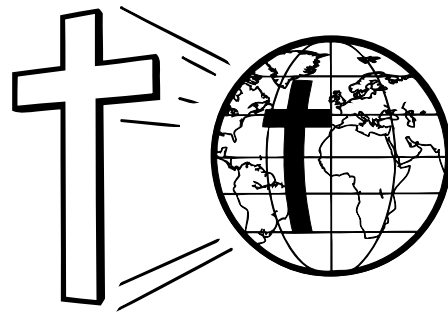


Foundation of Faith



500 YEARS OF REFORMATION



SOLA SCRIPTURA

SOLUS CHRISTUS

SOLA GRATIA AND SOLA FIDE

**REFORMATION AND
THE CHURCH OF GOD**

RETURN TO YOUR FIRST LOVE

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

For many locales, November is the time when rays of sunshine break through the fog and rainclouds much less often. The frost has already done its job, in part. The nice autumn leaves have lost their bright colors and have wilted and fallen to the ground. Blooming, growing, and harvesting have come to an end. Death before the sleep of winter has set in.

King Solomon attests, despite his riches: "All is vanity. What profit has a man from all his labor . . . ? One generation passes away, and another generation comes . . ." (Ecclesiastes 1:2-4). Everything is futile and fleeting, and often all effort is in vain.

Although everything on earth is subject to transience, God has given us the eternal, imperishable Word. For that reason, we are so thankful that after the terrible apostasy and dark night of the Middle Ages, the Lord chose instruments who desired to set the Word of God on the lampstands once again. They were the forerunners of the Reformation who proclaimed the Word of God to the people: Peter Waldus in France, John Wycliffe in England, John Huss in Bohemia, and Savonarola in Italy.

And 500 years ago, it was Martin Luther who, in 1517, posted the 95 Theses on the Castle Church in Wittenberg. While he was in hiding at Wartburg, he worked on translating the Bible. And after working on it for less than three months, he presented the completed manuscript of the New Testament to his helper Melancthon on March 6, 1522. Already in September 1522, the first 3000 Testaments were printed and were out of print within a few weeks.

God opened the windows of heaven so wonderfully so that back then, in 10 years, 45 print runs of the New Testament were produced, and then in 1534, the first full edition of the Bible from Martin Luther appeared.

Yes, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:35)!

H. D. Nimz

500 Years of Reformation

This present year, 2017, marks the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Martin Luther (1483-1546) is usually credited with the beginning of that reformation. He posted 95 theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany on October 31, 1517. The reformation principles of sola scriptura (only scripture), that the Bible is the authority in matters of theology, and sola fide (only faith), that salvation is by faith in Jesus Christ alone, were the most significant foundational proclamations in the posting. During the Middle Ages, the Roman Catholic Church taught that salvation is possible through good works and penance. Luther, however, agreed with Augustine (340-430), who insisted that the authority of the Bible stands above that of church officials, and also taught that salvation is by the grace of God.

Two important factors without which Luther's reformation would have been impossible were the recent invention of the printing press and the political tension that allowed Frederick the Wise to protect Luther from Rome's intention to put him to death. During Luther's concealment in Wartburg, he started to translate the Bible into German. This translation helped shape the German language by giving it a standard and allowing High German to become the written norm.

We thank Martin Luther for the reformation principles of sola scriptura, upholding the authority of the Bi-

ble, and sola fide, salvation by faith alone. Another principle of the Reformation is sola gratia (only by grace). As important as Martin Luther was, he was not the only reformer at that time. Both John Calvin, the Swiss reformer, and Menno Simons, who was born in Friesland, lived at the time of Luther. Both Calvin and Luther kept the practice of infant baptism. It was Menno Simons (1496-1561), along with the Anabaptists, who took the reformation one step further, realizing that baptism is for believers. One of the scriptures they used to show that baptism is for those who are born again is Mark 16:16: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." This scripture shows us that believing comes before baptism. Since infants do not have the capacity to believe, they are not candidates fit for baptism.

In 1675, Philipp Jakob Spener, along with Pietists within the Lutheran church called for a deeper heartfelt Christianity emphasizing moral living. August Hermann Francke (1663-1727) did much to help establish this moral reformation in Germany. Later in England, influenced by the Pietists, John Wesley (1703-1791) and John Fletcher (1729-1785) took the reformation principles even further and began to see sanctification as a distinct work of grace obtainable after one is born again. Through the Methodists in America, and especially

through the teaching and writings of Phoebe Palmer (1807-1874), entire sanctification and holy living became to be understood as Christian principles, and this led to the formation of the National Camp Meeting Association for the Promotion of Holiness in 1867.

It was his connection with the holiness movement that prompted Daniel S. Warner (1842-1895) to start publishing the Gospel Trumpet, a holiness periodical, in 1881. This became the mouthpiece of a new movement. In his book, Birth of a Reformation, A. L. Byers outlines the life and labors of D. S. Warner and details how his reformation led to the Church of God movement of which we are a part of today. Warner taught that it is salvation that makes you part of the Church of God. There is only one church and all who are born again belong to it. The church is the family of God. You do not join it, you are born into it.

The light we have today was not revealed all at once. God used reformers such as Martin Luther, Menno Simons, John Wesley and D. S. Warner to progressively teach “the way of God more accurately” (Acts 18:26b).

Gerry Mielke

A Mighty Fortress

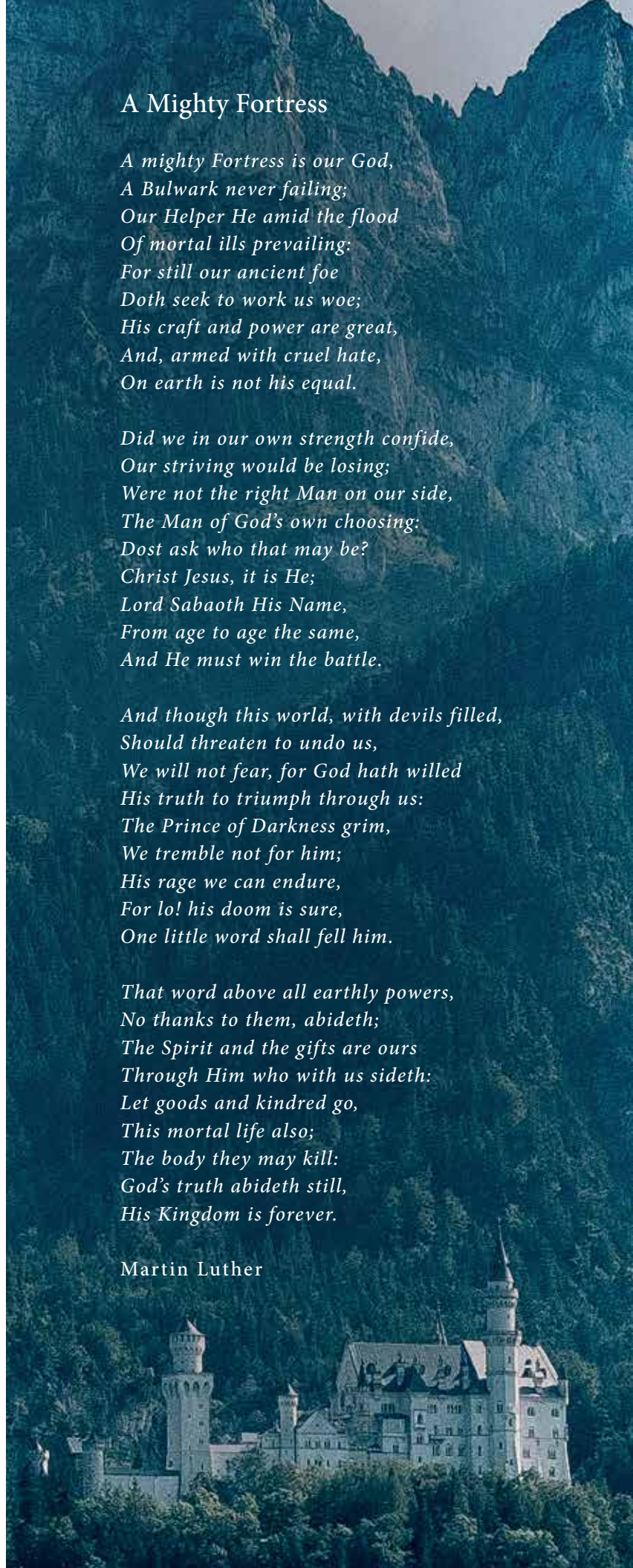
*A mighty Fortress is our God,
A Bulwark never failing;
Our Helper He amid the flood
Of mortal ills prevailing;
For still our ancient foe
Doth seek to work us woe;
His craft and power are great,
And, armed with cruel hate,
On earth is not his equal.*

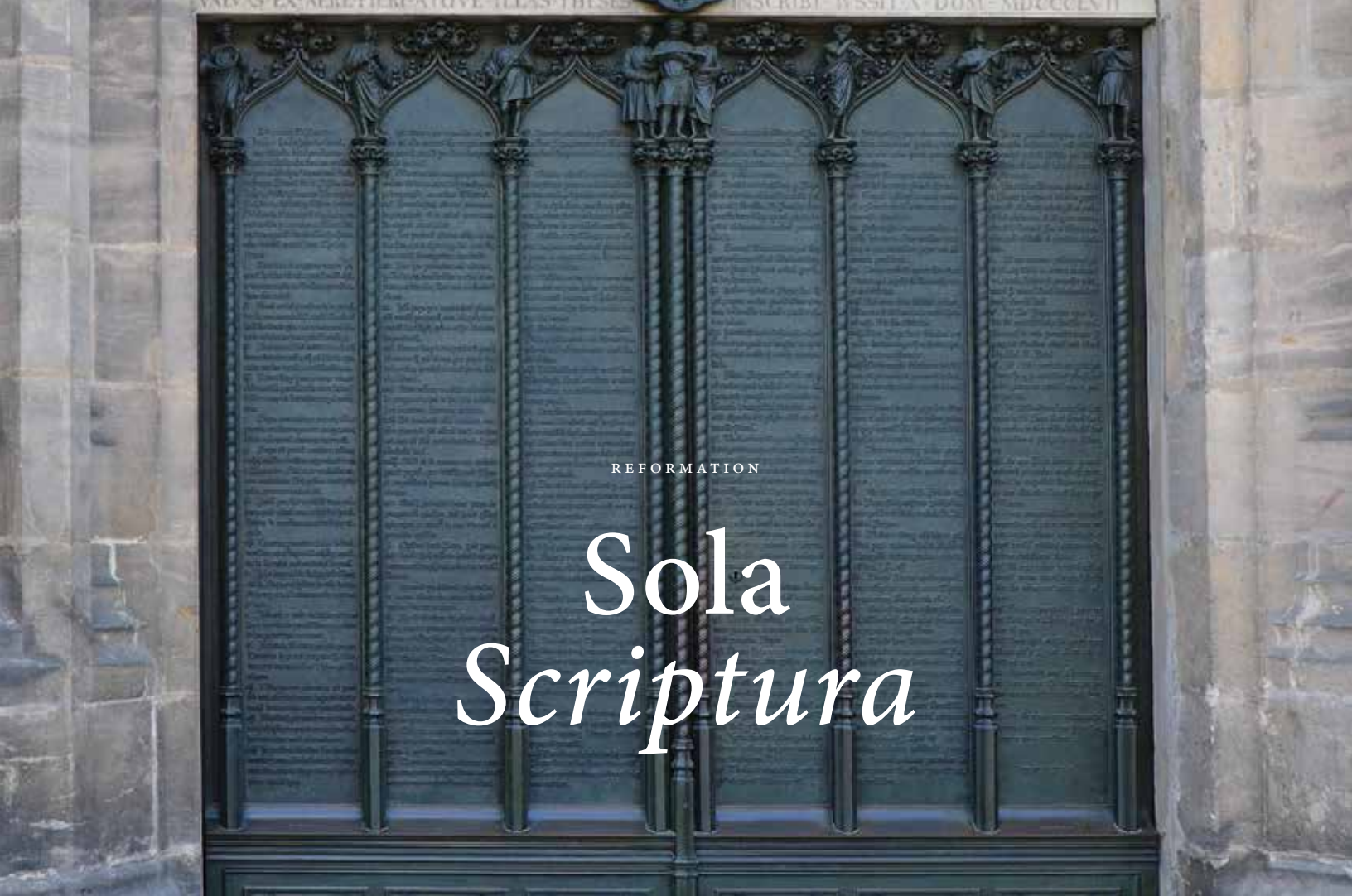
*Did we in our own strength confide,
Our striving would be losing;
Were not the right Man on our side,
The Man of God's own choosing:
Dost ask who that may be?
Christ Jesus, it is He;
Lord Sabaoth His Name,
From age to age the same,
And He must win the battle.*

*And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us:
The Prince of Darkness grim,
We tremble not for him;
His rage we can endure,
For lo! his doom is sure,
One little word shall fell him.*

*That word above all earthly powers,
No thanks to them, abideth;
The Spirit and the gifts are ours
Through Him who with us sideth:
Let goods and kindred go,
This mortal life also;
The body they may kill:
God's truth abideth still,
His Kingdom is forever.*

Martin Luther





REFORMATION

Sola Scriptura

“Unless I am convinced by evidence of Scripture or clear reason—for I believe neither the pope nor councils alone, it being no secret that they have often been wrong and contradicted themselves—I am overcome by the Scriptures I have cited, and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I therefore neither can nor wish to renounce anything, since acting contrary to one’s conscience is difficult, unwholesome, and dangerous. I can do no other. Here I stand. May God help me! Amen!”

These lines formed the centerpiece of Martin Luther’s speech of defense before the Diet of Worms. It established one of the Reformation’s most important doctrines, namely of Holy Scripture alone as the final authority in all questions of worship and as a sure guide through all of life. It was a basic principle of the Reformation that Scripture alone is the answer to all our questions and that we only need to ask humbly and persistently in order to receive an answer from the same.

In Luther’s time, Latin was internationally the primary language of the Church; the principle of “by Scripture alone” therefore became known as “sola scriptura.”

Let us take a closer look at what Luther said: “Un-

less I am convinced by evidence of Scripture or clear reason . . .” In prior debates, Luther had dared to interpret the Bible differently from the pope and church councils. For this reason, he was repeatedly accused of arrogance. Luther did not take these accusations lightly, but rather agonized over them. He absolutely acknowledged that he could be wrong. However, he believed the same of the pope and councils. In his opinion, the only infallible source of truth was Holy Scripture. It alone is never wrong. Luther also felt obligated to obey what he recognized as holy truth based on careful scriptural study unless his opponents were able to convince him that his understanding of doctrine did not coincide with Scripture.

Luther’s convictions were also related to the realization that the Word of God is very clear. The reformers

coined the term “Clarity of Scripture” (“claritas scripturae”). They sought to clarify that the significant contents of the Bible are so unambiguous and straightforward that they could be easily understood by any reasonable person.

Since the precise understanding of God’s words is at stake, the principle of *sola scriptura* requires great care when it comes to biblical texts. Despite all of the blessings of Scripture, there is a risk in its interpretation. The danger of human weakness is not to be underestimated. We may, for example, approach the Bible through the scope of more or less fixed preconceptions. We may unwittingly advocate opinions and beliefs that do not come from God. We may tend to prefer believing what we want to believe and look for reasons to ignore what we do not want to believe. This presents a great danger if we are attracted to a false doctrine and a serious obstacle if we find a particular biblical truth unappealing. It is a constant challenge to overcome the sinful tendency to read into the Bible the things we would like to find there.

Even the reformers were not immune to this danger. They, too, were only human, and we will find errors with them and with some of their insights. This is not surprising if we take into account the darkness from which they emerged and how painstakingly they had to fight for the truth one step at a time, often under threat to their lives. However, they did recognize Scripture’s holy authority. They saw that God’s Word must have the final say and that nothing, truly nothing at all, stands alongside the Scriptures. For this reason, God was able to use them to bring significant biblical truths back into the light.

It is important to learn anew from the reformers to what extent the Bible is God’s clear and definitive Word. It is His unambiguous Word, in which God means exactly what He says, and which does not and cannot have any peers. This is particularly relevant in our time, in which our own discretion, our own feelings, human dogma, and our own experiences are given equal or even greater weight than the Bible.

It is important for us to understand our human blind spots and to read biblical texts with even greater care.

It is also important for us to truly understand the reverence and love for God’s Word that the people of that time had and how moved they were to have the opportunity to hold the Word of God in their hands and read it. We must grow to appreciate the value of a Bible once again. This is something we can learn from the people

of the Reformation; for them, owning a Bible was an incredible treasure, something exceedingly great, and a gift from God. Many had to pay for this privilege with their lives, but to them it was worth it.

Paul says: “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5). The principle of *sola scriptura* remains worthless for us if it does not lead to a scriptural lifestyle. We must therefore continually examine ourselves to see if we truly allow Scripture the final word in all things. This extends not only to the big questions of spiritual life but also to all questions of personal and congregational life. Are we even looking for the answers to our questions in Scripture? Do we really share the mindset of the psalmist who wrote, “Your testimonies also are my delight and my counselors” (Psalm 119:24)?

Let us take career choice as an example. The Bible does not, of course, tell me whether I should be a doctor, a baker, a teacher, or an engineer. However, the Bible does teach me important principles that are decisive for doing right before God. For example, Scripture teaches me that I should feed my family with my career. A career that satisfies my interests but does not support my family can therefore not be the right one. Scripture also teaches me the moral principles of integrity, purity, and responsibility. This also eliminates some career paths. God’s Word teaches me the value of fellowship with believers. A career for which I would need to move to a place without a congregation can therefore not be God’s will for my life. In addition, the Bible teaches me the value of common sense. I am consequently prompted to use my common sense and to discover where my strengths lie and in which career field I can apply my strengths and efforts to serve to God’s glory. Above all, the Bible teaches me the value of prayer. The question of career choice must therefore be a serious prayer request, and God must be asked for guidance. If we proceed in this manner, we will not necessarily hear a voice from heaven telling us to choose a certain career in particular. However, we can experience God’s guidance toward a career that suits us and conforms to God’s will. God will bless us if we act according to Scripture.

Sola scriptura—by Scripture alone! May remembering the Reformation grant us new love and reverence for the Word of God, and may it help us to live in accordance with Scripture.

Christian Ress,
Herford (DE)

Solus Christus

An additional principle of the Reformation was: Christ alone - solus Christus (latin).

It was the pioneering conviction of the reformers that the Truth is found in Scripture alone. At that time, the church taught that while the Holy Scriptures were valid, there were other traditions of the church which had equal authority and validity. This is why it was such a crucial point for the Reformation that these men of God came out of the darkness of Scripture “and” other traditions to the clarity of *sola scriptura*, by Scripture alone. Nothing else, absolutely nothing was to be considered to be equal to the Holy Scripture!

This speaks to us and the question arises whether we might have, knowingly or not, also added an “and” next to Scripture. Our “and” may not consist of parochial traditions, but of our own discretion and feelings, perhaps certain experiences or human theorems.

The clear *sola scriptura* was crucial to the Reformation then and God can still use the same principle to work vital reformations today—in personal lives, family life, church life and even in society.

An additional principle of the Reformation was: Christ alone! The Latin expression for this principle was *solus Christus* and it meant Christ alone. His character, His work and His teachings are to be the foundation of our faith and our salvation, not the Catholic church, not priests, and not saints.

Solus Christus—this truth was precious to the reformers. Calvin stated, “We see that our whole salvation and all its parts are comprehended in Christ.” It was in this way that the reformers found peace with God, assurance of salvation, courage, and true joy in the Lord. We also find it in the wealth of songs from the time of the Reformation, such as a song by Paul Gerhard where two of the 15 stanzas read:

Nought, nought, can e'er condemn me,
My courage take away:
Hell's flames can ne'er o'erwhelm me,
For me they're quenched for aye.
No sentence e'er can move me,
No evil e'er deject,
My Savior who doth love me,
Doth with His wings protect.

My heart with joy is springing,
And sad I cannot be,
'Tis full of joy and singing,
The sunshine doth it see.
The Sun that looks with pleasure
On me is Christ my King;
The glory beyond measure
That waits me, makes me sing.

Solus Christus! This principle was lost in the church of that day. It had placed an “and” beside Jesus with other doctrines. Jesus “and” other things was largely due to the fact that the principle *sola scriptura* had been lost. Here it is clearly obvious how close the connection is between *sola scriptura* and *solus Christus*. The loss of *sola scriptura* opens the door to other losses, including that of *solus Christus*.

This should lead us to introspection and reflection. This danger is age-old and also existed during the time of the apostles. Paul fought hard against the teaching that we need Jesus and the Law for our salvation (Galatians 5:1-12). The principle *solus Christus* describes Paul’s entire teaching and life. He also ensured that this principle would not be lost—not in his life nor in the church.

Solus Christus meant more to Paul than merely battling false doctrine. Above all, it meant that Christ was all in all to him. He clearly expresses this in numerous passages of Scripture including to the Colossians, “And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence” (Colossians 1:18).

Is that really true for me? Have I, knowingly or not, added my own “and” next to Jesus? Is Christ really my all in all, the First, the One who has preeminence in all things? Are the things that I am not willing to give up in my own life really not just an indication that I am not prepared to give Him preeminence in all things? We lose so much (John 12:24) if we add an “and” next to Jesus.

We need a definite *solus Christus* for our personal faith. However, that is not all. Colossians 1:18 starts by establishing Christ as the head of the church in order to make clear that Christ is to have preeminence in all things. The head of a body decides everything that one does. It rules and guides the entire body. Paul uses this image to describe Christ’s scriptural position in the New Testament church. Christ is the head and has preeminence in all things. This then constitutes a corresponding position for the church, otherwise everything remains wishful thinking, merely a theory.

Solus Christus, this truth is only recognized in the church if the Lord can rule everything in it’s life: the doctrine, the activities, the organization, the policies, and the decisions which need to be made. Only that is *solus Christus* in the practical life of the church.

We again note how closely associated *sola scriptura* and *solus Christus* are to each other. For God’s plans for my life as well as the life of the church can only be found in Scripture. I may not find a verse that addresses every specific subject matter, giving a direct answer. However, I will always find biblical principles that put every issue into a biblical context and address the root of the issue. I believe that this also often requires us to read all of Scripture carefully because such guidance and answers cannot be shaken out of your sleeve. That can take a lot of diligence, time and effort. However, whatever does not cost a lot, is often not worth a lot.

Christ is the alpha and omega of a church (Revelation 1:11) only when Scripture is at the beginning and at the end of its thoughts. *Solus Christus* in a church where He is the head and where He has preeminence, where He can guide and build the church can only be achieved through a faithful and diligent *sola scriptura*. Otherwise, it all remains wishful thinking.

It was once said of the disciples, “When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only” (Matthew 17:8). They saw Jesus only, so no circumstance to worry about and no people to hold them back. They also did not despondently look to themselves in all their imperfection, but looked away from all that and saw no one but Jesus. This occurrence is a beautiful image of how a healthy and blessed life of faith looks. This is God’s plan for us (Hebrews 12:1–3).

In eternity, we will thankfully look back at every situation and every decision where we in faith saw no one but Jesus. It will be more clear to us then than ever before, how critical this was for us. Let us aim for that today, for that is *solus Christus* in practice.

Christian Reiß,
Herford (DE)

Sola Gratia and Sola Fide

Only Grace and Only Faith

During the darkness of the Middle Ages, God sent rays of light, giving deep spiritual knowledge. Salvation was given to mankind exclusively by God.

Throughout the past centuries, mankind was taught that salvation could be acquired through good works, intercessory prayer of the saints, and participation in the sacraments of consecrated priests. During this time, the Catholic faith pervaded all areas of life, and the power of the church reigned in personal lives. However, these “Christians” lived in spiritual darkness and far from God. The light (Matthew 4:16; John 8:12) that God sent through the birth of the Savior was concealed from them. Into this spiritual darkness, God in His mercy sent beams of divine light and knowledge. The Holy Spirit enlightened the searching soul of the Augustinian monk Martin Luther and revealed important fundamental truths of the gospel as he studied the Word of God.

Luther related what a powerful deliverance he experienced when, during a time of quiet contemplation, God revealed to him the deep meaning of Romans 1:17: “For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, the just shall live by faith.” The righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21) is a gift of grace, which mankind will only receive through faith in Jesus Christ. Man is not in the position to bring about God’s gift and forgiveness; it is not possible for him to achieve or enforce salvation through his own will. God gives him everything at the cost of Christ—solely out of grace.

Grace

The overall understanding of grace is the opposite of retaliation or enforcement of the law. We understand this as a free, undeserving favor which someone of a higher rank grants to one under him as he removes or lessens the sentenced punishment. Proof of grace can also be shown when a debt is forgiven. Jesus gives us a descriptive example of grace in the Parable of the Unforgiving Servant (Matthew 18:21-27). Even though the servant owed his master an immense debt and deserved punishment, the master had compassion on him. He lifted the penalty and, in addition, cleared his debt. [We read of] this idea of grace from the letter to Titus with the following words: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). Thus, God’s grace is evident in His inexpressible great love, with which He loves all mankind without looking at what they actually deserve or are worthy of. His desire is that everyone would experience salvation in faith (2 Peter 3:9) and that God’s grace would heal the soul that is burdened with sin.

Even though God offers grace to each individual, it still remains a personal gift. Everyone experiences this divine invitation personally and differently. Peter experienced his gift of grace at the Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1-11). At first, he was totally unaware that he was in

the presence of God. But as he heard the wholesome words of the Savior that He was preaching from a boat, his heart was deeply moved. After Jesus was finished, He asked Peter to take his boat out once more and fish. He obeyed, although it contradicted his expert experience, and behold, he successfully returned with a large amount of fish. Even though the harbor was full of people and his colleagues were standing around him, he felt totally alone in the presence of a holy and divine God, and knelt at the feet of Jesus. God's grace began working personally in his soul. This grace changed his life completely.

Grace not only gives us salvation and redemption and saves from the chains of sin, grace opens a door to a life full of splendor and riches. God equips us daily with what we need to live a holy life. Every morning, God allows us to draw grace from His unending fullness (John 1:16) and makes us capable of living a life according to the attitude of Christ. This is the only way we can live out the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and proclaim the message of divine grace to others.

Grace is a divine gift from God, which each individual can either accept or reject. In Jesus' parting words to His disciples, He instructed them to go forth and preach the gospel. He sent them into the whole world to preach to all nations, and gave them the divine doctrine: "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16). Likewise, the powerful Word speaks regarding the love of God: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Two magnificent elements become clear: the love that God displayed as He gave His only Son is for the entire world. Next, the deep truth that everyone (once again, not one person is overlooked) who sincerely believes in the Son of God will receive everlasting life. Therefore, every spiritually awakened person must make the personal decision whether or not to repent, believe, and accept Christ as his personal Savior.

Faith

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews

11:6). "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Romans 3:28).

In faith, the sinner stands before his Savior in a state of brokenheartedness and worthlessness. In the light of God's grace, he sees his self-righteousness (Isaiah 64:5-6) and good works through God's eyes: it is all in vain and worthless. Through his faith in God, his vision is sharpened, making him see the dimension of his guilt and sin distinctly. Faith recognizes the association between personal guilt and Christ's plan of salvation. My Savior had to die because I have sinned. The believer sets himself and his life knowingly under the doctrine and divine principles. He also becomes aware of the promises in God's Word, which lead him to salvation. Faith in God and His reconciliation saves from death (John 6:40, 47).

It is only through God's grace that the door is opened which through faith leads to everlasting life. It is only grace and faith, not our works, our service, or self-righteousness. Our ancestry does not give us an advantage or disadvantage; the way to salvation is only available through God's grace.

Faith is the sense through which we can understand and recognize God. As human beings, we are unable to see, hear, and taste God with our natural senses. However, through faith we can see our Savior, and through faith we hear His voice. In full faith, the child of God stands in His presence and leaves behind all darkness and doubt which separate him from God. Faith grasps God's deep love to mankind, and in all awareness allows himself to fall in the omniscient will of God. This is an experience, or better said, a true revelation which the Holy Spirit anchors in our mind and consciousness (Romans 8:38-39).

Through faith, we acknowledge that our life is a mosaic piece in God's work of art. Faith looks past the trials. Despite life's battles, the Christian is able to sing songs of victory and walk through the dark valley without fear. Faith holds strong to God's unchanging loyalty. The believer knows that God's grace upholds us, even in times of weakness, when prayer is strained. Faith carries us through from time into eternity until we are able to see Jesus, who gave us salvation through His sacrifice of love and whose power will never fail, until we reach the goal!

Hermann Vogt
Gifhorn, DE

Reformation of the Church of God

We have this wonderful promise of Jesus: “I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16,18)!

Peter’s testimony, that Jesus Christ is the living Son of God, is grounded on the eternal foundation of God’s Word. “And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth” (John 1:14).

Therefore, neither Peter nor John nor any bishop, pope, priest or preacher is the builder of the Church of God. Only Christ is. He alone laid the godly foundation. He alone is the godly high priest and the lamb of God who brought our reconciliation. He alone is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls! Yes, only the Holy Spirit calls and appoints His servants to “shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood” (Acts 20:28).

This light, yes, this knowledge of Jesus and His Church, as it was shown from the beginning in God’s Word is the foundation and key for the reformation of the Church. The brethren and pioneers made His longing become reality. He desired for His people to come out of confusion, out of human traditions, and out of false teachings and to return to the Bible. Brother Teasley clearly shows us this endeavor:

Back to the blessed old Bible,
Back to the city of God,
Back to the oneness of heaven,
Back where the faithful have trod,
Back from the land of confusion,
Free from the bondage of creeds,
Back to the light of the morning,
Jesus, our Captain, leads.

Back to the blessed old Bible,
Saints of Jehovah, rejoice;
Jesus is calling His children
Back to the land of their choice;
Often the people had sought it
While they in Babel abode;
Now we have found the fair city,
Church of the living God.

Back to the blessed old Bible,
Back at the Master’s call,
Back to the words of our Savior,
Loving, obeying them all,
Never in sects to be scattered,
Never again to do wrong:
Unity, holiness, heaven,
Ever shall be our song.

Back to the blessed old Bible,
Back to the light of its word;
Be on our banners forever,
Holiness unto the Lord.

The 1880 Reformation of the Church of God, was a result of deep study of the Holy Scriptures. In the Bible, those seeking found the answer to the following question: “What does Scripture say about the Church of God?”—The Word of God had the answer.

The first trait of the Church of God is holiness

1. “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

2. “That He [Christ] might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish” (Ephesians 5:27).

3. Where purity is, there God is, and where God is, there is the Church of God! In Acts 4:31 we read: “And when they had prayed, the place where they were assembled together was shaken; and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness.”

The second trait of the Church of God is unity

1. There is only one, true, heavenly Father (Matthew 23:9; Ephesians 3:14-15).

2. There is one godly Shepherd (John 10:12-16). “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned



to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25).

3. Christ only has one body (Romans 12:4-5). There is fellowship in the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16). “For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body” (1 Corinthians 12:13).

4. Only Christ has one Church (Matthew 16:18). He bought the Church by His blood (Acts 20:28).

5. There is only one way into God’s Church (Isaiah 35:8; Matthew 7:13-14; John 14:6).

6. According to the Scriptures, there is only one faith (John 7:38). Faith is put into action through love (Galatians 5:6).

7. The Church recognizes only one baptism (Ephesians 4:5).

8. It has only one name (Acts 4:12; Ephesians 3:14).

9. It has only one door (John 10:7-9).

10. It has only one head (Ephesians 5:23).

11. It has only one king, the King of all kings (Acts 19:16).

12. We have only one life and then follows the judgment (Hebrews 9:27).

Dear readers, I have just outlined the key points that played an especially important role during the Reformation.

I would like to conclude these thoughts with a song from Brother Ludwig Besler:

Christ is building His own temple,
building it with living stones;
Follow Him as our example,
for the church is His alone.

Every born-again believer
has been placed by Christ above
In the temple, as is needed,
and cemented by His love.

Search for stones, for God is building
here a temple of His own.
Every stone within the dwelling
will be placed by Christ alone.

Labor ‘till the work is finished,
and each stone is set in place;
When the building is completed,
we shall enter heaven’s gates.

Jesus is the one foundation,
And we are the living stones.
Jesus is the firm foundation
Of the church, which is His own.

H. D. Nimz

Do We Still Have Oil in Our Lamps?

The parable of the ten virgins is found in Matthew 25:1-13. It is of significance that Jesus begins this parable with the word “then.” In the previous chapter, we read that the Lord spoke with His disciples about the time when He would be coming again. He told them how important it is to be watchful. They must be ready for His second coming.

The ten virgins represent people who profess to be children of God. The wise virgins are those who are careful to be ready for the coming of the bridegroom. The foolish virgins were also invited to the wedding feast, but they were more careless about taking the necessary precautions to be ready. They had not taken oil along, and when the bridegroom came, their lamps went out. The result was that the door was locked, and they could not get into the banquet hall.

Today, we live in a time that is very dangerous for God’s children. In the West, we are not persecuted and tortured like the early Christians often were. But the danger is that we get swept along with the spirit of the times and are always busy and in a hurry. Speed and getting things done quickly are today’s imperative. But that means we often do not take enough time to spend with God. And do we take the necessary precautions to ensure that the love of God in our hearts does not grow cold? I fear that many who claim to be born again and sanctified get so busy and preoccupied with material things that they forget to monitor if there is still enough oil in their lamps. If you forget to watch and pray, then you may not even notice that the supply of oil may be running low until there is nothing left. Therefore, let us be very careful!

How easy it is for us today to become spiritually careless and negligent! It was different in the days of the Apostles. In great power and glory, the church manifested itself. “And the Lord added to the church daily those

who were being saved” (Acts 2:47). The Apostles went about preaching the Word of God. They did not wait until they received a mandate from a mission board or some other church authority. They allowed themselves to be led by the Holy Spirit and relied solely on Him. We read: “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said: ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away” (Acts 13:2-3).

Once, Paul had a vision in which a man of Macedonia begged him to “come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). Immediately, Paul took this to be the will of the Lord and obeyed. May we live close enough to God so that we, too, may be able to discern the voice of the Holy Spirit!

Sadly, the Church did not always remain under the leading of the Holy Spirit as in the beginning. Apostasy soon set in. Of the church in Ephesus, which began under the ministry of the Apostle Paul, and later had the privilege of being cared for by Timothy and John, we read that they had lost their first love (Revelation 2:4).

Over time, the whole Church fell into such apostasy and darkness that it took the Reformation of the sixteenth century to recover the foundational truths of the gospel and bring them to light again. But how quickly even this pure oil of the Spirit was allowed to burn down. A new awakening came through John Wesley and his fellow workers. They preached sanctification and the necessity of holy living. Revival spread out over Europe and America.

But once again, apathy took over and gained the upper hand. This movement also experienced a gradual spiritual decline. The oil again was running out due to human carelessness and negligence. The foolish virgins

slept without having secured a sufficient quantity of oil.

We thank God for the clear light of the gospel and the two witnesses, the Word of God and the Spirit of God, which are at work. If we do not have these two witnesses in our midst, then we lack oil. And the result is tragic. Just as a lamp will extinguish without oil, each individual in the local congregation who does not have sufficient oil will suffer severe consequences.

We need oil, heavenly fire, and divine power. When that is missing, then everything is cold, lifeless, and in

vain. If we depart from the Word of the gospel in its simplicity and if the Holy Spirit must remain in the background, then everything will suffer decay.

The Church of God as a whole needs the oil. And in the same way, each individual member of the church must have oil. This oil is the anointing. It is the source of light and power. It is what eliminates friction and ends controversy. It unites the hearts. Oh, let us pray that we may have enough oil in our lamps!

J. E. F.

Return To Your First Love!

“Nevertheless I have this against you, that you have left your first love. Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place—unless you repent.” (Revelation 2:4-5)

I believe it is hardly necessary to describe that first love from which many Christians have fallen. Surely you remember that first, overflowing love you had for everyone after your salvation. Your heart desired that others should be saved. How easy it was to take advantage of the opportunities to speak with others about Christ.

Remember how joyful you were to attend prayer meeting and Sunday services? You could hardly wait. How you loved your fellow Christians and fellowship with them!

Do you remember how willing you were to forgo your work to attend services? Do you remember how you locked yourself in your bedroom in order to spend time in prayer and intimate communion with your heavenly Father? Do you remember how you willingly and gladly sacrificed your gifts to the Lord, whether for His work locally or for missions?

Oh, how the salvation of souls lay on your heart! You would pray and cry for a lost world! How great was your love for Christ in those first few weeks!

So, did things change in your heart? Are you finding it difficult to have quiet time for prayer? No time to attend church services? No time to speak to your neighbors about Christ and His love? Has your love for Christ and lost souls become lukewarm? If this is the case, then it is time to go back to that first love, to the refilling of the Holy Spirit, so that our hearts are filled with a holy fire and we are completely consecrated to our Lord.

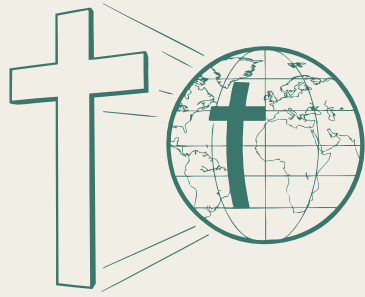
A return to that first love would once again bless the ministry with the wonderful anointing of the Holy Spirit. Ministers would be filled with a burning zeal for the salvation of souls, and the children of God would be filled with the love and faithfulness of Christ. Their joyful

testimony would follow them everywhere they go.

Even today there are many solitary Christians, yes, even ministers, who live for years in their communities without telling their neighbors of biblical truths. The Spirit-filled Christians of the early church would have found this situation inconceivable. Rather than longing for their old communities, they would have worked tirelessly to bring salvation to the people around them, and new churches would have been established.

Returning to that first love would fill our congregations with earnest prayer warriors. They would have that burning desire that all Christians would return to that first love. Satan’s kingdom would fall apart. His flock would become smaller, and God’s kingdom would grow and spread to all ends of the earth.

J. R. Tackett



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

Heroes in the Service of the Gospel

They have endured much hardship and opposition but remained true to God. They were heroes because they denied themselves and gave themselves for the service of God and their fellow men.

In the Old Testament, we are told of heroes who worked among the people of God. One of these heroes was David. God's Word tells us: "I have found My servant David; with My holy oil I have anointed him, with whom My hand shall be established; also My arm shall strengthen him. The enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him" (Psalm 89:20-22).

David was a simple shepherd in his youth. God had already chosen David to be the King of Israel before anyone knew of it. God's blessings rested on him because he feared God. The road to the royal throne was bitterly difficult for him. He proved himself in all sorrow and rose to be a hero in Israel.

Many fell in battle, and David mourned them with sincerity and compassion. He cried out: "How the mighty have fallen, and the weapons of war perished!" (2 Samuel 1:27). Among them was his best friend, Jonathan.

David suffered many defeats in his life. It certainly showed David how dependent we are on God. He prayed: "Do not take your Holy Spirit from me . . . uphold me by Your generous Spirit" (Psalm 51:11-12). His heart stayed continually drawn towards God, and that is why Scripture calls him "a man after My [God's] own heart" (Acts 13:22).

The Old Testament speaks of many battles. Our battles through Christ must be different. Paul wrote: "For

we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Ephesians 6:12). Further, he exhorts: "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). To his fellow servant, Timothy, he wrote: "Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called" (1 Timothy 6:12a). Here, different things were involved. It pertained to the struggle of faith and the victory of the gospel! There were many heroes on this battlefield. We certainly carry some of them in our memory.

Recently, I found the last letter of a truly selfless and blessed servant of the gospel in my desk. It was extremely important to him to preach Christ to his fellow man. He knew that he had been called into ministry by God, and his messages touched many hearts. He had just returned home from a very busy trip, and shortly afterward, he wanted to follow another call abroad. With regard to his busy and blessed life, he can without a doubt be classified as a "hero in the service of the gospel." God called him at a time when he had already wished for his eternal rest. On his gravestone are the words: "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace" (Luke 2:29). One can



only thank God for people like this. “Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct” (Hebrews 13:7).

During the Reformation there were many heroes in the service of the gospel. Many of these faithful servants had to go through contempt, sorrow, and suffering. They often had to endure terrible rejection and shameless injustice. Many godly servants went to prison and through severe torture and even death. Had their pure intentions been recognized and their message accepted, the world would have experienced God’s healing blessings.

The same can be said in view of the regrettable conditions of our time. How often are servants of God looked at with disapproval and contempt! They are not regarded, rarely respected, and often hated and despised. With respect to this, Jesus once said to His disciples: “For great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). What a wonderful comfort this was for them!

I once read of an ambassador of Jesus Christ. He was an enthusiastic speaker. He was on fire for God and led many people to Christ. His messages contained power and light. But then he lay powerless on his sickbed and felt that his last days had come. His young colleague sat by

his bed and wanted to know how he felt. His once powerful voice sounded very weak as he said: “I can do nothing more but cling to God.” His guest wanted to know more. After a short pause, he said: “The worst is already over. I am at the gate, and when I have gone through it, there will be no more death, no sorrow, no pain; for God will wipe away every tear from my eyes” (Revelation 21:4).

The people of our time are increasingly closed off to the saving light of God and the wonderful gospel. Many are trapped within the dark walls of unbelief and don’t even realize it. Paul recognized this condition when he wrote: “Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). And further he says in Ephesians 4:18: “having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.”

What can we do? With the prayer in Psalm 43:3 we can also pray: “Oh, send out Your light and Your truth!” We too desire to plead: “Lord, raise up consecrated, heroic ministers of the Gospel for the salvation and redemption of future generations!”

Friedrich Krebs

A Contemporary Question

QUESTION: Good day dear Brother S., I turn to you today because I simply do not know how to deal with my problem. I have a big issue with movies. I know most of it is trash that I want nothing to do with, but the draw and the habit is so strong that I cannot seem to leave it. My only explanation is my lack of determination. But how does one become more determined? I do not know! Is it possible that God intentionally does not give victory so that one remains humble? If you have an answer to this, it would be very helpful!

ANSWER: Good day, dear Brother. Thank you for your email, your question and your candor. You have already ascertained some noteworthy points: a) you have a problem and b) you lack determination. But in no case can you accuse God of “intentionally” not giving you victory. God does not do that. God is always interested in helping us be victorious.

You are right, movies can not only negatively affect our spiritual life, but also rob us of a lot of time that could be utilized much better. Is it wrong or even a sin to watch a movie? One cannot make a sweeping judgment because there are certainly a few worthwhile movies here and there. It is important that the movie does not contradict biblical principles. This excludes the majority of movies in which sin is condoned. Philipians 4:8 can be a big help to you in your assessment: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.” Does the movie in question measure up?—That would be a legitimate question.

In the church in Wetaskiwin, we are currently studying the life of Elijah. The people of Israel find themselves in a low state: idolatry is everywhere. Altars of foreign gods and idols are on every corner and 450 prophets of Baal are performing their service. When Elijah implements a reformation and the people return

to the true God of Israel, he takes drastic measures: he kills the 450 prophets of Baal. In plain words: sometimes decisive actions are needed to avoid going back. If something constantly causes you problems, impairs your spiritual life, and repeatedly causes you to fall, simply cut it off. Was Jesus thinking of these types of situations when He said: “And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire”?

Maybe you should thoroughly analyze your situation. What do you think would be the right thing to do?—What would help you? When do these temptations occur? Such questions can help you to take countermeasures in order for you to withstand these situations.

May I ask you some more personal questions? What is your spiritual life like? Do you read your Bible regularly? Do you live a life of prayer? Are you involved in the church? Are you trying to be a blessing and give others a helping hand?—Have you ever considered making a full surrender as described in Romans 12:1-2 and consecrating your whole life to the Lord?

I wish you God’s richest blessing for your life. Make the right decisions and do not let anything hold you back. I am praying for you. Write to me again and tell me what you intend to do. May God bless you.

Harry Semenjuk
Wetaskiwin, AB

The Last Letter

Dear Toni,

You are surely wondering why you are receiving a letter from me, which I am writing with a heavy resolve.

When I came home an hour ago from our motorcycle ride, I thought long and hard about us. I admit, I was very curious to see how you drive. I was surprised how confidently you control the machine. The manner in which you drove up already told me that you would not be a slow driver. You expertly sped through the narrowest streets, cut corners, hopped over the crosswalk, and only because of your skill were we able to bypass the pedestrians unharmed.

On the highway, you showed me what your motorcycle was capable of. You still found time to tell me all sorts of things. I feared for my life, but you only laughed.

Then we came into that little town. Children played in the town square; women carried shopping bags. You made full use of your horn. Like chickens, the children scattered; one old lady tripped in her terrified eagerness to reach the safety of the sidewalk.

When I begged you at the bus stop to watch out for those who were getting out, you looked at me with astonishment and quoted a silly old saying: “Prudent is the little man, who cannot otherwise help himself.”

At that moment, you had to brake hard because you were following a truck too closely and hadn’t noticed his brake lights.

No, Toni, thank God, nothing happened. But I was happy when I was home again. Not only because I had escaped unscathed, but because suddenly it became clear to me that two people live inside of you.

The one who sits at the controls, unrestrained, arrogant, reckless, expounding his rights, come what may. This man, Toni, I cannot marry, for the journey of life is too long and too difficult, and the two partners must relieve each other from time to time. If the one drives considerately and thoughtfully, but the other lacks regard and prudence, an accident will soon occur. There are too many vehicles on the road of life, that they cannot fail to cautiously merge into the great succession of those who are driving from today into tomorrow.

Pardon me for this letter, Toni, which will be my last to you.

Dagmar

VERSE OF THE MONTH

*But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
1 Corinthians 15:57*

As children of God, we can continually have victory. We are to overcome sin and evil. We cannot accomplish this in our own strength or by our own efforts, but alone through Jesus Christ and through persistent prayer.

Ask God every day for victory and determination in your personal life, as well as in the lives of those dear to you. Thank Him, for giving the victory!

Boundaries

*“He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, but he who refuses correction goes astray”
(Proverbs 10:17).*

Some young people have first-hand experience with the truth of this Bible verse. A person is never too young, but never too old, either, for instruction from the Holy Scriptures. The more a person places his life under the instruction of the Word of God, the safer he will walk on the path of life.

One’s own ways have a bitter ending. Self-confidence and a disregard for instruction lead one astray. Young people who disregarded the instruction of the Lord not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers have later deeply regretted it. Their self-willed actions brought them much distress and heartache. Heed the instructions in God’s Word; you will never regret it.

If Jesus Visited you, . . .


- *Would you first have to change your clothes before you let Him in?*
- *Or would you first need to hide some magazines?*
- *Would you turn off the computer and TV and wish He wouldn’t have heard what you were just watching?*
- *Would you wish you hadn’t spoken your last loud, hasty word?*
- *Would you sing the songs that you sing every now and then and read the same books in front of Him that you usually read?*
- *Could you speak with Him about the things that fill your thoughts?*
- *Would you be glad if He visited your best friends? Or would you wish they wouldn’t show up while He was there?*

Freedom

We were speaking about freedom. Everyone had a different opinion about it. One person sat with us but only listened until it was nearly the end of the evening. Then he raised his head. It is all well and good, he said, but it is not nearly worth it to speak about freedom. There is no such thing as freedom. Wherever freedom is spoken of in the world, it is a hypocritical attempt to draw people into embracing their cause or objectives. It would be best if he would openly oppose it and do exactly that which is forbidden through customs, morals, laws, and regulations.

Shocked silence.

But then another man said, without an accusing tone, “On my vacation, I was in the mountains. One day, I saw a trout jumping out of the mountain stream, likely chasing a fly. It shot so high and wide that it landed on the shore. I placed it back in the stream, otherwise it would have died.” No explanation was needed. We understood the illustration. Freedom also has its element: Communion with God. Outside of communion is death.

A photograph of a wooden surface, possibly a table, with several small white flowers scattered across it. On the right side, there are several large green leaves, some with small white flowers attached to them. The lighting is soft and natural, creating a warm and inviting atmosphere.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

Charlotte's Bible

Charlotte was a little girl who was just learning to read. She loved to read her school-books. She also took her little Testament with her to Sunday School. Her parents taught her various Bible verses so that she could recite a Bible verse in Sunday School each Sunday.

When Aunt Emma came to visit, she always brought something for Charlotte: a book, a doll, or some small trifle. Charlotte loved her aunt very much. When she had to return home again, Charlotte always cried.

Once, when Aunt Emma had been visiting again for several weeks and was preparing to say goodbye, she told Charlotte: "If you don't cry now, I will send you a Bible." Charlotte had been wishing for a Bible so badly that she didn't cry this time.

When Aunt Emma arrived at home, she bought a nice picture Bible. She packaged it, wrote Charlotte's

address on it and mailed it. Charlotte was overjoyed when she opened the package and found the Bible in it. She took it to church with her every Sunday. Her parents helped her read it every day, especially the difficult words. When Charlotte got older, she could read it all by herself. She read her Bible from cover to cover. Then she began again at the beginning, and each time, she discovered something new and wonderful.

Dear children, if you would read your Bible once, twice, even a hundred times, you too would discover something new and amazing every time. The Bible is God's book and it is such an educational and wonderful book, that each time you read it intently, it will become dearer to you.

The Psalmist also loved the Word of God, for he wrote: "How sweet are Your words to my taste, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" (Psalm 119:103).

M. R.

Senior's Page

Fear of Death

“Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” (Hebrews 2:14-15)

In a cemetery of a city stands a gigantic marble cross on which an inscription, written in gold, states: Eternity is near. Are you prepared?

Hundreds walk by this question daily. Have you pondered it? Are you ready? I am aware that many people prefer not to speak of death. One would like to avoid this inescapable reality of life. But no one can avoid biblical truth: “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). We humans are surrounded by death. Wherever we look, we see death and impermanence. The leaves that fall to the ground, the wilting and decaying of plants, and every funeral procession, preach to us of death and call out: “Set your house in order, for you shall die” (Isaiah 38:1b). Every created object is only temporary. The beauty of the world is like a flower. Death beckons everywhere.

Do we wish to say that Moses’ request is unnecessary: “So teach us to number our days” (Psalm 90:12a)? There is only one step between us and death. What could be more serious? In that hour, you leave behind your loved ones, your long-held job, your house and yard.

One more time, I want to ask: What could be more serious than that moment when the curtain rises and eternity’s portal opens, and an immortal soul must leave its mortal nature, this world and its deception and glare, and stand in the radiance of God’s countenance? A soul must head into the brilliance of eternal truth to stand before the One who has eyes like fire. How does that make you feel? Remember: Eternity is not far; soul, are you ready?

How did this fear of death come about? When our forebears lived in the Garden of Eden, God told Adam that

they could eat of all trees in the garden except a specific one, “for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:17b). Adam and Eve ate of the forbidden fruit. Because of their disobedience, sin came into the world. Ever since, “the wages of sin [are] death” (Romans 6:23). Death is separation of body from soul.

How may I lose this fear of death? Countless believe they have found a solution by not thinking about it. Many forbid speaking of it.

A rich man lived in a small town. Every time someone died, he went on a trip for three days. That is how he attempted to rid himself of this fear of death, but instead he showed that he was its slave.

Others believe that they can avoid fear of death by fleeing from God. They are on the run for decades, but eventually, they have no way around this problem. Fritz Woike said:

You want to flee from God
In this time of uncertainty?
You cannot flee from Him;
He is the great Eternity!

Many attempt to banish thoughts of death through this world’s pleasures and delights. They have no quiet time and stay out of reach of God’s Word. Is that not a clear confirmation that we are slaves of the fear of death?

So we see that neither being reminded of death, nor fleeing from God, nor the pleasures of this world, nor pleasant sayings will help us lose the fear of death. All

humans are subject to the fear of death. This truth is not only in the Bible but also in our conscience.

Is there no remedy? Are we condemned to remain slaves of the fear of death? Is it God's wish that the sinister specter of death lurks behind all pleasures? Are we not to be happy during our lives? No, that is not God's will. There is liberation from the tyranny of the fear of death.

When Schubert lay on his deathbed, someone said to him: "Soon you will see the Savior." He then called out: "I already see him!"—An old father sat up in his bed. Joyfully he called: "Jesus, are you there?" There was no fear of death, but joy that they were now going home. "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Through His death, Jesus has taken the sting from the word "death."

The believer knows that Christ is at his side. One day, children of God will go from only believing to seeing. That is why they say: "Jesus lives, and so shall I. Death! thy sting is gone forever!"—An old father lay on his deathbed. One more time, his children were gathered around his bed. He prayed with them, blessed them, and then asked them: "Please sing the song with me."

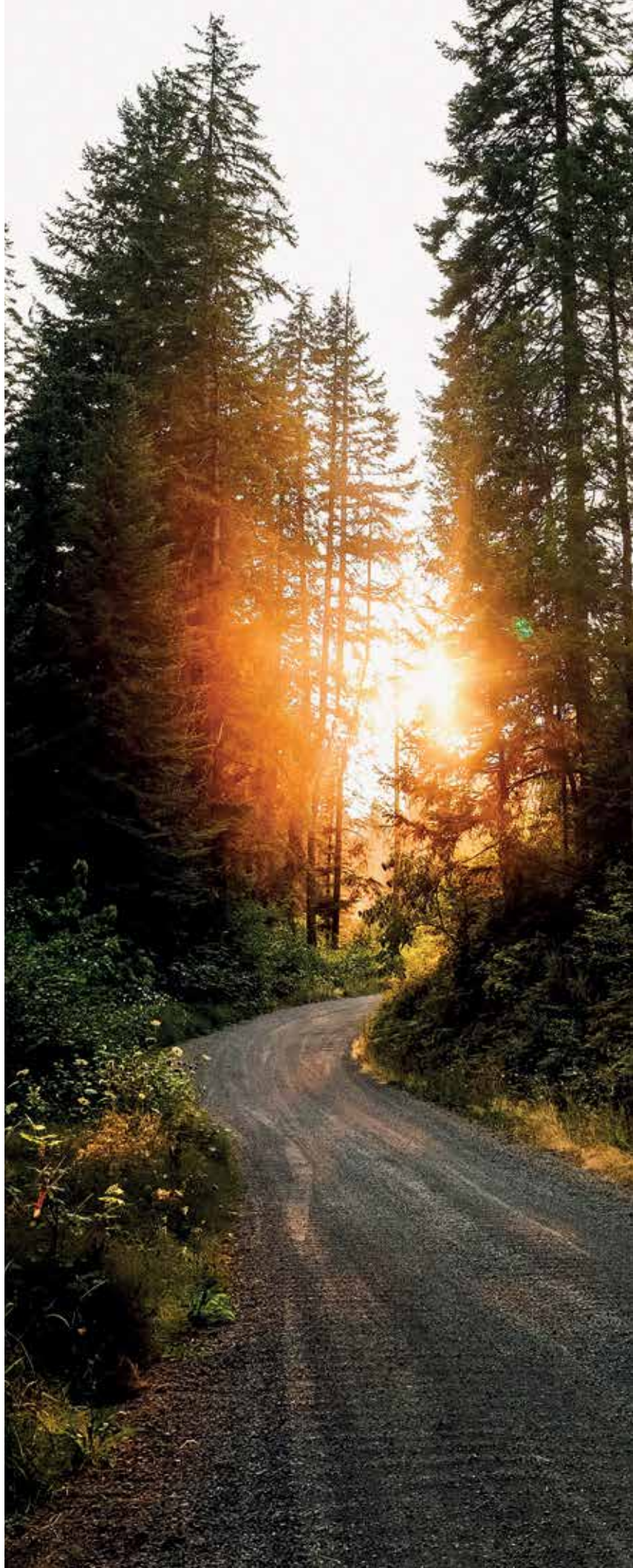
Saved by grace, saved by grace,
Let me see my Savior's face.
How my soul now longs to see Him,
And forever to be near Him.
By His throne, to bring Him praise.

Sweetly shines, sweetly shines,
Sun through clouds with light sublime.
Joining with all saints together,
When will I see Heaven's treasure,
And behold my Lord divine?

Paradise, Paradise,
There are no words to describe,
Fruits of healing by the river,
Where the tree of life is ever,
Lord, I long for Paradise!

As they got to the words of the last verse: "Lord, I long for Paradise!" he had already gone home. One who dies like this, dies well!

Heinrich Mueller



The Lord's Prayer

By Gerhard Mielke - Part 7: On Earth

*“Our Father in heaven, Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts,
As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation,
But deliver us from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom
and the power and the glory forever.
Amen.”*

(Mathew 6:9-13)

As we continue to study the Lord's Prayer, we notice that as Jesus teaches us to pray: “Thy Will be done,” He adds, “on earth as it is in heaven.”

On Earth

God's will is to be done on earth. So when we pray “Thy Will be done,” we are praying that it be done here and now. Holiness is the will of God. Some Christians think that once they are in heaven, there will be no more sin, but now they will not be able to live a life pleasing to God. Yet God wants us to strive for holiness here and now. “On earth as it is in heaven.” Some believers claim that they sin daily and cannot overcome the temptations of Satan. Yet in Matthew 1:21, we read that Jesus has come to save his people *from* their sins, not *in* their sins. The Apostle Paul writes: What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? (Romans 6:1-2). Those who claim that they must continue to live

in sin because they remain sinners should note that God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven. Sinning is not the will of God. When people talk about saints, they often have in mind people who are no longer living, and who were very special. But over 50 times the Bible refers to ordinary Christians as saints, those who are alive and following the Lord. When Paul writes to the saints in the churches of Asia Minor, he is referring to the members of those congregations. Don't wait until you die to become a saint. Then it is too late. In 1 John 1:9 we read “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

How is God's will done in heaven?

Psalm 103 gives us insight into this: “The LORD has established His throne in heaven, and His kingdom rules over all. Bless the LORD, you His angels, who excel in strength, who do His word, heeding the voice of His word. Bless the LORD, all you His hosts, you ministers of His, who do His pleasure” (Psalm 103:19-21). In heaven, the angels heed God's voice. In heaven, they are ministers who do His pleasure. So if God's will is to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we are to heed God's commands and do His pleasure. Are you living to God's glory? Can you say that you do His pleasure?

In Revelation 4:10-11 we see a further glimpse of heaven. “The twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: ‘You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.’”



Here we see elders, who have been given the crown of life. Yet they do not take their crowns as being their achievements, they give glory and honor to God. They worship Him and give Him all honor and glory and power. Likewise here on earth. That which we have been able to achieve is due to the grace of the Lord. He gave us the talents that we have. He gave us health and life. Thus glory and honor are due to Him. In our Christian walk, the victory we have is due to His power, made strong in us.

It is also noteworthy that the elders do not worship saints or Mary or the Apostles. They give all glory to God and worship God only. “Thy Will be done on earth as it is in heaven” also teaches us that only God is to be worshipped and prayed to on earth. We have respect for the apostles, and we have great admiration for Mary, but we cannot worship or pray to them. That is reserved for God, on earth as it is in heaven.

Not an indicative active statement

We cannot say that the will of God is done everywhere on earth. Rather we pray: “Thy will be done. Thy will be done in my life.” It is our life that we have the most control over. We do not have the power to control how others live. I cannot change other people, but by God’s grace I can change. God can give us the power to live according to His will if we submit ourselves to this prayer.

As a child, I came across a brain teaser. The question was: How can the city of London be swept clean in a single day? The answer was: if everyone sweeps in front of their own house. Spiritually speaking, this also applies to God’s will on earth. It is only possible that God’s will be done everywhere if everyone takes responsibility for themselves.

As for us, when we pray “Thy will be done,” it is first and foremost that it occur in our own lives. Now this does not mean that we should not strive for social justice, or that we should not pray for the will of God to be done for us collectively as a congregation, or that we should not be concerned that our country be a place where God is honored and His commandments kept. These things are important as well. When we have victory through the power of the cross, we will also be concerned about others. Therefore, let us not shirk our responsibilities and say with Cain: “Am I my brother’s keeper?” That is certainly not the will of God. It may be the will of God for you to take a greater role in the congregation, or to strive for God’s will in the community, or to become politically active, or to engage in foreign missions. However, the first step is to be right with God and to personally apply this prayer: “Thy will be done on earth as in heaven in my life.”

What does such a life look like?

No doubt such a life will be quite different than a life that strives for the things of this world. The best example of a God-centered life is Jesus Christ Himself. He lived what he prayed. Of Jesus we read that “a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased’” (Matthew 3:17).

Heaven reveals to us that it is Jesus in whom God is well pleased. So to do God’s will, let us internalize the teaching of Jesus and follow in His footsteps. That is what Jesus invites us to do when he says: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29).

Prayer Topics 2018

Dear brothers and sisters, we all realize that we are living in a time of great changes. There is much ruin and brokenness among people: broken faith, broken hope, broken relationships, broken hearts, and broken lives! The prophet Jeremiah seemed to have lived in a similar time as ours. To encourage him, the Lord sent him to a potter's house! He saw marred vessels. But he also immediately saw that the potter could make something new out of them! Likewise, our Lord can still make changes today! (See Jeremiah 18:1-6.) Paul writes: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication . . . with all perseverance" (Ephesians 6:18).

- Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (CA)

I. The small flock in the hand of God

1. The flock is Satan's target. It receives little respect and regard in this evil world (see John 15:18).
2. Jesus foretold of enmity and persecution (John 15:20) and made it clear that these would remain constant (Matthew 10:23). That is why we are constantly reminded to pray with perseverance, for God promises that no one can snatch the small flock out of His hand (see John 10:29).
3. We are to take note of the comforts offered in regard to our reward for faithfulness (Luke 6:20ff; John 16:33).

We pray:

- a. For the necessary patience when suffering and for perseverance for all children of God (Acts 14:21ff; 1 Corinthians 4:1ff).
 - b. Earnestly for resolute and unshakeable hearts in the midst of ruin (Hebrews 13:9).
 - c. That the signs of the times would exhort us to fight the good fight of faith! We should also remain sure we have oil in our lamps (Matthew 25:1ff).
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II. Pray for our brothers who have responsibilities in serving congregations and missions

1. The pastor of the congregation stands in a very important position of leadership. With this position comes great responsibility. The flock that is consecrated to God must be able to follow Him (John 10:4). More important still than all education and ability in the service of a congregation is a godly example (Philippians 3:17).
2. We think of some burdensome situations that are associated with this service and that, unfortunately, do occur.—For example, when a congregation does not experience the growth that is wished for, or even if an unfortunate decline takes place, then we can only pray and trust that God will help.

We pray:

- a. For a spiritual revitalization and a prayer revival in our congregations that only the Holy Spirit can bring about.
- b. That every congregation remains firmly rooted spiritually so that there may be spiritual life, progress, and endurance to the end (Ephesians 6:11).
- c. For workers and for fruit from that sown in the congregations and mission fields (Matthew 9:36ff; Galatians 5:22).

III. Our responsibility for the future of the congregation

1. We can do nothing greater than leave a healthy legacy of faith behind for the coming generation. This can only happen if we are deliberate about it today to maintain an authentic, solid faith! “Holiness adorns Your house, O Lord, forever” (Psalm 93:5).
2. Will the congregation of the future be able to further build on the state of faith we have today? We are responsible that the younger generation hears and recognizes the clear teaching and full truth of the Bible and that they are prepared to continue to preach it unchanged (2 John 8-9).
3. Truth, biblical unity, or our promised salvation should never be compromised for the sake of “progress” within a congregation.

We pray:

- a. That the congregation would at all times remain steadfast and faithful on the sure foundation of the truth (Colossians 1:23; Hebrews 13:9).
- b. That we may leave behind a blameless and spotless legacy for tomorrow’s congregation (1 Peter 1:3-5; Hebrews 9:5).
- c. That in the coming days, the Lord would find the right servants, and be able to use and work through them (Jeremiah 3:15). Moody spoke of an “old gospel that is preached with new vigor.” May God grant it!

IV. God’s people in hardships and difficulties

1. The signs of the times cause us to look to the future with apprehension. Since every generation must eventually make room for those following, we can be sure that our young people will one day take over the work and responsibilities of our congregation.
2. The hardships of today already make it clear that the next generation will be confronted with difficult problems and serious decisions to make (see Daniel 3).
3. We owe it to our young people to appreciate and love them and to prayerfully entrust them with certain tasks, as well as some burdens and difficulties (see 1 John 2:12-17).

We Pray:

- a. For God-fearing young people who recognize His voice and allow themselves to be called to higher purposes and be used (see 1 Samuel 3:19ff). We should remember the enormous need of winning souls!
- b. For their strong faith and deep spiritual growth and the vital resoluteness they need (Daniel 3:16ff).
- c. That the younger generation will be the future congregation! God can work great things through them!

V. Pray for older brothers and sisters in Christ and for the sick in the congregations

1. The Bible states that while Jesus was on earth, He was ceaselessly concerned about the sick. He is the same today (Hebrews 13:8). Even today, we can expect help, comfort, and healing from Him!
2. God has thoughts of peace toward us (Jeremiah 29:11). His thoughts and ways often remain hidden while we are going through health crises, but according to Psalm 25:12, He has the best way for us.
3. Our personal assurance of salvation and our surrender to the will of God are very critical (Luke 22:41-43).

We pray:

- a. Earnestly, that God would manifest Himself even today, to our sick, through His unchanging power of healing (confer Philippians 2:27-30).
- b. For the steadfast readiness to be surrendered to God’s ways and will, always prepared for when He calls us home.
- c. That we would not forget to thank for the grace of salvation’s assurance, for the Lord who knows us and loves us, and for the clear promise and hope of future blessedness!

Unstoppable

*Time is always pressing on
Like a river that is flowing;
Slipping through your hands, it's gone,
And you wonder where it's going.
Like the sunset, it won't last;
Like a vapor, fleeting fast.*

*Time is always changing fast,
Joy and sorrow interchanging.
With a day of sunshine past,
There may come a storm that's raging,
Yet above all time must be
The silence of eternity.*

*Time is always going by,
And the hour of death comes nearer.
As the sun sets in the sky,
Things of life are growing drearier.
As the cold of night sets in,
Do you have God's peace within?*

*Time is always rushing by.
Your hours will all be done at length;
Therefore lift your eyes on high
To God who gave you life and strength;
And always keep the end in view,
That home that God's prepared for you.*

Gertrud Tarutis