love your enemies.” The express purpose of the military is to kill and destroy the enemy; it does not matter which country’s soldiers and generals are fighting. Those who do not repent will come under the judgment of God.



Scriptural Church Discipline

I am writing in response to “Evangelical Discipline” (AV21, page 34).

L.E. from Wisconsin calls us to avoid using the bann to settle differences of understanding and application. The AV editor rightly points out that this plea for moderation and humility does not allow us to avoid or neglect church discipline; but, he reminds us, “we dare not use unscriptural methods of church discipline.”

I agree! And let me say up front that I agree that excommunication is sometimes necessary, and the bann can be redemptive and scriptural when the church deals with a fallen brother’s flagrant sins.

Because the Anabaptist movement was born out of a vision to restore a pure church, free from the blatant corruption and vice in the state churches, scriptural church discipline has always taken a high priority. But as I see history, some of the early Anabaptists took a good point and drove it too far. Their imbalance led to a divisive spirit that has plagued the movement ever since, riddling it with many divisions that have often been enforced with a bann.

We admire Menno Simons for how he appealed to Scripture. He and other Dutch Anabaptist leaders were sure they were “scriptural” in their zeal to maintain the purity of the church. What did they do? They excommunicated one another! In fact, they excommunicated and banned whole groups of brethren—entire churches—who disagreed with them. They even banned the far-away Swiss/South German Anabaptists because these faithful brethren who understood redeeming love would not take sides and uphold the rash excommunications of the Dutch Anabaptist leaders!

Did these Dutch leaders appeal to Scripture? Yes. Were they scriptural? I do not think so.

I use these examples from history to show us what can happen when people focus on being scriptural in their exercise of “church discipline.” If we compromise our Christianity (Christ-likeness) to “be scriptural,” or to protect our church purity and policy, we are selling out way too cheaply!

Let’s not do it!

AV Councilor, Ernest Strubhar

I propose that the simple key to “scriptural church discipline” is to learn to know the heart of our blessed Lord Jesus. If in all Scripture we seek to know Him, we can avoid the enemy’s snare of getting us so focused on

some text or principle of Scripture that we become blind to the glorious person of the resurrected Christ.

In His life and example, Christ reveals how we are to treat people who disagree with us, who fail, who come short of our expectations, and even those who rebel against the church.

By Christ’s example He shows us how to harmonize all the Scriptures that deal with church discipline and excommunication.

I cannot see any example in Christ’s life that could have led the Dutch Anabaptist leaders to their view of church discipline and excommunication. Jesus not only tells us to love one another, He teaches us how to love. He washed the betrayer’s feet (John 13:26). He let Judas kiss Him in the Garden (Matthew 26:49). He declared that one who is not against us is on our side (Luke 9:49:50). He told His disciples that they lead by serving others, and not by lording it over them (Luke 22:24-28).

In none of these examples would the use of the bann exhibit a Christ-like spirit.

However, in I Corinthians 5, Paul writes about flagrant sins that call for not eating with those put out of the church—fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railing, drunkenness, extortion. Paul says, “Deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved” (verse 5), and “do it so the sin leaven does not destroy the church” (verse 7). This defines the scriptural use of the bann.

Paul specifically mentions that he means not associating with any sinful brother or sister who has been turned over to Satan (verse 11). He does not mean to not associate with open sinners who have no connection with the church. God will judge them (verses 12-13).

I Corinthians 5 does not tell us how long the bann on the social relationship should apply. Many believe that it should be until the offender repents; perhaps so. But I weigh Jesus’ example into this question and I wonder if the bann has a redemptive purpose after the line between the church and the offender is clear.

Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18 also gives direction as to how to treat sinners who have been dealt with by the church. Jesus said to treat those who do not hear the church as the “heathen and tax collectors” (Matthew 18:17). How did He treat the heathen and tax collectors? “When the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, ‘How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of

a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance' " (Mark 2:16-17).

Our dealings with sinners, whether those outside the church or those who have been put out, should always reveal that we have this "Jesus heart."



Military Christians

I have read the ongoing discussion about Christians in the military (AV20, page 30 and AV21, page 33). I agree with I. M. from Ohio that the statement, "A man in a police or soldier's uniform cannot be a follower of Christ" is too judgmental.

Both Dean Taylor's book, *A Change of Allegiance* and Jay Johnson's experience (AV20, page 27) testify that people can be sincere Christians while enlisted in the military.

We can teach and preach against serious sins such as adultery, murder, lying, and idolatry (Revelation 21:8). Those who practice these things and do not repent will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. The Bible is clear on these sins.

However, the Old Testament sanctioned military involvement and the New Testament does not condemn everyone enlisted in the military. Some soldiers may be innocently serving in the military and still be right with God. God will judge the hearts.

AV Editor:

Jesus taught in Matthew 7:21 that God will judge people by what they do and not just what they say. "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." History is full of people who claimed to be doing the will of God while they tortured and murdered Christians. Others fought in great wars, from the Crusades to Vietnam and Syria, while claiming to be doing the will of God. Many, many people who did not actually kill on the front lines knowingly supported the war effort. Maybe those "Christians" had never read their Bibles and no one ever told them that Jesus taught His followers to love their enemies. Yes, God will judge them.

According to Romans 1:18-21, God implanted some knowledge of right and wrong in man when He created Him. And the Scripture says in verses 19 and 20, "What may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has

shown it to them. ... so they are without excuse." Yes, God will judge all men in the military or the police by His standard and not by ours. But God's warning that man should not do evil is inscribed on man's very being, whether it is in Chinese, English, Spanish, or German. No one in the military can claim complete innocence before God.

Both of the brethren you mentioned opened their hearts to God and His Word. Then their commitment to follow Him at whatever cost led them to exit the military. For Jay Johnson, the crucial point was the oath of allegiance to the United States. He realized he could not make that oath and at the same time follow Jesus in the Kingdom of God.

In Jay's personal testimony to his commanding officer, Jay wrote, "I truly believe nonresistance is a commandment of God that is required of all Christians" (AV21, page 27).

Some "Christians" will go to the Old Testament for justification. I would remind you that there were no Christians in the Old Testament. Christ had not yet instituted His peaceable kingdom in the Old Testament.

We live on a training run for low-flying military jets. These awesome thundering jets fascinate me with their maneuvers in the sky. But if those jets were to drop bombs and reign death and terror from the sky, would we believe their pilots and gunners might be Christians? And what about all the people who support them? Can they be Christians? I think it impossible.

I do not relish the task or the danger of teaching that a Christian cannot be in the military, but it is evident that the military and a Christian are kingdoms apart. As soldiers in God's kingdom, we have some responsibility to shout the warning, "You cannot be a faithful servant of God and continue to be in uniform." We might flee from the task as Jonah fled from Nineveh. But if the message is from God, we cannot escape his presence by fleeing to Tarshish.





The Practical Side:

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

— Colossians 3:17

This recurring feature in *Anabaptist Voice* consists of three parts.

1. **Reader Responses**—feedback on previous stories
2. **The Rest of the Story**—what actually happened
3. **New Stories**—situations met by today’s Anabaptists

Here is your chance to help others live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ “right in the corner where they are.” This section is not for some idealistic future kingdom posing theological complicated questions with no good answers—for example, the woman who had seven brothers as husbands (*Matthew 22:24-28*).

Take the time to write *Anabaptist Voice* and share your situations where you faced a difficulty... and failed, or won a victory. As you ponder the situations in these stories and then share your answers and experiences with others, remember the words of Jesus when He told the packed-out house, “**My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s Word and put it into practice**” (**Luke 8:21**).



The Practical Side: Work Boots Required

The Practical Side: Rest of the Story

What really happened in conclusion to stories from previous issues.

Convicted (AV21, page 39)

by James G. Landis



Everything about this straw bale business had not gone according to my desires. I had told the two men we were not ready for pine straw. They were putting it out anyway. I had not counted the bales as was

my custom. And the claim that there were three bales in one was preposterous.

It was getting close to 4:30 p.m. and the longer we deliberated, the later it got. The big talker asked, “Are the banks closed yet?”

“I do not know,” I replied.

“Could you give us some cash?”

“No,” I answered, “I will not do that.” (We do not keep much cash around).

Seeing no pleasant way out of the situation, I made up my mind I was going to give the men a check for the full amount, \$2,123.

“Okay. I need a social security number so I can report this payment on my tax forms at the end of the year,” I said.

They looked at each other. The leader hesitated. The

burly short fellow said, “It doesn’t make any difference. He can have mine.”

Mr. Burly handed me a plastic card similar to a driver’s license, but it was not. It plainly said, “Convict # ... and gave all the pertinent information of where he had been jailed, his SS# and, of course, a picture of his face.

I slowly made my way to the office. The two were at my mercy. One call to the sheriff’s office would end the whole affair. Or I could bargain with the two for a more reasonable settlement.

Was this God testing me? I had been teaching “More than Nonresistance” and the words from Romans 12 came to me: “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ... Repay no one evil for evil. ... Beloved, never avenge yourselves. ... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.”

I wrote out a check for \$2,123 and returned to the two men. “I want to pray with you,” I said. The two men and I gathered in a circle and I laid one hand on one shoulder of each man. We bowed our heads and I prayed that God would bless them.

I do not know what the result will be in the lives of those two men. But I know that what I have done is the way of peace Jesus taught us to follow.

The Old Candy Machine (AV21, page 39)

by Larry M. Dentler



At his brother's suggestion, Larry tried to steal candy from the candy machine. The attempt didn't turn out well. Larry wound up with his fingers caught in the machine. Larry concluded his story with the following comment:

"This became the full extent of Lewie and my criminal careers!"

Many people in similar situations who seem innocent at first continue to do what is questionable or wrong rather than learning a lesson. Larry and Lewie learned a valuable lesson through their failed attempt with the candy machine that has stood them in good stead the rest of their lives.

Learning from our failures and not repeating them applies to many things in life, not only to wrong and

sinful things. A common thread weaves through the lives of many people. They fail in what they attempt to do and then make the same mistake again and again because they are sure they are right. We ought to learn from our mistakes as Larry and Lewie did and change our behavior accordingly.

Larry learned another good lesson from this experience. He says, "I can't help but reflect how gullible I was to do what Lewie suggested. He was my big brother. He's always been my hero. Even though I knew better, I followed his lead."

It is good to have heroes and mentors we can follow and admire. But we should never stub our toe or jump off a cliff because our hero did it first. It is never safe to follow others when they do bad or sinful things. God's standard and a pure conscience before Him must always supersede the actions of others.



God's Paymaster (AV21, page 40)

by Norman Ward



In AV21 Brother Norman Ward introduced us to the story of Frank William Crossley (1839-1897), a dedicated English industrialist who used his wealth and talents to build the kingdom of God.

This man put his faith into practice in a number of ways. For instance, his company refused to supply their products to companies such as breweries, which Frank and his brother William did not approve of.

The "Rest of Frank Crossley's Story" might be enlarged by his obituary published after his death on March 25, 1897.

THE LATE MR. FRANCIS WILLIAM CROSSLEY. We regret to learn of the death, at the age of 57 years, of Mr. Francis William Crossley, who has perhaps been better known for his works of philanthropy even than as the introducer into this country of the gas engine.

He came of a North of Ireland family, and was fortunate in securing entrance as an apprentice into the Armstrong Works at Newcastle; but while still a young

man he went to Manchester, and there, with his brother William, started works as engineers on quite a small scale; but later they bought the home and colonial rights of the Otto gas engine, and since then they have extended their works, and their name is closely associated with the famous German engineer in the development of the oil and gas engine.

Mr. Crossley, however, was not prominent personally in public engineering affairs, but confined himself to works of philanthropy, of which much might be written. As a friend has written: "With growing wealth, new channels of usefulness were continually opened up. There were the large mission-hall at the works at Openshaw now conducted by his brother, Mr. W. J. Crossley; two homes for orphan girls, or those taken from dangerous surroundings, at Altrincham; the large Rescue Home for Women, at Oakhill; innumerable gifts to the Salvation Army, the City Mission, the Boys Refuge, Foreign Missions, and very many other like objects."

Perhaps the step by which Mr. F. W. Crossley became most marked in the public view was his determination, taken many years ago, to live among the poor people.

When he came to this decision he searched carefully for the most needy district in Manchester. This he found in Ancoats, at the time much more neglected than it is today. There was an old music-hall called the Star, which he purchased, and upon the site of it and in the neighboring streets he built his mission-hall and dwelling house, and afterwards the row of houses used as training homes for missionaries. There he and his wife and family have made their home, laboring without sparing themselves for the spiritual, moral, and temporal welfare of the poor people round about.

If you want to learn more about the life of this remarkable man, read:

***The Life of Francis William Crossley* by J. Rendel Harris**

Excerpt: “The basis of his life, and the mightiest force in moulding his character was his intense realisation of his personal relation to Christ who had died for him, and now lived in him.”

***Francis William Crossley* by Herbert Boyd McGonigle**

From the book blurb: “Francis felt that his life was becoming too opulent and that his inward spiritual life ought to be employed in personal efforts amongst the poor. When he came to this decision he searched carefully for the most needy district in Manchester and decided on Ancoats. There was an old music-hall called “Star” and on this and neighboring streets he built his mission hall and dwelling house and training homes for missionaries.”



The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.

Trouble On the Highway

by Leonard Mast



His rigid stance promised little mercy. His hard eyes held mine.

Two hours before, I had received a phone call from my truck driver. A *Federal* (federal police officer) had pulled him over as he was delivering a load of silage. Things were not going well.

The customary practice in our area is to quickly and smoothly hand over some cash as soon as there is initial contact with the officer. If everything is reasonably in order, within minutes a truck driver is back on the road. If there is a glaring problem with paperwork or some large mechanical issue with the truck, a ticket is issued and the truck can be confiscated or locked up, unless a very large bribe is handed over.

As followers of Christ, we have long tried to be very careful about going along with the customary practice. Some brethren who joined our church after growing up in the world have very strong feelings about the need for this. And normally, this carefulness gives a chance to share our testimony and reaps some measure of respect from the officers. Usually, we are given permission to leave without any money changing hands.

But this time was different. Threats hung in the

air. The issue was not coming to a peaceful resolution. Then the *Federal* wanted to talk directly to the truck owner. My driver handed over his phone.

“Listen, you have a problem,” the officer barked. “We’re about to confiscate your truck. We need cooperation.” A pause. Then, “We’re taking all the truck documents and your truck driver’s license. Don’t dare let your driver move the truck without our permission. We’ll be out to your place. Go out to the highway and wait for us to come by. Where shall we meet?”

I quietly gave them the requested information, and they hung up.

A low-grade ache settled into my stomach. This was going to be difficult. Would I lose the truck? Making a living is difficult in the country we live in, and losing the truck, or paying gigantic fines and fees to satisfy some angry officer’s vengeful attitude, would be devastating.

“Lord, help us,” I prayed. “How can I best leave a consistent witness? How can I calm this man’s anger? Can I in some way touch a troubled heart in a way that brings his soul’s need into focus and makes the message of salvation personal and hopefully even appealing to him? Help me to act as a Christian. Keep me from panicking and from doing something I would later regret.”

Going home, I shared the trouble with my wife, and together we prepared for the meeting. I made sure I had some cash in my wallet. I would try to be very careful to not bribe my way out of trouble, but if he demanded cash, would it be right to refuse?

He could have been there in 15 minutes. It took nearly two hours. He was busy pulling people over, and making me wait would be a test. It also gave me more time to pray and think.

As soon as he pulled over where we had agreed to meet, I got out of my vehicle and respectfully greeted him.

“Come over here, and we’ll talk!” he barked. “Look, you’ve got a problem. Your truck papers are not approved by the Federal government.” (True) “The state government approved them 4 years ago.” (True) “That’s a long time ago! I have power to take away your truck right now. I don’t know how you’ll ever get it back, or what it will cost to pay the tow truck, the lockup, and all the money it will take to satisfy everyone else, but that’ll be on you.” (True)

It was also true that the government was at an impasse on what to do about updating paperwork for trucks like mine, and there was little I could do except wait and let them figure out their disagreements.

“What are you going to do?” he continued. “I’m not out to be a troublesome person, but you’ll have to somehow get me on your side. And don’t play the ‘Christian’ thing on me. Quit trying to make me feel like I’m the one with a problem.”

Obviously, the officer knew us already. Obviously, our position was stirring anger within him.

Is wounded pride his issue? Guilt? Greed? Or have we failed and been disrespectful of him?

“Making friends with me is not corruption! It’s what you’ve gotta do. Why do you all always act like you’re right and I’m wrong? It’s your truck. So it’s your problem. I can’t help it the government isn’t allowing you to update your registration. I’ve pulled different ones of you over. I already know what you say, and I’m sick and tired of it! Trying to make me feel ashamed is wrong! If you’re gonna talk about doing things the Christian way, then make sure that when I pull you over, I can’t find even one detail wrong with your paperwork or your truck! That’s the only way to be consistent. But I’ll warn you ahead of time. There isn’t a vehicle on the road that I can’t find something wrong with. So that’ll never work. I’ll respect your efforts to do things properly IF you learn to work with me.”

He was really getting worked up. Anger is a tactic

that is often used to intimidate, but this seemed genuine. He truly was thinking of making an example of us. And the law grants him that power.

“I’m sorry. I’m sorry where we have made you feel like we don’t respect you. A lack of respect is wrong, and while I trust we all want to respect you like the Bible teaches, we make mistakes, and I’m very sorry if that has happened.”

His companion was busy waving semis over as we spoke. Every one of them cooperated quickly, and was on his way within minutes. As one pulled over right beside us, his engine brake blasted in my ears, startling me. I glanced over momentarily.

“Look at me!” the officer yelled. “You’re being disrespectful! Look at me straight in the eyes when I’m talking!”

“I’m sorry” I responded meekly. “I intended no disrespect. The engine brake startled me, but I will try to be more careful.”

“So, how are you going to become my friend? One of these days one of the trucks from this community will be confiscated. And I’m not gonna give a hoot. Y’all deserve troubles.” The diatribe continued. On and on. How would it end?

Twenty minutes later, he was beginning to run out of steam. “Well, you’ve listened to me respectfully. You haven’t argued, and I appreciate that. You don’t have those attitudes against me that I’ve been talking about. You warn your friends that I’m gonna hit hard one of these days, but I’ll make sure it’s one of them, not you. I’ll give you your papers back, and you may tell your driver that he is free to go. Just do things right from now on.”

“Sir, thank you. Thank you for the necessary work you do whenever there is an accident and somebody needs to take charge and tell people what to do in difficult situations. And if you are finished, I have something more.”

A doubtful look flashed across his face, but he waited to see what I would say.

Practical Questions:

1. What is the difference between a bribe and a legitimate payment?
2. How should a Christian show respect to an officer?
3. What are the God-ordained functions of the police?



Upcoming Events

If you know of any meetings or events that would benefit the Kingdom of Christ and are open to attendance by the general Anabaptist community, please let us know so we can continue to feature this section in future issues.

Kingdom Fellowship Weekend

Date: August 20-22, 2021

Registration: Registration is required.

Location: Roxbury Holiness Camp

13763 Cumberland Hwy, Orrstown, PA 17244

Lodging Contact: Marvin Dolly ~ 717.753.0845

Theme: “Life More Abundantly”

“...I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” **John 10:10**

Please prepare your heart by memorizing Romans 8 in the KJV or NKJV—yes, the whole chapter! All those who memorize this chapter will be given an opportunity to recite it together at the Saturday evening service.

More Information: [www.https://kingdomfellowshipweekend.org/events/kingdom-fellowship-weekend-2021](https://kingdomfellowshipweekend.org/events/kingdom-fellowship-weekend-2021)



The messages are planned as follows:

Friday evening

“Mystery of Life” by Philip Hess,
State College, Pennsylvania

Saturday

“Resurrection Life” by Ken Miller,
Stuarts Drafts, Virginia

“Family Life” by Mark Yoder,
Chachagua, Costa Rica

“Adorned with the Beauty of Life” (ladies’ topic)
by Deborah Bercot, *Chambersburg, Pennsylvania*

“A Fruitful Life” (young men’s topic)
by Mark Yoder, *Chachagua, Costa Rica*

“Spreading Life in a Culture of Death”
(panel discussion)

“Helping the Homeless” by Patrick Matthews
“Loving the Fatherless” by Mark Yoder
“Exposing Unethical Vaccines” by Wolfgang Miggiani
“Fighting Addictions” by Frank Reed

Sunday

- “Structure and Life” by Dale Heisey,
Marsella, Costa Rica
- “Beatitudes of Life” by Finny Kuruvilla,
Medford, Massachusetts



Circulation & Financial Statement

Income & Expense Report

April thru June 2021

April 1, 2021 Beginning Balance	\$5,894.17
Income	
Donations	\$3,191.50
Local Support*	\$5,000.00
Total Income	<hr/> \$8,191.50
Beginning Balance + Income	\$14,085.67
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$649.00
Postage	\$3,361.11
Printing	\$5,020.00
Staff Expenses	<hr/> \$692.50
Total Expense	\$9,722.67
June 30, 2021 Ending Balance	\$4,363.00

Circulation Report

June 2021

ISSUE #16 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$10,236.26
Cost Per Copy: \$2.18/ea.

ISSUE #17 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$9,898.99
Cost Per Copy: \$2.04 /ea.

ISSUE #18 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$10,071.62
Cost Per Copy: \$2.08/ea.

ISSUE #19 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,750 | Operating Cost: \$9,734.65
Cost Per Copy: \$2.04/ea.

ISSUE #20 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,850 | Operating Cost: \$9,682.20
Cost Per Copy: \$2.00/ea.

ISSUE #21 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

Print Qty: 4,760 | Operating Cost: \$9,722.67
Cost Per Copy: \$2.05/ea.

**see section "Our Finances" on Page 4 for more info.*



End Matters

With the help of interested brethren we have reduced the number of extra AVs "under the table" by about 100. We still have abundant supplies of AV18s and AV19s. If you can use them in any way—samples to friends, Bible studies, extension, evangelism—we will gladly forward them to you free of charge.

For any who have read Part I of the Jay Johnson story in AV20, but did not get to read Part II in AV21, we have some extra copies of AV21 we can send to you. Do not miss Part II of the exciting Johnson story or any of the other good material in AV21.

I thank the Lord that He has granted me health and energy to put together AV22 and for willing workers who helped make it possible.

Remember! The time is short for each one of us till His second coming! In His service,

James

For You to Ponder

The world commonly accepts "kids" as a valid alternative for "children." Many Christians use the term as well. So how do you like this corruption of Romans 8:16-17?

"The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are 'kids,' and if 'kids,' then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ!"

Anabaptist Voice
5282 Hwy. 56 South
Waynesboro, GA 30830

editor@anabaptistvoice.com

www.anabaptistvoice.com

*“If you really keep the royal law in Scripture,
‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing
right.”*

- James 2:8 (NIV)



The Alps - France