

(The Recovery of the Apostolic) 1. the Rise of Anabaptism

by Dale Heisey

The sermon advocates for a return to apostolic teachings and warns against modeling church practices after existing structures without grounding them in Scripture.

Duration: 1:08:09

Scripture: John 10:27, Acts 2:41, 1 Corinthians 3:11, 1 Peter 1:18, 1 John 4:5-6

Topics: "Following Jesus", "Discipleship"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by mentioning a choice he would have liked to present visually but is unable to due to time constraints. He then describes a scenario where a young Catholic couple, hungry for God's word, seeks guidance on the way of God. The speaker asks a young man to share the message of God's holiness with them. The sermon emphasizes the importance of practicing what Jesus taught and following in his steps. The speaker concludes by inviting the audience to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

Transcript

We pray, Holy Spirit, that you would come upon this assembly this afternoon, and into these few hearts here gathered, reveal Thyself through Thy Word. For Thy Word is truth, and Thy Word is alive, Thy Word is ever living. Thy Word is able to change the heart of a man, to make it like unto Thine own, and form Thine own image within us.

And if others who stand face to face before Thee this day, might we as David ever set the Lord before our eyes, that we might have a perfect model, a perfect example, a perfect life to follow. Dear Father, may our eyes at this moment be removed from man, and may they be fixed upon God. May He not be far from us, but may He be near unto every one of us.

We might this day in His Word behold Him, and hear His voice, and yield ourselves to Him in these moments of time. We thank You for the promise of Thy visitation, the promise of Thy presence. Dear Father, we look to Thee to direct us in the moments to come.

Through our Lord and Savior we pray. Amen. I suppose that all of you have done enough of carpentry work.

You have all done enough of building, or at least you're acquainted with it, to know that a pattern is a very important part of construction, a blueprint, a pattern. I'm aware that there's some people here who do a lot of building, and I am sure that when they receive a blueprint from a building, and having constructed the edifice, the building from that blueprint, and then are called upon to build another building, they do not build the second one by observing the first one. They say, well, the roof looks like it's about such a pinch.

It looks to me as if the walls are so high, and it looks to me like they used so much concrete here in the footer. But no, to the blueprint we return again, and the second structure is modeled not after the first, but after the original design. And so it is that when a person is cutting out stair trusses, or whatever it is, the first pattern is laid out, and now we follow that pattern.

But I don't use the last piece I made to determine how to make the next one, but I go back continually to the original. You understand that. And you know what soon happens if I take the last thing I built, the last thing I made, and use that pattern for the new.

For very, very soon, in a very short time, the thing that I made will be quite removed from that with which I started. But I'm convinced that one of the things we have seen, even in our lifetime, and certainly it's clear throughout the history of the Christian church, is that Whisper Down the Alley has had a good bit to do with church organization and church life. Time after time after time, men have rebuilt a model based upon what they saw already established, and were there once unable to return to apostolic foundations.

And it's not satisfactory to me, this afternoon, to show me right here was a good group of people. Here was a church that did it well. Here's something we appreciated.

Right from my childhood, I remember how it was. I was carried in there. I was baptized there.

I was married there. All the churches drifted. If only we could go back to where I was as a boy.

I want to tell you something. You didn't go back 2,000 years far enough. There needs to be a return to the apostolic position, a return to apostolic vision.

I'd like you to turn in this program, if you will, to the last page. Well, there is somewhat of an outline given here, if we will, of what the brethren who have been responsible for this work would like to achieve for the grace of God. And in that, it has been said that this shall be, to some extent, a study of the history of Anabaptism.

I want to make it very clear at the outstart that what we study in Anabaptism is not an attempt to learn from them how to make a model or build a model in our time. But we look at Anabaptism as a 16th century model of apostolicity. That is, in that period of time, 1525 to 1570, which will be the years we will be confining ourselves to when it comes to Anabaptism, in that period of time, there were those who attempted to return to apostolic doctrine.

They attempted to return to the teaching of Christ and the apostles. All else notwithstanding, anything standing in the way of any structure or organization or potency that had arisen in that interim of time was disregarded, and it was returned to the apostolic position. And I realize with you, and we'll look at that somewhat this afternoon, that there were some mistakes made in their attempt to do that.

And that's why it would be a foolish thing for us to model ourselves today after what they did, although we certainly owe a tremendous debt to their somewhat, shall I say, maintenance of the holy position that we

have fallen heir to today. I am concerned about any position that says, here was a good way to do it, if only we can return there. I have that problem with statements such as this that appeared in a recent and fairly well-known in this area publication, written in the fall of the year, 1981.

Someone was trying to define what they felt as a church group, their responsibilities were in this hour time, and these words appeared across the pulpit and written on papers that carry like this, to carry out the old discipline of Lancaster Conference. I'm here to say that any such attempt is futility. If my purpose is to go back to some group that I feel has done well or has done well for a period of time and feel that I am responsible to maintain what they did, to maintain what they have, then I am repeating the error of the reformers who made that very serious mistake in supposing that God had raised them up for the purpose of preserving a system that they unfortunately thought had fallen.

They considered Catholicism at that time to be a church fallen, and there they are seriously mistaken. Catholicism was not a church fallen. It was not a church at all.

It was Babylon. It was Babylon in the midst of the years. It was Babylon in the midst of the times.

They were wrong to suppose that there was a church there that they could restore at all or could reform or could improve. It was a Babylonian system. I wonder if we understand the difference between reformation and restoration.

We had in our school just a few weeks ago a brother who was teaching us how foolish it would be for a mason to build a stone or brick or block wall, and in the midst of that wall, basically upon the teaching of chapter three in 1 Corinthians, how foolish it would be in the midst of that wall to stick some wood or to stuff in some straw or to put in some hay or some other combustible and very weak material. We know very well what happens. The structure is weakened.

And then they take that straw out of there and that hay out of there and the wood out of there and the sawdust out of that wall, and they get somebody in there to skilfully place bricks in there. I'm telling you this afternoon, it would be utterly foolish if all the while the wall was built upon a pile of sand. But there must be, first of all, we must have this assurance that we're building upon a foundation, a right foundation, and then we can build there.

And so if the wall looks ever so good, but has some straw and some hay in it, to take that out and change it will not make a strong structure if we're not upon the solid foundation of Christ and the apostles. It's why I'm concerned that we do not repeat in our time the errors of those before us who felt responsible to maintain or improve a bit or pull the straw and chaff out of a weak system and put some bricks in there to shore it up and make it stronger rather than returning to apostolic doctrine. And so our emphasis is what to be throughout these six weeks as the Lord would tarry.

We want to return to the Bible position, and we will be using only a few lessons from the Anabaptists to show the challenges they faced in their time. And I'm sure you'll recognize with me quite a parallel to what we're facing today. Chapter three, they say it was Menah Simon's theme text, verse 11, for other foundations can no man lay.

Then that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. How does a person determine if he's building upon that foundation or not? The Bible gives us more help on it, Ephesians chapter two, verses 19 and 20. Now, therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints of the household of God, and are

built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone.

In Acts chapter two, and I think the verse is quoted in the front of your program. I'm not quite sure the brother may have referred to it in his devotional period already this afternoon. I want to read, if I may, verses 41 and 42.

Then they that gladly received his word were baptized. The same day they were added unto them about 3,000 souls. They continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.

I'm particularly concerned about that phrase, continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. Now, would you turn with me to the fourth chapter of 1 John, where there is an interesting phrase here in verse six. Verse five reminds us that there are those people who are of the world.

Therefore, speak they of the world, and the world heareth them. They hear the world, and the world hears them. However, the contrast is in verse six.

We are of God. He that knoweth God heareth us. He that is not of God heareth not us.

Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error. May I make a bold statement this afternoon. If you are of God, and have the spirit of God in your heart, you honor God's word.

You believe its message. Your heart is open to the movings, and motions, and drivings of the spirit within yourself. If that is the case, you will hear what is said at these meetings.

You will say its truth. Your heart will agree, or else I am wrong. It's as simple as that.

Either your heart and mine concur this afternoon that this message is what I want from my heart. It is right. It rings clear.

The same gospel you speak is the same thing that I feel moving in my heart, or else these words are unclear words. They are sounding brass and tinkling cymbal. They are not the words of God.

Now what are we doing when we are hearing what we are hearing? Who are we hearing, and what are we hearing? He that knoweth God heareth us. What is he hearing? My position this afternoon is that he is hearing apostolic doctrine, and I base that upon John chapter 8. Would you turn to that? Where Jesus comments on this same thought himself in verse 47. He that is of God heareth God's words.

Ye therefore hear them not, because ye are not of God. There all that we have in 1 John 4 is that apostle whom Jesus loved commenting on these precious words of Jesus. If we know God, we hear God's words, and we understand them and receive them.

And if we are not of God, we hear them not. Now then, I am concerned that we do more than preserve. Turn in your Bibles while I say this to 1 Peter chapter 1. That we do more than preserve corruptible things.

What do I mean by corruptible things? Well, the Bible defines what it means and what I mean by that. In chapter 1 of Peter verse 18. Forasmuch then, forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

What do we say? We are not interested this afternoon in preserving some corruptible things. Some things that I've seen in time past, and I liked it. I enjoyed it.

Somehow I had a nostalgic effect upon me or some sentimental value to me, and so I feel called upon to preserve that. No, that's not my purpose. That's not our vision.

What we want to preserve is apostolic faith and truth. And let everything else be questioned. Let everything else be challenged.

Let everything else be examined in the light of that word. I'm a kind, very conscious that I with the reformers can make some external changes in my life because reform is an external going on. We talked recently in school about reformatory.

I remember in about the year 1968 when the state of Vermont did away with all of their state penitentiaries and county prisons and started a correctional institution. They called them correctional centers or correctional institutions. Reform schools is what they're called some places.

And it's an attempt to take a life that's been out of touch with society and out of tune with itself and somehow make some changes in the life that would acclimate it again to the society in which it owes a debt, in which it owes a service. Those external changes produce the degree of conformity that make one fit into society. We learned recently a man who was in jail for a period of time when we come out of jail.

He was used to open up his automobile by grabbing hold of the handle and pushing the button in with his thumb. But he was in jail for so long that the car manufacturers had changed their method of making a handle to the kind where you reach under with your hands and pull on it. Many of you have automobiles of that kind today.

Those of you that have cars. And he was frustrated. He did not fit into that.

And his life was confronted continuously with changes of that kind. And so he needed to be reformed. He needed to change some outward things about himself to fit into society as it then was.

But restoration is not a work on the outside. Restoration is a work in the heart of a man. And so the Anabaptists and Reformers needed to split ways because of that.

Why then, point number one, do we study Anabaptism? I remind you that it is only, as far as we're concerned, one model from the 16th century of a group that attempted to return to the Bible foundations. And so what we're doing today, what we want to see today in our time, is across the land, across the world, within our hearts, for our families, we want to see a 20th century model of a similar return. That is our desire.

I want you to know in beginning here that the Anabaptists were not infallible. They made some mistakes. I think one of the reasons why they had some of the errors inherent with them that they did was because their eyes were pretty closely focused upon the situation in which they found themselves.

You know, it's an extremely difficult thing. In the fray of persecution and desputation, they were in continual conflict. It's a difficult thing to stand back far enough to get a total arama, a total view.

Of God's plan for his church and for his people, I think they did amazingly well with the limited eyesight they had. And at times with the limited access they would have had to materials. They had the Bible only.

But nonetheless, I want to call attention to a few things this afternoon to help you understand that we're not trying to hold Anabaptists up as some particular group that was holy more than others. Only as one model that was very effective in its time. Number one, in their attempt to be so literal, they were Biblicists, you know.

The Bible was literally a babe. In their attempt to be so literal, they at times violated the very spirit of Christ. I can give you a couple of illustrations of this.

Their times were hard. Their times were denunciatory. Their times were condemning.

Their times took things in their hands that were not for them to take into their hands. I'm referring to the time that George Walroth bounced his way into Nicholas Villater's pulpit there in Zolichin and said, you weren't called to preach today. I was called to preach.

And forced the attention away from the pastor as he was already in the pulpit and took it upon himself, taking a stick, if he had a walking stick, and rotting on the bench to get attention and making such a disturbance as that in the house of God. And in his zeal to proclaim God's word. And he felt called.

He felt compelled to share the message. He knew he had the truth in the faith. But in his attempt to do that, he violated what is obviously the spirit of the Lord Jesus, who did not stride nor cry nor cause his voice to be heard in the streets.

I bet that suffices one illustration I'm talking about. Governor Grebel himself, who's oftentimes called the founder of the Swiss brothers, was very, very sharp and seemed to allow very little room for any thoughts beside his own. I say that cautiously.

I admire, I certainly appreciate the life and testimony he left behind. But I see that in him. And are we not careful, we will notice it in ourselves.

We are so right, you know. We understand things so well, you know. We just don't have any time to listen to anyone else.

You better hear me. But you know the Bible, the spirit of the Bible is going to ask us to stop, as we had to do an hour before we came this afternoon, and listen to two ladies that came with a bag around their shoulders. And in that bag were some papers.

I suppose you know what those papers are. And these were very well-dressed ladies and very polite, and they had a message to share. And I could have taken those ladies and booted them off the porch and said, you're just a bunch of Jehovah's Witnesses.

You're just a bunch of Russellites. We don't have time for you. Head out the door.

We've got the truth. And you're a bunch of heretics and allies. But I just wonder if that is truly the way that I can share the life-giving wine of spirituality with somebody in that hour in sore need of it.

And after all, if I had more than they had, wouldn't there be a better way to prove it? Number two, I will talk a little bit about Menno Simons, because some of us have been rather revering a church that seems to have his name. I'll call attention to three things that you and I would not agree with that he taught. He taught, for instance, in his zeal to maintain church purity, he was so sick and tired of the sin in the church, sin in the corpus christianum.

He was so tired of a church and state mixed together, he wanted to see church purity. He went to this extreme to do it, that if a believing spouse had an unbelieving partner, he taught that the one must separate from the other. He taught that in direct contradiction to 1 Corinthians 7, where a believing wife, for example, was told if she had a believing husband, you can turn to it and study it yourself, to live with him if you allow it so, and in such a manner attempt to raise the children in a pure fashion in purity.

The person gave illustrations from modern times that would verify that wisdom of Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians chapter 7 for the good of children. He taught in the second place that his members could be, this is going to shock you, I know it, but he taught that his members could be politicians, that they could be involved in serving in the affairs of state. He did not require that a person holding office in a political committee or whatever it was, political office, would need to drop that and become part of his church.

And we would see that as, I'm not quite sure why he took that position. I never found a whole lot of information on it. You can verify what I'm telling you from Franklin Mattel's book, *The Anabaptist Vision of the Church, View of the Church*.

And then in third place, I want you to know that this man taught a very erroneous view concerning the doctrine of incarnation. He taught that the Lord Jesus Christ received none of his being or bearing or essence from his mother, that Mary was immaculate and in virginity continually throughout this whole experience and that nothing from her contributed to the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he felt to do that, I believe, to, well, in doing that, I believe he was trying to maintain a, he was trying to refute Catholicism's fully honoring of a virgin Mary, this immaculate mother Mary, this mother of God.

He was trying to eliminate that view and in so doing, what the Nikolaus extreme where Mary had nothing at all to do with Jesus' birth. And in so doing, he did not have a man when he was done, I'm afraid. And the Anabaptists, the Swiss brethren particularly, never accepted his view on that, nor have I. You can say that thing more particularly if you're interested in doing the research on it.

And so these brethren were not corrected in everything. I want you to know that. I'll call attention to one thing more.

And I see this error repeated many times, even in my own life experience, where they tended, in that time of Anabaptism, they tended to depend too much upon the charisma of their leaders. And when the leaders died, there was a serious dirt. I'm thinking of that particularly in Zelikon.

When Mons and Grebel and Blaurock were gone, the work fell apart. And I believe really, excuse me, in so doing and holding up the leaders, that they came in there with great power and great strength and great wisdom. And those men were very, very able men.

I'm sure they were. To face what they faced in that time was the kind of zeal and clear thinking that they had. Because of that, there was a tendency to not depend upon personal prayer, fasting, Bible study, personal devotion, personal feeding, as there should have been.

The emphasis was more gathering together, getting together often, hearing this terrific preaching, being involved in these very, very stirring services, these very unique patterns of early and primitive worship, where bread was broken from place to place. And the hands were laid on those called out and sent. This was so moving at that time.

The people just lived from one of those experiences to the next. And in so doing, failed to learn how to feed themselves and how to spend time with God. And I believe that that is one reason why the Anabaptists then were so susceptible to pietism when about a hundred years later, it started to sweep across Europe.

The pietism came without any external emphasis. It came along with an inward view. What's the heart of the man like? Let's look into the heart.

How's your relationship with God? And offered to the persecuted Anabaptists of their time an easier and yet a Christian way. You can be a Christian by having this thing within the heart. You don't need to be out here making some external demonstration and profession of your position.

You can stay in the state church. You can remain part of the Corpus Christianum. You can be part of the Regimus, if you please, and still have Christ in your heart.

You can have that personal, individual life in devotion to God. You don't need the external part. Persecution stopped.

The cross is gone. I have this little piece, this little faith in me, pietism. I would say there's some older pillars in the faith than myself here today, and I'm sure you will concur with me that I believe that that is one of the reasons why, in the late 60s and early 70s, many of the plain people in Lancaster County, right here where we are today, fell prey to the charismatic movement.

Because even in those times, in conservative circles, the emphasis was not as it ought to have been upon a personal life and walk with God. And when, then, someone offered them a stirring experience in the heart, well, they fell for that thing just rather quickly. So we need a synthesis.

We need to bring it together, of the external truth and application that God's Word teaches us, along with a holy and healthy emphasis upon my personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, my walk with God, his spirit in my heart, peace reigning in my bosom. I consider those to be, as I said here, a number of weaknesses in the Anabaptist movement, and so, if we have our eyes upon Anabaptism alone, we stand a good chance to reproduce their own errors, and so let us take our minds and hearts back to the Scriptures. I want to say, at this juncture in time, that we who are gathered here have no personal positions to promote.

I have no theological system to defend. I'm not here with a favorite verse picked out, and if you don't come to agree with me on this verse, why, we just won't be able to agree, and I'm going to have to write you off as someone who doesn't understand the Scriptures. I just have no position like that.

We do not, because I understand the motives of the brethren. There's no church group that we need to advance in this afternoon. It's just that simple.

My concern is only that what we say is God's truth. And I am open to the challenge of being corrected. I will say this, however, in that we propose to be biblical, and we are willing for anyone to teach us from the Scriptures where we have made mistakes, and I'm expecting that that will happen, yet we know whom we have believed.

We know the Lord Jesus Christ, and we offer Him to you. What then, in brief, were the origins of the Anabaptist movement? How did this thing begin? And here, if I may, I must be a bit historical. Will you

allow that? Some of you have come for that very reason, and I want to hear some of that part of it, and I will try to share with you in a way that will not be too boring and difficult for you to understand.

Will you go along with me back to about the year 300? Now, that's an approximate year. I'm going back to the year when Constantine was fighting, and in his vision that night, maybe you remember the story he saw, a cross in the sky, and it was told that this sign conquered, and so he took this cross, this sign, and put it on the armor or the chest of his warriors, and before they went to battle the next day, he took them all to the river and had the whole army run through the river for baptism, and in one sweep through the creek, he baptized the whole pile and Christianized them all of a sudden. We now have something brand new in the history of the world, a Christian army, something brand new again, a Christian emperor, and unlike many people think, it was not Constantine, but one who followed him, Theodosius, who united or married church and state together, and now we have a strange thing.

Everybody within the geographical confines of this area, Roman Empire at that time, are Christian people all of a sudden. That synthesis, that uniting of church and state, all people in this geographic area, all people living in this political boundary, are all part of the church. That condition existed until the time of the Anabaptists.

There were times here and there, the Carthi, the Waldensians, the Albigensians, a number of other times, the Lawers, the Hussites later on, who attempted, Moravian brothers, to break this pattern, but there was no universal or, shall I say, lasting break in this position until 1525. Let's keep that in the foreground because there must one day be on this earth a separation from those who know the Lord and from those who know him not. There must be a division.

There must be a separation between the true and the false. In our time, I must know who are the brethren and who they are not. Consequent to the verses we had here a while ago, you know about the blows of the hammer in 1517 upon a somewhat isolated chapel, Catholic Church in Wittenberg, and you know the monk who tapped those 95 thoughts written in German upon that door.

Before that year was over, numbers of strange things happened. It would be interesting for you to know that that same year, 1517, quite a few miles to the south of the city of Zurich, a strange thing happened. A man named Erasmus had just completed a new copy of a Greek New Testament.

He had been teaching Greek to a number of students there, and this copy of a Greek New Testament came into the hands of that year of a man named Ulrich Zwingler and started studying the New Testament for the first time in his life. He was a Greek student. He had just received an understanding of Greek language, and now he is feeding upon the very words of truth, the very words of God.

This is having an effect on him. Now, history records for us that this Ulrich Zwingler was born exactly seven weeks after Martin Luther was born, who is the man I formerly referred to, and these men became somewhat entranced in a position, having studied the Scriptures on their own, Ulrich Zwingler studying that Greek New Testament, and Martin Luther back here working in Germany, each operating in individual spheres without too much knowledge and contact with each other, were attempting to bring their people to a gospel position in 1522. This Ulrich Zwingler was called to be the chairman, the head pastor of the largest church there in Zurich, the Großmünster, and he vowed in his heart before he accepted this pastorate that he will do nothing except preach the gospel.

Now, you say, well, Brother Dale, that sounds real good. That sounds like he's doing the right thing. I want to explain to you that that was a tremendously critical thing for Ulrich to undertake, because prior to that, he would have been responsible to maintain the position and teach the ethics of the church fathers, that is, the past Catholic writers who had given a tenet of faith to the people which would be taught as the word of truth, because it's the word of the church.

But this man proposed to stand before his congregation and preach nothing but the words of this book. It was a new day, really, in Zurich, and people joined Luther's work in Germany and Ulrich Zwingler's work in Switzerland. And I want to give you at least three reasons why they joined, why they were Protestants, as they were called, Protestants because they protested against Catholicism.

Consider these three things. Why were they Protestants? First of all, they were Protestants because they weren't Catholics. They just happened to be in a canton, in an area, in a state, in a nation that accepted a Reformed position, and so consequently, we can be Catholics no more, so we must be something else.

There were cantons in Switzerland, for instance, where a person might be a Catholic one year and a Reformed Protestant the next and a Catholic the next year, all depending upon which army was winning in the Thirty Years' War at the time. When Catholics were winning, they were Catholics. When the Protestants were winning, they were Reformers, and so on.

Another reason for this, of course, was because some of them felt great liberty, great looseness, aha, free from this ritual of Catholicism, paying all these dues, taking part in all these rituals, free, free from Catholicism, and so because they desired that looseness, some of them joined. And those of you that know the life of Martin Luther are aware of how much he lamented that ere he passed into his tomb. He attempted to start a free church and found out he did little more to give people a license for their looseness.

Then, number three, there were those who took this position with these two men because they had, with them, been serious students of the Word of God. My attention comes to three men at this point. Simon Stumpf, Conrad Grebel, and Felix Mann.

It just so happened that Oryx Zwingli, who was the older of all these men, had a Bible class of about seven students. There may have been more than seven at one time, but seven emerged as having taken tremendous interest in this Bible study. And he did more than study with them.

He gave them the tools to teach them how to study themselves, and so they continued to study after he had ceased. It should be, I'm sure you're aware, that the time came when some conflicts arose between their thinking. And at this point, I would call attention to two specific dates in the life and times of these men.

The one is October. The other was January. I put a day in here, January 17th.

I'm not quite sure what the date was for the meeting in October. This was a memorable day, because at this point, the discussion and conflicts and understanding between Zurich Oryx Zwingli and his students was widening to the extent that they decided it was time to call the council together, the Zurich Council, the 200-man body that was politically responsible for Canton Zurich. Call them together to find out just what, after all, should be done with a man.

Shall we continue to observe the mass, as Catholics have done so, or shall we eliminate the mass? And there's a number of words that Simon Stump, one of Zurich's, one of Oryx's students, comes to our minds on this occasion. Oryx said, no question, boys. Now, boys, be patient.

This question about the mass, that will be decided by the council. We'll let the council decide. All in all, said Simon Stump.

If you look at the back of this folder, you'll see what he answered. Master Oryx, you have not the right to leave the decision of this question to the council. The matter is already decided.

The spirit of God decides it. That happened on that occasion. That marked, really, the beginning of a division between the reformers and the Anabaptist brothers.

And so because of that, they went their own way, began teaching as God had taught them. Simon Stump said, as he left that place, he said, he's going to leave this meeting. He told Zwingli this.

He will leave this meeting and go out and preach nothing else but God's holy word. And wonder what Zwingli thought of that. And Zwingli said, you can say it in German better than I can.

He said, that is right. Das ist korrekt. How do you say it? And he said, I pray you do the same thing.

But that didn't last too very long, because these men intended to do just exactly what they said. And shortly after that, Commander Grebel had a baby born in his home, and he refused to baptize. And so consequently, now we have the council clamping upon them because you've refused to obey the orders of the church to baptize these babies.

You know, all year 1524 was one frustration and confusion. And they decided by January 17, the holy meeting, to decide what to do with these people who refused to baptize their children. It must be done.

And so on that occasion, the council decided that we will imprison those who haven't done it, that are part of our canton. And all those who are in this canton, teaching and taking this position, who do not belong here, their citizens elsewhere, shall be banished. And so then we move very rapidly to four days later, on the 21st of the same month, when that memorable meeting was held in a farm kitchen, we're upon their knees together in prayer that they wondered what to do about this.

Now that some were to be despised, some were to flee, others were facing imprisonment, what shall we do? And there, of course, it was kind of, it was George Blorock, strong George, George Bluecoat, who asked Governor Grebel to baptize him upon his confession of faith. So right there in the farm kitchen, this baptism rite was performed. And immediately the rest of the people who were in that room asked George Blorock to baptize the rest of them, which he quickly complied with.

And then they had a breaking of bread ceremony right there in the midst of that whole scene and ordained each other to the ministry of the gospel. And thus began what we know today as the Anabaptist movement. It happened in just such a manner as that.

Now, how should we attempt to define what this group stood for? Who were the Anabaptists? What did they mean? What did they stand for? I found a quotation I want to share with you, and it is the position that this committee is taking as they teach these lessons. And it's for this reason, if you may, that you move from this paper to the center of your folding here. Only at the source of a movement do the waters run

pure.

We must go back to the sources. And so we want to truly understand what Anabaptism was. I really cannot take you to Dortrich in 1623.

That's too far down the road. I really can't take you to Strasbourg in 1560. We really cannot go into this Tyrol in 1535.

Let's get back to the sources. Let's get back as close as we can get. And so the information that we give to you in these meetings, we will try to go on back as far as we can into the original sources.

Here's a little confession of faith that was written way back at the beginning in 1527. Many of you might have books on Anabaptism at home and not be able to find this in any of your books. The reason for it is it was only discovered quite recently, and there was only a complete translation made of it, I think, in about 1973.

It may have been 76, from German into our English language. And so if you had German, you would have had access to it earlier. But those of us who are English-speaking would not have had.

It says they're probably authored by Michael Sattler. We'll tell you something about him in next week's lesson. And we say possibly because back in these times, it was difficult to know who authored what.

And we believe it was Michael Sattler who had MS written at the end of it. We believe it was he. He had written, he had been responsible for the Schleidheim Confession, which was very similar to this.

Now, it is difficult for us, however, to define Anabaptism, and I will give you a few reasons why. The main reason was because these men lived such a short time. Governor Grummel, for instance, was part of this movement for about 16 months.

After this date, he was present there and was certainly the impetus and the drive and the visionary man behind the whole work. But in a very short time, the plague had killed that man, and he was gone, leaving three children behind. And one of his descendants, 13 generations later, became the pastor of that same Great Winchester Church, for many of these debates were held where his great-granddaddy, 13 generations before, had been condemned to heresy.

His wife, Barbara, never joined him in the faith. I can hardly imagine, knowing the struggles that we have in our own life and time, how hard it is to maintain pure vision and apostolic truth, but it must have been like to have three children and face the possibility of seeing them raised by the opposition. But that was the thing that that man endured.

Michael Sattler, two years after he was converted, his ashes were lying at Hora. And so these men didn't live very long. That was one reason why we have difficulty defining all that was going on in those times.

They did very little writing. We know far more about the Anabaptists by what their critics wrote than by what they wrote. In fact, we know far more about their slight-armed confession, even, about what Zwingli wrote in Reputation of It, where he gave us almost the total text, because there is no extant copy of the slight-armed confession today, as far as I know.

But we have reconstructed almost the whole thing from his Reputation of It. Other articles would have been the same way. Secondly, these people had, or thirdly, these people had no theologians among

them.

For them, the idea of defining justification by faith like Luther did, this kind of theology study was not their interest. All they wanted to do was follow God's word of it, said they were going to do it, and told other people to do the same. As a consequence, you cannot develop a form of doctrine from them.

They were not the only ones challenging infant baptism. And here's an interesting point. They were inspirationists.

You might say that they were the forerunners of the patristic movement who believed that there was something that held superiority over this. They believed that the spirit in the heart, the inner word, they called it, was superior in position over the words of God that we have here. And they, of course, took that same position that it's not necessary to have an external evidence of what's in here.

You just enjoy this thing with God. They were against infant baptism, but here is one unique difference. Although there were, at the same period of time, others who challenged Catholicism, the Anabaptists were the first people--are you listening?--to not only challenge infant baptism, but to practice the truth of the matter.

You know, it's one thing for me to say this is wrong, and that is wrong, and that is wrong. It's another thing to have the faith and courage to stand up and take a position that's right and do it. They were rationalists, Sassinians, followers of a man Sassini.

These rationalists denied the Tritarian view of Christ, of Godhead, excuse me. They were intellectuals, but they challenged Catholicism, and when the Catholics took on, they confused them with these apostolic brethren that we're talking about here. There were other radicals, too, like the radicals up in Munster.

I'm not going to spend much time talking about them, who believed in a high fervor and fever of eschatology that Christ is coming to establish his kingdom right there in Munster, and so they captured the city with armed strength, established themselves in there, and fought off a Catholic army and defeated it, strange as it might seem, and lived up a very, very sensual life within the confines of that city. And, of course, they claimed to be against inter-Baptism and so on, and so the Catholics looked at this uprising and this terrible disregard and disrespect for authority, civil authority, as indicative of the entirety of this movement. And so, until about the year 1930, many scholars and historians, even here in America, did not know the truth, again, about this vision.

They felt and equated almost the whole program with such terrible scenes as what I just described. And so, for that reason, it's difficult to define this thing more clearly. But, to Harold Bender, we possibly owe an example.

He defined Baptism in three ways, and I'll just give you some more here. Some of you are keen to learn today, and you'll take some notes if you want to benefit from these discussions. He said that Baptism is well-defined, first of all, and it was separate then, and he advised then to make them distinctly different from the other groups around then in their view of this.

Number one, discipleship. Number two, voluntary church concept, or as I have termed it here, brotherhood of love. And thirdly, non-resistant or serving love.

We have come to learn that the term serving love, or love that serves, is possibly a bit better or more clear than non-resistant love, because we, with our position and our background, have come to view the doctrine of non-resistance as a somewhat political matter. And I've used this term to talk the pot out of any such thinking as that, for when a person refuses to serve in the armed forces and takes some CEO or voluntary service position, but backbites and slanders and offends his brother and allows him to have his needs met in life, but he is not practicing this concept of non-resistant serving love that John the Baptist taught, and which this article that you have in front of you here so clearly expects of its people. Right here we mean that a person's life is changed because of his walk with God.

And a person is not a Christian simply because he's part of a geographic area, but he's a Christian because he's a follower of Jesus Christ, because he's a disciple, for he has come to know God, and his life stands in sharp contrast to this world in which he lives, our lesson for next week, the Lord tarrying. And I think the rest of these thoughts are understandable. I want to move on quickly and try to finish this.

This brought them into conflict with the Reformers, very, very much so. And I want to tell you why they came into such sharp focus here. All right? Outline for the day tells us that we're supposed to be studying the prophetic dissent, that is, their disagreement with the Reformers.

Now, and here is this affliction in these men who taught them the very first foundations of Bible truth. Or in Swigley, to them they owed the debt. He gave them the Greek New Testament.

He taught them the very first words of faith. He moved Grebel out of his humanism, out of his sensual life. He was a very, very sinful man, Grebel was, and gave him the very first principles of the faith.

And now he sees to his greatest smeg, his great teacher, turning away from the truth. Those of us who are teachers, and those of you who are pastors sitting here this afternoon, think of the terrible disappointment to your people when you taught them the ways of truth, and they come to you and express their appreciation, only to find out that, I'm sorry, I've changed my mind. I don't believe anymore.

I trust if you and I ever change our minds, it's because we've been shown a more holy way. They believe in a true church. The Reformers did, Luther and Swigley.

I'm referring to those two elements. They lived in a true volunteer church, made up of spiritual people only. I'd like to verify that.

Since you are satisfied, I can read to you from a book that we have here titled, The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision. And I'm reading if you're taking notes from page 205, and you can check this out yourself, those that have this text. I do want to document what is said here.

It was Swigley who, one time, gave this definition of a true church of the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm quoting from Lord Swigley. Thus, the two criteria for determining a given congregation's adherence to the true church are the existence of believers and the proclamation of true faith.

And we're going to have this lesson coming up in a few weeks on the Anabaptist view of the church. That's in two weeks from today. We'll be discussing this concept in more detail.

But can you imagine that tremendously challenging position? What is a church? A church is that place where only saints are gathered, where those who love God are gathered, and where the truth is taught and believed. Wherever that happens, you have a manifestation, you have an actualization of the body of

Christ on earth, wherever the holy word of God is taught and believed and proclaimed, and where true saints are gathered together. How did Swigley change his mind? I told you these brothers were disturbed and disappointed because these reformers changed their positions.

Swigley only dropped one half of his definition. He said, a true church is a place where truth is proclaimed. And there he was in his great monster, day-to-day preaching for this Bible.

And so he said, we have a true church here because God's word is going forth. And you know very well that that is happening across radio waves by radio preachers. Truth is going forth.

Just parts of it. You know it's a partial gospel. But truth nonetheless, if I have a place where we give credence, we give a degree of recognition to God's word, but we don't require it to be affecting the lives of our people.

We allow them sitting there day by day and week by week to be satisfied and snug in their sin. We have no body of Christ. We have no true church.

And so let's examine ourselves. Just because of good preaching in our time is not the judgment for a true church. Even Swigley would have told you that.

Just because the teaching emphasis is so good, and the teaching and nurture program is so airtight, there's no indication that all of us together are part of that body, which is living and which is the Lord's. Number two, these people voted. First cause was believers.

The other problem was they ran into difficulties. How can I ever be the leader of this whole geographic area if I must depend upon those few who accept Christ as their Savior? Those few who would preach the amendment of life. How can I ever be the leader of the whole business if I must depend on those few to come out? And so compromise was born.

And Luther himself compromised to such an extent, such a terrible extent, that he one day said these words concerning the Baptists and their position of believers in Baptism. He said that even a cow, if she would have understanding, would know better than they. And yet himself believed the same at one point.

There's another position for which the brothers endured the disappointment when these Reformers changed their minds, and that was on the authority of the Scriptures. You've already detected that Zwingli placed another authority above the Scriptures. And I want to say at this point that whenever anybody ever attempted to refute the Anabaptists, the first thing they had to do was limit the power, limit the authority of the Scriptures.

How do you do that? You do that very simply by raising up something else on an equal or higher basis. As soon as anything else, any organization or any entity of power comes in to assert supreme authority here, you should know the anathema that that is going to produce. I want to give a quotation here, if I may, from Martin Luther's life.

He said these words as he was on the way down to the Diet of Worms, where he was supposed to defend himself. Worms was a city, by the way, and not crawly animals. Where he was being challenged for his hammer tapings up there at Wittenberg's door in 1517.

Here is Luther's statement, word for word. Of course, it's translated in English. I did not read German.

If the Emperor desires a plain answer, he was asked, are you going to recant and denounce your position, and will you accept the painful bull that comes out of Rome, or what will you do? Of course, that letter that came to him, he kindled a fire right there in the town square and burned it in the presence of his people. If the Emperor desires a plain answer, I will give it to him. It is impossible for me to recant unless I am proved to be wrong by the testimony of Scripture.

My conscience is bound to the word of God. It is neither safe nor honest to act against one's conscience. Here I stand.

God help me. I cannot do otherwise. That is a clear position, brother.

There, Martin Luther decided, yes, the Scriptures are supreme. I appeal to the Scriptures. There is no higher court of appeal.

But that man himself ended up killing Anabaptists, putting them to death before the whole experience was finished. How is it possible? How did it happen? I remind you, his first attempt to refute the Anabaptists began by limiting the authority of the Scriptures. Catholics themselves said that the Reformers were defending themselves against the Anabaptists with arguments which, if used consistently, would drive them right back into Catholicism.

And as soon as we raise any group or authority or power supreme over the Scriptures, we'll do the same thing that Catholicism is doing all the while. We are final. We are the answer, God forbid.

Now, I'm recommending this afternoon that the question we're facing and the question they faced there which gave rise to the Anabaptist movement, bringing us to the conclusion, was this question. Would you listen? Who is a Christian? If you and I can capture a vision from God's Word this afternoon of the answer to that question, then we have feed for our souls. Then we have a reason in our hearts why Anabaptism returned to an atmospheric model in the 16th century.

And we have then a goal for which our own lives and families should be receiving, should be embracing. May I give you three answers to that question, who is a Christian? Here's an informed answer. Lutheran, please.

Anabaptist answer. I'm sorry this chalkboard is making so much noise up here. Catholics say the Christian is the person who receives grace through the priesthood.

I wonder if any of you ever heard of sacraments. Have you ever heard that word, sacrament? A sacrament is any means, any activity, any church function, any rite or ritual by which I communicate or channel grace from God into your hearts. You become saved by grace.

We all know that. And so you receive this grace for your salvation through the observance of the sacrament. As I lay my hands on you, pour holy, heavenly water upon you, offer the bread to your tongue as we share in that mass service time by time, you're receiving the holy grace of God into your life.

And he who receives that is saved. He is a Christian. He received grace through the priesthood.

How does that definition line up with the scriptures? The Reformed people had another one. Who is a Christian? He who enjoys the inner experience of grace by faith. It is wonderful.

Into my heart, God has done all this little thing. Why don't you be baptized with water? I don't need to have this wafer put on my tongue. I don't need to watch this priest.

I don't need to confess to him. Why God does this nice little thing in my heart that I've got the grace of the Lord right within me. Oh, it's such a good thing.

It's such a wonderful thing. And I'm a Christian now. I have his grace by faith in my heart.

I would like you to look at a third alternative. John Stank, who said, he cannot know Christ save he who follows him in his life. What does it mean? He is no Christian except he who has been with Christ to his cross.

He has been there to have his life changed. He was now a disciple living under the power and influence of the resurrected Lord. He is no Christian, save he whose life has been changed.

I'd like you to turn to your Bibles to Matthew chapter three. I have another interesting chart I'd like to put on the board, but time does not permit that this afternoon. And so I'm going to skip that, possibly give it to you later.

But if you don't get it, it won't really matter. But perhaps I can duplicate it on a sheet and give it to you some other way or some other time. But there's a very interesting way to show in picture message, show graphically these three experiences defined on paper with the blackboard and chalk.

I'll try and do it for you another way. If you're finished with this, I'd like to write another word on the board. And possibly I can just write it down here if you'd rather than not see it.

I'd like to write the word that was the center, the core, the heart of John the Baptist's message in chapter three. That word was this. Metanoah.

It comes from two Greek words, a prefix and a suffix, and here they are. Meta and noah. What do these words mean? It was when John the Baptist was preaching in verse eight, when he saw the Sadducees and Pharisees, Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism.

He said unto them, O generation of vipers, who has warned you to flee from the wrath that comes? Bring forth therefore fruits. Meet for metanoah. Meet for repentance.

And think not to say within yourselves, we have been saved by the vain conversation received by tradition from our fathers. We have been saved. We are Abraham's children because we have built a model based upon someone else's model.

Who based it upon someone else's model. Who based it upon a former model. No, think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father.

For I say unto you that God is able in these times to raise up children to Abraham. The ax is laid down. He's going to check it out to see whether or not you have the fruits of the life of God in your heart.

Metanoah. What does it mean? Meta is a Greek prefix meaning from one thing to another thing. All of you know, I think most of you would know a very, very large Greek word that begins with the same prefix.

The word is the same thing that happens when a butterfly emerges from a chrysalis. When that feeble monarch comes out from that chrysalis there at the time of metamorphosis. Change, transformation, metamorphosis.

Meta means from one thing to another thing. From here to here. Now, what is moving from here to here? What is going from this experience to that experience? What is moving from here to here? What is nos? Well, that word in Greek means the very essence, the very core of one's inner being.

I think it's the best word the Greeks had to call, to name what you and I call the heart of a man. The heart, my heart, dear brothers and sisters, has moved from this to this. There has been a transformation.

The Bible calls it a renewal of the what? A renewal of the mind. There's been a complete change from one to the other. And until I've experienced that metanoia, until I've experienced that change of heart, a renewal of mind, there yet remaineth no life in me.

Turn to John. Well, excuse me, you're in chapter 4 and 3 now. In chapter 4, Jesus taught, believe me, the exact same message.

From that time, Jesus began to preach. Verse 17, he says, Repent, metanoia, the verb form instead of the noun form in this case, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Jesus' message was the same.

John 15. Dear brethren, is this you? Here's what separates the corpus christianum, which is the Christian body. Christian because all of the world, all of this political area is now all Christian because they're all Catholic, or because they're all Lutheran, or because they're all Reformed, or because they're all any other name you put in there.

All these people are Christians now. Corpus christianum. The whole thing is Christianized.

By the way, an interesting note from the times of Augustine. Do you know who that great theologian was, or they call him great, who taught Calvinism long before Calvin was ever born? Augustine and the Reformers had this unique view of the millennium. Those of you who love prophecy, you'll be interested in this quotation.

They thought that the millennium was what was happening in their time when they saw the whole Roman Empire become Christian. The millennium in our time. The whole empire is now Christian.

That's what Reformers believe. That's what Augustine believed. That was the millennium to them.

When the state becomes Christian. But wait a minute. Wait a minute.

Who is the child of God? I am the true vine, and my father is the husband. Every branch in me that bears not fruit, he taketh away. Every branch that bears fruit, he purges it, that it may bring forth more fruit.

Now you are clean to the word which I have spoken unto you. Abide in me, and I in you, as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me. I am the vine, ye are the branches.

He that abides in me and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit. For without me ye can do nothing. Brethren and sisters, I have this concern this afternoon.

I want to ask you this question. The question is this. In what you are calling, whatever you are calling the church today, in that body, standing before your eyes, has everyone experienced a from-to situation in their hearts? Is every one of those people that you are including in the church of Jesus Christ this afternoon, in your concept, is every one of them living the fruits of righteousness? Are they bringing forth fruit? I'll give you an illustration.

We had a young man who we were working with who had made a profession of having his sins forgiven and wanted to be part of a church. Claimed salvation, claimed the Lord had worked a work in his heart, and yet was having serious struggles in his life. And so I gave him this thought to ponder, and would you put this thought right into your own mind and work it over in your own experience? I said, here you are, you're called into a home where there's a young Catholic father, 23 years of age, with his young wife.

Now, they were married when they were 17 years old, and they now have four children. They've been raised in Catholicism, and their family is firmly entrenched in their local diocese. But they are hungry for God's Word.

They're disturbed at heart. Something is wrong. They got a little bit of a taste of God's Word somewhere.

Somehow they got a breath of the Holy Spirit of God as it blew across his children, and they were startled by what they observed. They wanted that for themselves, and now they're asking, explain to us the way of God. Teach us this holy way.

Come and teach us. I asked this young man if he would go along and sit there in that home and share the fruits of God, the wine of almighty holiness with those people. I asked him what they would have to say.

He looked at me, and he said, nothing, nothing. What am I telling you? If you have had a metanoic experience, if your heart has moved from here to here, if your heart has changed and no longer a part of this world but transformed by the inner working of the Spirit of God, and you're abiding in that vine, then your life will bring forth fruit that will be a blessing to such souls as exist in this world. You can help them and encourage them and strengthen them, for you have found peace in your own life, and you're able to share it then with somebody else.

The Bible is full of that kind of teaching, full of that kind of challenge, and I think it's time that we get back to a viable definition of who a Christian is. It is he who brings forth fruit unto God, and anything less than that is here, or it is here, it is not here. And so the split came.

Anabaptism was born because they got a vision of what the Bible taught a child of God really to be. That's why anabaptism was born in the 16th century, and I asked him, is it asking too much for every member of our fellowship to be born again of the Spirit of God and filled with the Word of the Lord? As I am aware, there are all kinds of external requirements that I can make of you, and you can go to Rubenstein's department store and meet every one of them before the day is over, or you can go right down to the road here one block, or you can go to some other rituals and conform yourself to some position. There are some things that you, your brother or sister, cannot do.

You cannot let the Word of God dwell in you richly with all wisdom. You cannot let the peace of God rule in your hearts to which you are called in one body and be thankful. You cannot let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but made herself of no reputation.

That you cannot do, but that is the work of God. That is the evidence of birth. That is metanoia.

That is repentance. That is change of heart. And until you do not have that, anything else is less than the corpus Christi, less than the body of Christ.

It is something else. I will close this discussion by reading a few words of someone who very aptly penned this life in action. The Anarchist's vision was not a detailed blueprint for the reconstruction of human society.

They knew better than to expect that you can reform all society. But the Brethren did believe that Jesus intended that the kingdom of God should be set up in the midst of earth, here and now, and this they proposed to do forthwith. We shall not believe, they said, that the sermon of the mouth or any other vision that he had is only a heavenly vision meant but to keep his followers in tension until the last great day.

But we shall practice what he taught, believing that where he walked, we can by his grace follow in his steps. Brethren and sisters, I invite you, I welcome you to follow the Lord Jesus Christ in steps such as that.

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