

# (Early Anabaptism) Christ in Early Anabaptism

by Denny Kenaston

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*Denny Kenaston's sermon explores the transformative impact of Christ in the lives of early Anabaptists and the lessons we can draw from their testimonies today.*

**Duration:** 1:03:18

**Scripture:** Psalm 50:2, 2 Corinthians 4:8-9

**Topics:** "Anabaptism"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses a group of 12 men who gathered in the house of Felix Montz to seek God's guidance. The fear of God settled upon them, leading them to separate themselves from the world and break away from evil influences. The speaker challenges the audience to reflect on how this story applies to their own lives in the present day. The sermon emphasizes the importance of not compromising one's faith and the need to continually seek God's guidance in all aspects of life.

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## Transcript

Hello, this is Brother Denny. Welcome to Charity Ministries. Our desire is that your life would be blessed and changed by this message.

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These messages are offered to all without charge by the free will offerings of God's people. A special thank you to all who support this ministry. Oh, Amen.

What a joy to be here this evening. In the name of the Lord Jesus, thank you for coming tonight. We sense the Spirit of the Lord in this place.

Isn't it amazing what God can do? This is just a farmer's field, but it's been prayed over, walked over, it's been sanctified, it's been set apart for God's holy uses. And we gather in this place, the Church of Jesus Christ, and all of a sudden it becomes a holy place. Hallelujah.

I'm grateful for that. I'm also grateful to be here and request your prayers as we open up this subject, Christ in the early Anabaptists. I must say I'm both burdened and excited about my assignment.

It's been a bit challenging. I've not been an ardent student of Anabaptism through the years, although I have read Anabaptist writings for the last 26, 27 years of my life. I wouldn't count myself to be an expert on this subject, but I have enjoyed the challenge of taking this assignment on.

All my Christian life I have pursued truth and reality through Christian history. And that's my desire this evening and all through this week, that we can do the same thing. We can seek truth and reality through Christian history.

I believe it's God's will for us to do that. And I have been blessed and deeply challenged by my repeated study of the early Anabaptists. I am no expert, so I beg your patience.

You may be sitting here this evening and know way more than me. Have mercy on me, I beg you. Nevertheless, we want to take this subject up and lift it up as an example of what God can do in the hearts and lives of people who surrender themselves totally, wholly, unreservedly to Him.

And I believe wherever man does that, whatever name you want to put on it, God is glorified. Psalm 50 verse 2 says, Out of Zion, the perfection of praise, God has shined. Out of Zion, the perfection of His praise, God has shined.

Psalm chapter 50 and verse 2, Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined. And that word beauty and the word praise come very close together. Just like it says there in 1 Peter, where our brother read to us this evening, that we should show forth the praises or the virtues of Him that called us out of darkness into His marvelous light.

And brothers and sisters, that is our calling. As God's people, we have been called to show forth His praises or His beauty or the virtues of Him who has called us out of darkness and into His marvelous light. That's exactly what the Anabaptists did.

Verily, verily, God did shine out of the early Anabaptists. They have shown us the true beauty of holiness, the perfection of beauty that God can work in the hearts and lives of people. I want to say just a few words about the title, because it is a title of a series, not just the message this evening, but a series.

And somehow, God needs to help me. This is a tent meeting and there are all kinds of people here and I'm supposed to have a teaching all week long. So you pray for me.

We'll see if I can do that. But I want to say something about the title, because it's a title of a series. We are not just studying a people, not just studying a theology of a people, but it was Christ working in the early Anabaptists, both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

And that's what we're going to be studying all week. Christ in the Anabaptists working both to will and to do of His good pleasure. And we open up the history books and we read about it.

But God, in His wisdom and His loving kindness, has laid this history out to us and preserved this history, not so that we could look at it and find it interesting, but rather so that we could look at it and be challenged and to be stimulated and to be inspired and, yea, brought to a place of repentance and change in our own lives. And thus, a series even like this fits very well in a tent meeting. Amen? Because we came here to get our lives changed, not just to hear something.

It was Christ working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure. 2 Corinthians chapter 4. We want to read there, if we can, just for a minute. 2 Corinthians and chapter 4. My, what a beautiful example the early Anabaptists were of these verses that we find in 2 Corinthians chapter 4. And I want to change the pronouns a little bit in these verses, just so we can apply them to the early Anabaptists.

In 2 Corinthians 4 and verse 8 and following, this was their testimony, the testimony of the early Anabaptists. We were troubled on every side. Amen? Were they not? Yet not distressed.

We were perplexed, but we were not in despair. We were persecuted, but we were not forsaken. We were cast down, but we were not destroyed.

Hallelujah! That is their testimony. They go on to give their testimony to us this evening. We were always bearing about in our bodies the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our bodies.

For we, which live, were always delivered unto death for Jesus' sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then, death worked in us, but the life of Jesus Christ worked in you. That's the testimony of the early Anabaptists.

Death worked in them, and the life of Christ was spread all over Europe. Brothers and sisters, death worked in them, and the life of Christ was spread all over Europe. Grab that.

Get a hold of that. Let it get deep down in your soul. God doesn't change.

That's the way God does it. Death worketh in us, and the life of Christ was spread all over Europe. Do it again, Lord.

Do it again. Do it in this hour day. Do it in this county, dear God, that death would work in us, that the life of Christ would be spread all over this county through us.

Amen. Christ, the perfection of beauty, shined all over Europe through the early Anabaptists. Oh God, help us to see deeper tonight and through these sessions.

Help us to see beyond even some of the things they did, and even some of the things they believed, to the Christ that was inside of them, working in them, moving in them, breathing in them, living His life out through them. Amen. Because that's what early Anabaptism is all about.

Christ in the early Anabaptists. To just focus a bit more on the title, I want you to notice that I've phrased it early Anabaptists. There is a reason for that.

And basically, I'm going to be focusing on a 50-year period from 1525 to 1575. We may go across the other side of that a couple of times, but it seems to me that Zion was in its prime during those years. Amen.

And most of the authors that I read stay within this time period. It seems like there, in the midst of all of the dying and all of the persecutions that they were going through, the Spirit of Christ was mightily upon them and working in them in such a way that a testimony, a beautiful testimony that has endured all the ages of time of hundreds of years, was raised up back there in 1525 to 1575. From there, after 75, persecutions began to slacken.

The people began to settle down more. And I'm not faulting them for that. I can't imagine what it would be like to live your whole life running for your life.

But the persecutions began to slacken. The people began to settle down. And some hearts began to cool.

Sound familiar? Christian history is the study of the biographies of people's lives. That's what Christian history is. The biography of people's lives.

I want to just say a word, give a little definition of the word biography. And please bear with me this evening. We're just doing the introduction here.

We're just laying some groundwork. We're going somewhere, but I have to start somewhere. And I can't be on day five.

It's day one. Biography. What does the word biography mean? You look it up in the dictionary, in Webster's Dictionary, 1828.

It's made up of two words. The word bio, which means life. And graphy, which means to write.

Or, to write a life. And that's what we have. I've been reading for three months on the biographies of the Anabaptist people.

Because somebody wrote their life. Amen? And that's what we have. To write a life.

The life and character of a people. And this evening, and through this week, it will be the life and character of the early Anabaptists. In the Old Testament, we find the word testimonies.

You know, you'll find that word many, many times in the Old Testament. And if you look in Psalm 119, it's in there probably 10, 12, 13 times. The testimonies of the Lord are sure.

The testimonies of the Lord are right. And the testimonies of the Lord is the record of the biographies of the people that the Spirit of God breathed out for us. David and Jonathan and Saul and on down through the line it goes.

It is the biographies of their lives. In the Old Testament, it is called testimony. In the New Testament, it is called witnesses.

Witnesses. Turn with me now to Psalm 48, as we continue just to lay a little groundwork on what we're doing and why we're doing it. In Psalm chapter 48, we have a beautiful portion of Scripture.

I want to read verse 1 through 3 and then drop down to verse 8. So we can just get the flow of the context here of what God is saying in Psalm chapter 48. Psalm 48 is talking about the testimony of Zion. The testimony of Zion.

Or the biography of Zion. Read along with me. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God.

Notice who gets the praise in the city of our God. The Lord does. Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of His holiness.

Beautiful for situation. There it is again. Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.

Beautiful for situation. The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

Drop down to verse 8. As we have heard, so have we seen. In the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God, God will establish it forever. As we have heard, so have we seen.

Someone told us about Zion. Someone told us what the city was like. And as we heard them say it, so have we also seen it with our eyes.

We have seen what Zion, the city, is like. We have thoughts of Thy loving kindness, O God, in the midst of Thy temple. According to Thy name, O God, so is Thy praise under the ends of the earth.

Thy right hand is full of righteousness. Isn't that a blessing? God's right hand is full and running over of righteousness. Let Mount Zion rejoice.

Let the daughters of Judah be glad because of Thy judgments. And here are the verses that I would like us to focus on a bit here this evening. God tells us to walk about Zion.

Walk about Zion and go round about her. Tell the towers thereof or examine the towers thereof and count them and see what they are like. Mark well her bulwarks.

Set your heart upon Zion's bulwarks. Consider her palaces that ye may tell it to the generation following. Why? For this God is our God forever and ever.

He will be our guide even unto death. Now, according to Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 22, the New Testament church is Mount Zion. Now, I know what God is saying here in the Old Testament.

And you know how these things can be when you're reading in the Old Testament. I believe that the psalmist was even thinking about Zion in its beauty and its glory. There, Jerusalem, Mount Moriah, where the temple was, all those things.

I believe the psalmist was thinking about those things. But as prophetic things are so many times, they were seeing them in reality in that day, but also looking ahead to a greater day. And brothers and sisters, we can even look at it today and look ahead to a greater day yet.

But according to Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 22, we are come to Mount Zion. We who have been born again by the Spirit of God are come to Mount Zion. That's the New Testament church.

It's the dwelling place of God. As I see these verses, God is encouraging us to look at Zion. God is encouraging us to study Zion.

God is encouraging us to look back and see what Zion was like in days gone by. And that's what we want to do through these days. We are encouraged to set our hearts on what we see.

And we are encouraged to receive what we see as an example for our own lives. And by the way, we are to take that which we see, which encourages our own hearts, which inspires our own hearts, and turn around at the same time and pass it on to the next generation. Amen? And so in a sense, that's one thing that I'm doing here this evening and all week long.

I've been studying Zion for three months and I'm now going to pass it on to the next generation. Amen? All you children, all you young people, sit up and take notice. This is what Zion was like a few hundred years ago.

Study Zion. Walk round about her. Look at Zion from this way and look at Zion over here.

Tell her towers. See what she was like. Look at her palaces.

You may be able to pass it on to the next generation. And so that's one of the burdens in my heart. The history of the saints who lived before us is one of God's primary methods by which to challenge and instruct His people.

May I say it again? The history of the saints, those who have gone before us, is one of God's primary methods by which He uses to challenge and inspire and instruct us that we should go on in all that God has for us. I mean, think about it. If you can look and see what God did, how God shined through Zion in days gone by, you can also look at it and say, this God who did these things is also our God.

What God did in those days, God can do in these days. Do you believe that, brothers and sisters? What God did in 1525, God can do today. He is the same yesterday, today and forever.

He changes not. He is the immutable one. God can never change.

And what God did back in those days in 1525, He is longing to do again. Don't you doubt it. He is only looking for some vessels that are willing to yield themselves completely to God.

I want to give just a little definition here and share with you A.T. Pearson's words on biography. A few of you may have heard this before in a leadership seminar, but there's too many people here for me not to say it. A.T. Pearson says this about biography.

History is a record of facts. These facts demand a personal factor. Maybe when you were in school you had a history teacher.

Some of us had history teachers and we didn't like history. Others of us had history teachers and we thought, wow, history is great. You want me to tell you the difference between the history teacher that you didn't like and the one that you did like? The difference is biography.

A history teacher who takes biography, who takes the lives of personal men and makes them come alive, makes history come alive. And that's what A.T. Pearson is saying. History is a record of facts, but these facts demand a personal factor.

Or it can be very dry and lifeless. And so this week I do plan to focus on history, but we are going to focus on the personal factor of history. And I trust it will inspire and challenge us to the depths of our hearts.

He goes on to say the key to history is biography or the study of a life. Biography is most suggestive, most inspiring, thus most instructive of all studies. To portray the lives of Christian men is to teach theology by example.

To portray the lives of Christian men and women is to teach theology by example. And that's what we're going to be doing through this week. We're going to be looking at theology, but we're not just going to be giving theology up here.

We're going to look at theology by example. And that stirs the heart. To portray the lives of Christian men is to teach theology by example.

Just like when Jesus cast out the devil in the synagogue, remember? When He cast out the devil in the synagogue, you know what the people said? Whoa! What new doctrine is this? What new doctrine is this? Why would they say that? He didn't give a teaching on casting out devils. He just did it! Amen! He didn't give a teaching on it. He just did it! And the people knew that they're one and the same thing.

If they are true reality in our lives, it's one and the same thing. And so, instead of them saying, What is this that He's doing? They said, What is this new doctrine? Hallelujah! I like that. That is a beautiful example of how we're going to approach the early Anabaptists this week.

What new doctrine is this that we see by the way these people lived? Amen! One of the greatest gifts, listen to me, one of the greatest gifts that God gave to man was 160 pages of God-breathed biography of His Son. It's one of the greatest gifts that God gave to man. 160 pages, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, inspired God-breathed biography of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, the express image of the Father.

Isn't that true, brothers and sisters? That is the greatest gift that God could give to us. And it was this biography that captivated the early Anabaptists. They went beyond theology.

They learned their theology by His example. And because they learned their theology by His example, this carried them way beyond the Reformers. Way beyond.

And brothers and sisters, if we will also learn and develop our theology by the example of the Lord Jesus Christ, it may take you places where you never dreamed you'd go also. Amen, Raymond? I want to say more about the New Testament word, witnesses. The New Testament word, witnesses, if you look at it in the Greek, it is the word *martis*.

That's the Greek. It's where we get our English word, martyr. That's the word witness.

You look it up. You go look it up in your Strong's Concordance. You'll find that's what it is all the way through the New Testament.

Sometimes it's translated testimony. Sometimes it's translated witness and witnesses. But every time it's the root word, martyr.

This word means way more than speaking about Christ. However, it does mean speaking about Christ. But it means much more than that.

It means to live a dying life that testifies of Jesus Christ and of His salvation, even all the way unto death. That's what a martyr is. Like Stephen, my faithful witness, God said in Acts chapter 22.

My faithful witness, Stephen. Why did God say that? Because he died? Sorry. Yes and no.

He said that because he died. But he also said that because he lived. Look at the life of his faithful witness, which ended in a pile of stones outside of the city.

Amen? That wasn't the reason why he called Stephen his faithful witness. Stephen was that one who stood there and his face shined like an angel as he stood before the Sanhedrin. So anointed with the Holy Ghost.

So anointed with a holy life. And so anointed with powerful words that they gnashed their teeth when he spake. Yes, my faithful witness, Stephen.

Oh God, have mercy on us. Acts chapter 1 and verse 8 says these words. And ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost has come upon you.

And the result? Oh, you'll have a good feeling. No. No.

That's not what God says. What is the result? Ye shall be my martyrs. You shall be my martyrs.

You shall be martyrs unto me in Jerusalem and in Judea and in Samaria and under the uttermost parts of the earth. That is the result of the Holy Ghost coming upon the early church. Ye shall be martyrs unto me, Jesus said.

And oh, you look into the book of Acts and you can see how beautifully they did live that out. Not just in their dying, but as they lived a dying life. Early Anabaptists were these kind of witnesses.

Yes, Christ was in the early Anabaptists. He found His willing, yielded vessels in them. God will also have His witnesses in this our day.

He will. Perhaps a few examples of life and practice might be in order. Just to skim the surface of their lives this evening to help you to come back on Monday night.

The words of their enemies can be very revealing. The words of the enemies of the Anabaptists, their critics, are quite revealing. They said of the early Anabaptists, listen to this, they are hypocrites of the darkest dye.

They said of the early Anabaptists, they are devilish enemies. But they also said a few other things. And it's so interesting to me that they could do this.

But I believe it was the Spirit of God making them do even what they didn't want to do. But listen to what they said also. While they called them hypocrites of the darkest dye, they also said these people may be readily known by their quiet, unassuming life.

They are modest in their attire and wear neither costly nor unclean clothing. Did you get that balance? Neither costly or unclean clothing. They live by the labor of their hands.

And even their preachers are shoemakers and weavers. They do not lay up riches but are content with that which is necessary. They live pure lives and are temperate in eating and drinking.

They do not visit drinking houses and they do not attend places of amusement. They exercise self-control and may be known by their considerate speaking. For they do not indulge in joking, slander or gossip.

Zwingli said these words who had so much trouble in Zurich with the Anabaptists. In fact, he said that dealing with the Roman Catholic Church is nothing compared to the problems that he has with the Anabaptist people. But he also said this, If you investigate their life and conduct, it seems at first contact irreproachable, pious, unassuming, attractive.

Yea, it seems that they live above this world. Even those who are inclined to be critical will say that their lives are excellent. I like that.

Bollinger, who took over as the head pastor in Zurich after Zwingli lost his life because he bore the sword in battle, he wrote this about them. Those who unite with them will by their ministers be received into the church by rebaptism and repentance and newness of life. That's the only way you can get into their church.

That's what he said. They henceforth lead their lives under a semblance of quite spiritual conduct. They denounce covetousness, pride, profanity, the lewd conversations and immorality of the world, drinking and gluttony they want nothing to do with.

In short, their hypocrisy is great and manifold. That's what he said. Trying to figure out how the devil could make such holy lives out of these people.

He went on to lament these words, that the people are running after the Anabaptists as though they were living safe. And they were, hallelujah. They were.

Capito, and I may not have these pronunciations right, and if you know them better, please forgive me. I'm ignorant. Capito, the reformer in Strasbourg wrote these words in 1527.

I frankly confess that in most Anabaptists there is in evidence piety and consecration and indeed a zeal which is beyond any suspicion of insincerity. That's what he testified about them. The preachers in the canton of Bern, that's another city, said this, The Anabaptists have the semblance of outward piety to a far greater degree than we and all the churches which unitedly with us confess Christ.

And they avoid offensive sins which are very common among us. But yet they're the deceived ones and we're right. Hello.

It seems to me that there was such a witness of right and wisdom in the hearts of these men that their conscience would not allow them except to write the true reality of what these people are like. Oh, but by the way, they were deceived and the devil was leading them. Have you ever heard that one before? And lastly, a Roman Catholic theologian, we'll see what Roman Catholics thought about them, he wrote these words in 1582.

In his treatise called Against the Terrible Errors of the Anabaptists, he wrote, Among the existing heretical sects, there is none which in appearance leads a more modest or pious life than the Anabaptists. As concerns their outward public life, they are irreproachable. No lying, no deception, no swearing, no strife, no harsh language, no intemperate eating or drinking, no outward personal display.

They weren't proud in the way they dressed. It's found in and among them. But instead, humility, patience, uprightness, neatness, honesty, temperance, straightforwardness in such measure that one would suppose that maybe they had the Holy Ghost.

Imagine that. But yet somehow it didn't fit inside their little box. And because it didn't fit inside their little box, somehow they had to say that it's wrong, even though everything that these people lived was beautiful.

It was, yes, the perfection of beauty shining out of Zion in their day. And they missed it. They missed it because of their religion and their laws and their little boxes in which they thought that God's people should be in.

They missed the beauty of these people. Do it again, Lord. Do it again in this hour day.

Do it again here. It's interesting to me how much information about the Anabaptists was gleaned from the negative, critical writings of their enemies. In fact, much of the history has been put together by drawing out of all the things that the enemies wrote about them, and you could see what they believed by what the enemies were saying.

So how did all this begin? It is important for us to go back to the fountainhead. Amen? The springs from which this river began to flow. If we're going to understand the river, we need to go back and take a look at the spring.

We need to go back and look at the beginning. We need to go back and see what it was, what setting it was, and what grace was upon those who were the instruments of the beginning of this movement. Just like in the book of Acts, we must go back a ways to understand Christ in the early church.

We must go back a ways to understand Christ in the early Anabaptists. Back to the life of Christ in the early church. Back to the radical teachings that He gave to them.

Back to the crucifixion that they all stood and watched. Back to the resurrection when they heard that beautiful news, He's not here, He's risen from the dead. And finally, back to the glorious infusion and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost.

That's what explains the book of Acts. Now, what explains these people that we are addressing here this evening? To understand the inner dynamics of the Anabaptist movement, we must look at the religious and political climate of Europe in the day in which they were birthed. It was no doubt the fullness of time.

The time for change was fully ripe in Europe. Gutenberg's press was rolling off copies at a very fast pace by 1517 and following. The Bible had been translated into the German language.

In fact, several translations of it, which by the way, was the language of most of the common people in that day. Before then, they had to understand the Bible through the priests who spoke it in Latin. And so most of the people didn't even know what the Bible said.

They just went by what the priest said it said. But oh, blessed be God, when the Gutenberg press was made and it started cranking off pages and pages and pages of Scripture, and the Scripture was translated from Latin and Greek into German, which was the language of the common people, the common people began to get their hands on a few pages of that book called the Bible. And when they started reading it in their own language, in a language which they could understand, the lights began to go off in their hearts.

It's still the same today. Amen. In fact, the religious leaders today will tell you, don't read too much of the Bible.

It will make you go mad. Well, that sounds like something that a king said to the Apostle Paul one time. Thy much reading hath made thee mad, Paul.

Amen. It's true. It's true.

So, German was the language of the common people in those days. Still looking at the setting, the religious and the political setting. Wolseyan missionaries had been distributing hand-copied portions of

the Bible for 200 years, here and there, secretly, carefully, dropping off little portions of the Bible, which they copied out by hand to a hungry soul in this town and a hungry soul in that town.

That had been taking place for 200 years. Luther in Germany took his stand and put his 95 Theses on the wall of the church. In Wittenberg, I think.

He took his stand against Rome in 1517. Zwingli in Switzerland did the same thing in 1518. And things were beginning to stir in Europe.

Why? Because the Bible was given in the language of the people. Why? Because it was the fullness of time. Why? Because darkness had covered the earth for a long, long time and God was ready to move in its origin.

The Reformation movement stood for the vital restoration of primitive Christianity. It's very important for us to note that here this evening. Very significant for our own lives.

The Restoration movement or the Reformation movement, in its origin, it was a vital desire for a vital restoration of primitive Christianity. However, in just a few short years, the leaders of the movement, and I mean more than just Zwingli and Luther, the leaders of the movement felt that a union of the state with the church was needed in order to be successful. We're not going to be able to do it.

So we're going to have to bring the state in here to help this thing along. This compromise, in order to avoid persecution, and that's what it was, it was a compromise in order to avoid persecution, moved them from trusting God to trusting the government or the arm of the flesh. And the clouds of gray and eventually dark black settled in over them again.

In the beginning, the leaders of the Reformation and the leaders of the radical Reformation, or the Anabaptists, walked together. It's very important for us to grasp this. Not just so we can look back at it and say, hmm, too bad, too bad.

But it's important for us to grasp it for our own lives. For our own lives. Because there was a point in time when the leaders of the Reformation and the leaders of the radical Reformation, the Anabaptists, were walking together.

They were walking in the light together. They were studying the Bible together. They were discussing what they saw and comparing notes together.

They were clearly seeing the great gap between the New Testament and the Roman church of their day. They were seeing those things together. There was a time when they sat in circles in a room somewhere and discussed these things and discussed what the Bible said.

And they were in agreement on many, many points. It is both shocking and frightening to read what Zwingli and Luther wrote from 1518 to 1522. They wrote some pretty powerful things.

They spoke about infant baptism. They spoke about believing in the baptism of true believers only. They spoke about a pure and a free and a voluntary church.

They spoke about the mass and how that it was wrong and way off the foundation of New Testament Christianity. They spoke about a church that was not governed by the state. They even spoke about the persecution that this will bring as they walk in the light of all these things that are dawning on them.

But there came a point in time when these men could no longer walk together. There came a point in time when these men could no longer walk together. George Blorock, Conrad Grebel, Simon Stump.

Did you get that? Simon Stump. That's Dean Stump's ancestors. Felix Mons, Balthazar Hubmeier and others.

They said, we must obey the Scriptures. Zwingli said, we must obey the city council. These early, these young upstarts, these young men, these Bible students said, we must obey the Scriptures at all costs.

But Zwingli said, we must obey the city council. That was the beginning of the end of their Reformation fellowship. And rightly so.

I tremble to consider the depth of what happened here at this point. And we shouldn't be too quick to judge the Reformers. Don't jump on them this evening.

Sit in your own seat for a while and look at your own life and think about all the things that you've seen in the Scripture. But yet you backed away and said, oh, if I do that, what will people say if I do that? What will happen to me if I say that? They'll throw me out of the church if I go do that. I'll be in trouble if I do that.

If I get baptized, I'll lose my family, I'll lose my inheritance. And we back off because of that. So we can't be too hard on the Reformers.

But we just want to look at them and take a lesson. Because from that point up to that point, they were walking in the same light. I mean, the light was going on.

Look at that. Look what the Bible says. Oh, but look at the way it is in the church.

Look what the Bible says here. But look at the way it is in the Roman church. Look at this.

We are justified by faith, not by all these things we're doing in the church and all these rituals. Wow, isn't that beautiful? There was a point in time when they were walking in the light, and the light was glorious, and the light was inspiring them. But there came a point in time where they had to make a decision.

This is going to cost me more than I'm willing to pay. Perhaps there would be a way around this crucifying cross that is standing in front of me. And that's what the early Reformers did.

And brothers and sisters, whether we like it or not, we've been doing much of the same thing. Maybe not on the same issues. No, believers, baptism, that's not an issue today.

But maybe it is for some of you. What is the way around this cross? So we shouldn't be too quick to judge the Reformers. The cost of obedience can be very high for us also.

And we often choose the easier road of silence and compromise, even today. The little group had three choices after that last meeting when Zwingli said, we will do what the city council says. They had three choices to make.

Number one, they could be quiet and conform to the conscience of the group. That was one choice. Number two, they could leave Zurich.

Number three, they could obey Christ and face imprisonment and much persecution. They chose the last one. They chose the last one.

Aren't you glad tonight that they chose the last one? Look how much of what we have today hinges on the decision that those few men made back there in 1525. Look at it. Do you think that the decisions that you make are less important than the ones that they made? Don't kid yourself.

Don't kid yourself. They are very important. They are very important to you.

They are very important to your life. They are very important to your family. They are very important to your posterity in the many, many generations to come.

They are very important to the neighbors that live around you. It is very important, the decisions that we make in our lives. Just like back there.

They chose the last one. We will obey Christ and face imprisonment and persecution because of it. A few days later, a dozen men, a dozen men soberly trudged through the snow at nighttime to the house of Felix Mons.

They were very sober. The whole thing was sinking down into their hearts, the things that Zwingli had told them in the last meeting that they had and told them you must submit or you are going to be in trouble. This thing had been stirring in their hearts for a few days.

They were all going to a meeting, a nighttime meeting at the house of Felix Mons. The story of what happened that night is recorded and I want to read a little of it to you here this evening. And what I would like you to do this evening, we are going to return to this story because this picture, this scene and the picture of this scene has about 50,000 words in it.

So we are going to go back to it again, but I just want you to picture the scene in your heart. And here is what I would like you to do. Instead of being a spectator, I want you to put yourself in the shoes of these 12 men trudging through the snow at night, sneaking off to a place where they can meet privately to do business with God.

As they were gathered there in the house of Felix Mons, it came to pass that they were together and as they were together, the fear of God rose up within them and came upon the gathering. The fear of God settled down upon them. May I just say it? The fear of God is the presence of God and the presence of God is the fear of God.

And whenever the presence of God is around, the fear of God is there. And the fear of God settled down upon them, so much so that they were constrained or pressed in their hearts. Then they got down on their knees before the highest God in heaven.

It is just as if the Spirit of God brought them all down on their knees and they cried to Him in brokenness. They cried to Him that night because He knew their hearts. They prayed that He would help them to do His will and show His mercy to them because flesh and blood or human instigation had not brought them to this place.

They all knew as they sat there in that meeting that it wasn't their own little ideas that brought them there, but it was the Spirit of God working in each one of their hearts that brought them there. So thus, they cried out to God in brokenness and prayed. They well knew that their patience would be tried and that they would have to suffer for this which they were about to do.

After the prayer, George of the house of Jacob, or George Blaurock, got up. He had asked God to show him His will in his prayer and he got up. And he asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him with the correct Christian baptism upon his faith and testimony.

I want to be rightly baptized, he said. Will you baptize me? I am not satisfied with the baptism that I had before. Would you baptize me? When he knelt down with this desire, Conrad Grebel baptized him because at that time no servant had been ordained to handle such a work.

After this, the others asked George to baptize them, which he did upon their request. In this way, they gave themselves together to the name of the Lord in high fear of God. They commended one another to the service of the gospel.

They began to teach and to hold the faith. They began to separate themselves from the world and break themselves off from all evil works. This picture, brothers and sisters, we will return to again.

For it has 50,000 words in it. But tonight, I'd like us just to consider our own lives for a few minutes in closing. This little walk around Zion that we've made this evening, it has not been given to us just as something interesting that we could look at tonight.

It has not been given to us. It has not been preserved for us so that it could stimulate our minds a bit. But this little walk around Zion has been given to us that it might be a challenge to our own very lives.

Let me ask you just a few questions in closing tonight. How does this little walk around Zion apply to you tonight? Where you sit, July 2008 in Lancaster County. How does this little walk around Zion apply to me today, 2008? What about the compromise? How does it apply to me? Are we walking in the light that God has given to us? You see that little lesson there, that little departure that took place, which was just a little departure in the beginning, but it turned into a very, very wide gap.

Such a wide departure that they who at one time sat in the same room talking about the same Scriptures, talking about the same applications, they on the one side turned around and pronounced the death sentence on the others. Imagine what not walking in the light will do. I wonder how many others have pronounced the death sentence on their Christian brothers and sisters because they were not willing to walk in all the light that God gave them.

How does this little walk around Zion apply to me tonight? Could you join those dozen men on their knees if the opportunity was given to you this evening? Could your heart rise up and unite with them and run alongside of them knowing that yea, you as well as they would be in prison in just a matter of a few days? Could you go there? Could you get on your knees next to them? Could you join their communion, their church? Are you like-minded with them? Have you been born again by the Spirit of God? Is God living inside of you? And I'm not talking to the Amish men that are sitting in this tent tonight, though there are some in this tent tonight. Have you been born again by the Spirit of God? Does God live inside of you? We're going to give an invitation this evening for anybody that God is speaking to. You know, if we respond to the light that God shines on our heart, God gives us more light.

If we shut ourselves up to the light that God shines in our heart, God gives us cloudiness. So I just want to open up the altar here this evening as we bring this message to a close and ask you, what is God saying to your heart? Are there things stirring inside of your heart this evening? Even this evening, this first evening, just this introduction to what the early Anabaptists were like, that God is stirring in your heart this

evening that you need to make things right. Are you in need of salvation? Crystal clear this evening.

A born-again experience that is without question, that you know without a doubt, God has come to live inside of me. That is what salvation is, my friend. It's not a trip to the altar.

It's not a prayer that you pray. It's God living inside of you. And when God comes to live inside of you, you will know it.

You will know it! The fear of God will also settle upon you! And so, I open the altar this evening with an invitation to any of you who need to come. Maybe you need to get something right in your heart. Maybe you're not born again and you need to respond.

Maybe you just need to come and fall on your face and say, God, deal with me this week. Deal with my heart. Make me like these people.

I want to be like them. Maybe you need to just come and say that to God. Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord.

And the Lord will lift you up. We're going to have a prayer and then have a song of invitation. What is the song of invitation, brother? Number 55.

If you can open your songbooks there, we're going to have a prayer. And then we're going to sing. Oh, if God is moving upon your heart, we just want to give you an opportunity to come.

Even as last night, oh, many came last evening. Praise God! Let's do business with God. Amen? We're just not here to be entertained.

May God change us! Let us pray. Oh, yes, Father. When the high and holy fear of God settled down upon them in that room, so much so that they were constrained, they were pressed in their hearts, and they dropped down on their knees.

Oh, Lord, we pray that the high and holy fear of God would settle down upon us tonight. That we would also be pressed in our hearts to fall upon our knees. Lord, we commit the invitation into your care.

You promised you'd send your Holy Spirit to convict. And I pray you'll do that tonight in the hearts of all these dear people. And I ask it in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Amen. Alright, let's sing number 55. And as we're singing, if you have a need, you just come to the front.

We won't tear you long. We want to give you an opportunity.

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