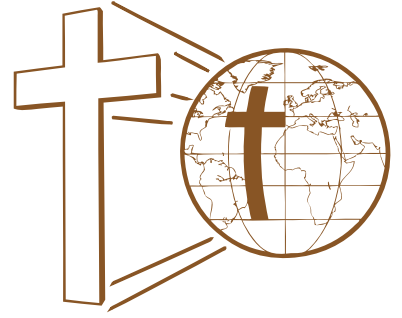


Foundation of Faith



Pentecost
Mother's Day



May 2013

Content



MOTHER'S DAY

- 4 The Diamond Cutter
Mother's Day All Year**
- 5 Your Child's Soul**
- 6 Dearest Mother**
- 7 For My Mother (Poem)**
- 8 Parenthood**
The gift of children comes
with a great responsibility
- 9 To Raise Children**
- 10 The Family - Will it Survive?**
Created by God, the family is
under the siege of sin and secular
society



PENTECOST

Radio Broadcast

- 16 Lead By the Spirit**
- 18 Does God's Fire Burn Within us?**
Christ came to earth to light a fire
in the hearts of people. Does it burn
in yours?
- 19 What is Entire Sanctification?**
- 20 Sanctification - The Second Work of
Grace**
- 22 A Church that Lives Out Its
Doctrine and Profession**
- 23 The Best in Life (Poem)**
- 24 Ascended On High
The Coming of the Holy Spirit**
- 25 Jesus at the Right Hand of God
Faithful to the End!**



Youth Page

12 Of Wheelbarrows and Books

Youth Question and Answer

13 The Garden of Eden

14 Experiences with God

Children's Corner

15 Am I a Christian?

27 Announcements

28 Down! Down!

Editorial

The Lord Jesus left the glory of heaven and came to earth to seek and save the lost. He gave His life for this cause, going to the cross and to the grave on our behalf. However, He also gloriously rose from the grave! After Easter, He marvelously appeared to His disciples and was then taken from their presence to return to His place at the right hand of the Father.

During the years of His earthly ministry, Jesus called and equipped His disciples to share the precious gospel message. He made them 'fishers of men' who would seek other people to be converted, and to faithfully follow and serve the Savior.

The prophet Isaiah had already written about this divine favor of being converted to God: "One will say, 'I am the LORD's...another will write with his hand, 'The LORD's' " (Isaiah 44:5).

If we have received forgiveness of our sins and through Jesus' precious blood have been redeemed to become His possession, we can consecrate ourselves fully to the Lord for time and eternity.

It is as consecrated fathers and mothers that we are to be an example to our children. Each of us, whether young or old, whether at work, in the home, in the community, or wherever God has placed us, is to live a holy life of sacrifice to God. Only then can we be a true witness and blessing, and bring honor and glory to God. And then we can join in the refrain from the pen of M. E. Howard:

*My home and friends are dear to me,
Yet He is dearer still;
In my affections first He'll be,
And first His righteous will.*

*My all, O Lord, to Thee I'll give,
Accept it as Thine own;
For Thee alone I'll ever live,
My heart shall be Thy throne.*

When you and I consecrate ourselves fully to God, He will supply all the grace and power we need to live in victory so that we will be a blessing and a light for Him.

H. D. Nimz

The Diamond Cutter

A friend shared an interesting incident with me. He had recently watched as a diamond cutter took a precious stone in his hand. It was still uncut and rough looking. He cased it in lead and then pressed it against a 2000 RPM polishing wheel. The gem literally groaning, the craftsman turned it over after some time to begin polishing another surface. Again the stone sang and groaned. But the craftsman knew what he was doing. Again and again he turned the gem and pressed it against the grinding wheel.

After he had rotated it approximately fifty times, my friend asked the diamond cutter: "Sir, is it still not enough?"

"No, still not; I don't do things by halves," he replied.

Then finally he removed the gem, handed it to him and said: "Now take a look at it! But don't hold it in the sun – it will burn your eyes!" An amazing, brilliant light radiated from the heart of the stone and spread in the full spectrum of colors to all the carefully polished surfaces. It was a masterpiece!

"Since you were precious in My sight, you have been honored" (Isaiah 43:4). To achieve this honor, our edges must be polished. Should we then be resentful towards God when He presses us against the polishing stone of suffering?

EP

Mother's Day All Year

A mother and daughter were spending a lovely afternoon at the beach. The young mother was sitting in a beach chair knitting while her daughter played beside her on a sand dune. Suddenly, the young girl rolled down the dune. A wave washed over her head. The mother frantically called out for help, but there was no one nearby except a young man, who was too far down the beach to get to her daughter in time. Without any further thought, the mother jumped up and dove into the sea. She grabbed her daughter, but lost her footing in the deep water, and both of them were swallowed up by the next wave. Fortunately, the young man had started to run when he first heard the woman cry out, and he got to them in time to pull mother and child out of the water and back to the safety of the shore.

He called a taxi to take the frightened mother and child home. "Can you even swim?" he asked the shivering mother during the drive.

"No, I can't," replied the woman.

The young man gave her an incredulous look. "But you dove into the water knowing it was too deep to stand. What were you thinking?"

"I wasn't thinking," she replied simply. "I thought of nothing. I just jumped in."

The young man grew silent. When they arrived at the woman's home, he made sure they were safely inside, and then he turned toward his own home. On his way home he stopped at a nearby florist and bought a bouquet of flowers for his own mother. "What's this?" she asked, delighted, but surprised. Her son did not normally bring home gifts. "Is it Mother's Day already? Or do you have something to confess to me?" She gave him a playful jab in the arm. "Out with it, my boy! What have you done?"

"I have nothing to confess, Mom," the young man answered and gave his mother a hug. "It just occurred to me, though, that the year actually has 365 Mother's Days."

G. B.



Your Child's Soul

*A child's soul is like a diamond:
Polished bright by parent's hand.
A child's soul is like a blossom fair:
Parents, guard the innocence there!
A child's soul is like a rose garden:
Parents, wait for the buds to open.
A child's soul is like a morning star:
Let it shine for God near and far!
A child's soul is like a drop of dew:
Let it reflect the heavens blue!
A child's soul is treasured by angels:
Keep it free from sin and dangers!
A child's soul is heaven's heir:
May no wickedness mar it here!*

We agree with the unnamed author of this poem. He places a high premium on the value and beauty of a child's soul. He also stresses the guardian's responsibility in nurturing that soul. Take a moment to seriously consider your responsibility – and the great value of your child's soul!

Our responsibility stems primarily from the eternal worth of a child's soul. "Children are a heritage from the Lord" (Psalm 127:3). Happy and blessed are those parents who are guided by biblical principles in raising their children! That children are a true gift from God is clear just by examining the intricate design of their physical bodies. We are amazed when we catch glimpses of their untapped mental capabilities. However, all this is overshadowed by the fact that children have immortal souls. Of all the things entrusted to us on this earth, the only thing that will pass on into eternity is the soul of our God-given child. Everything else will be consumed by the grave. But the benefits a child's soul receives in this life extend into the after-life.

Someday we will be held accountable for the children God has entrusted to us. We are responsible not only for the nourishment of their bodies, but even more so for the care of their souls. Their souls can either be saved or lost. In the story

of Samuel, we read of Hannah's commitment to dedicate her son, for whom she had prayed for so long, to God: "Therefore I also have lent him to the Lord; as long as he lives he shall be lent to the Lord" (1 Samuel 1:28). Today, Christian parents continue to do the same. May the burden of this responsibility bring us to our knees, so that we give our children to the faithful Shepherd, who gave His life for them!

A father and son were in the garage. The boy watched his father repairing his car. "Hey Dad," said the child, "you certainly put a lot of time and effort into your car."

"Yes, my son," answered the father, who was thinking of everything but his son at the moment. "You see, this car is a very valuable investment for me. If I don't take good care of it myself, it will soon lose its value. It's worth my time and effort."

For some time it was quiet in the garage. Then a sad and timid voice asked, "Dad, then I guess I'm not a valuable investment, right?"

Shocked, the father stood up and looked into his son's teary eyes, "What?! Why not?"

"Because you don't ever have time for me."

The father ended his car repairs much sooner than he had planned. That evening, his required reading material was left unopened in his briefcase. He spent the entire evening playing with his overjoyed son, and he read to him at bedtime. It was an investment in the invaluable heart and soul of his son.



Dearest Mother

When I sit with you on the couch just to talk, all I can say is "Thank-you!" First, I owe our Heavenly Father a debt of gratitude that I am able to be your son, and that you are still with me. I'm so thankful that I can still sit with you here, listen to your sweet voice, and tell you many things.

You often told me that my birth was really a two-fold miracle. It was miraculous that you survived the birthing process. It was miraculous that I grew to be a healthy boy. Back then, over fifty years ago, a home birth, with all of its attendant risks, was still very common. Personally, I'm convinced angels stood at your bedside that day and kept watch over us both. You and I have something to thank God for together!

Mother, you could not have known what a difficult task God gave you in raising your first-born. How often I saw you at the end of your wits and at the beginning of your tears. Why did I have to be so difficult even as a young boy? I can vividly recall the time when you simply turned and walked away. I don't think I was older than five at the time. With tears spilling over my cheeks, I pursued your retreating figure, calling out, "Mom, please don't go away! Mom, wait for me!" Today, as a father and grandfather, I begin to understand what you may have been going through in that moment. How often you prayed to God for wisdom! Despite all the faithful reminders you gave me, I always surprised you with fresh disappointments. Yet you never gave up on me. You always pointed me back to Jesus. And it was Jesus who gave you the patience and strength for all those early days.

Do you remember when for a half a year you dictated two spelling lessons to me almost daily? I was nine then. At the beginning, it certainly wasn't worth your bother to count the many mistakes. But what a gift your patient instruction has become to me! I recall how often I protested against those grammar exercises, but you never gave up. Thank-you Mother! What a help this skill has become for me. Do you remember when we took a keyboarding course together? I never imagined then to what extent good typing skills would aid me in the 30 years of my life's work.

There is so much that I owe you gratitude for! You know of course that I'm not referring to any material wealth or any outstanding personal gift or social standing. I mean the faith in God that you taught me. I shared in so many of your experiences where you trusted God for both little and great things. I was watching those many times when God intervened in our family life because of your prayers. You had faith that God could turn pennies to dollars. You trusted Him for physical healing, which we experienced many times together. You truly trusted in and depended on the help of God, and He never disappointed you.

When I was a boy, you also instilled in me the principle of priority, taken from 1 Kings 17:13. You demonstrated very practically together with Father that the things of God always take precedence. Though it often required sacrifice, and the family had to give up many things, the Lord's kingdom always came first. We learned to do without, to serve, to wait. Today I am so thankful for these lessons, and I really believe they formed a life attitude that has made a great variety of God's blessings available to me. You also demonstrated another blessing to me that is intimately associated with this principle: Complete surrender to the will of God for your life. You often sang the lines, "Your will alone I'll

do, O Lord, on earth below.” And so I watched you experience highs and lows as you followed the will of God. I sensed your serenity and trust in the Almighty. Sometimes you were close to despair, but in those times our Heavenly Father came to especially comfort you.

Dear Mother, I always considered you a woman of great stature, even though I quickly grew taller than you. Today, your physical strength has yielded to weakness and exhaustion. Today it is the prospect of heaven that gives light to your heart and your hour. Yet, I am so thankful that I can still sit with you on this couch and hold you in my arms. So often you held me close, comforting me. Having you close to me comforts me still. And I know you pray for me. Thankyou especially for this, but for everything else as well...

Your Son

For My Mother

Dear Mother, hear this song I sing for you today,
And may its melody be ringing for you always.
For all your tender love and caring, thank you so much!
For all your time, your work, your sharing, your loving touch.

Who read for me those Bible stories, that I so love?
Who taught me how to cast my worries on God above?
Who taught me how to pray for others, and do what's right?
I learned from you my loving mother, by day, by night.

How often when I caused you sorrow, you prayed for me!
Your heart was stressed about tomorrow, how I would be.
I could not understand your worry; you are so good.
For grieving you, I'm saying sorry; I know I should.

Deep in my heart I do remember, O Mother dear,
Your loving words so kind and tender, they calmed my fears.
With unceasing toil you worked day in, day out.
My carefree childhood days were pleasing, without a doubt.

Your life was truly sacrificial, for all to see.
Indeed, you are so very special, so dear to me.
So Mother, hear this song I sing for you today.
For you to God I'm thankful; for you I pray.

Parenthood

Children are a God-given gift that come with great responsibilities for the parents. We live in a time when new parenting methods and philosophies exert a strong influence on parents and children alike. However, the eternal truths of God's Word remain the fixed point of reference that provides today's family with the guidance and blessing it needs.

Children are a gift from God, and parents should always rejoice in this gift. But raising children can become a burden, especially when they are disobedient. Ironically, it is often the parents and not the children who deserve the blame for a child's disobedience.

If children are a gift from God, then proper child-rearing skills can also be considered a gift from God. These skills are acquired on our knees. After all, raising children demands much wisdom from God. This wisdom does not permit a "no" to become a "yes". Children will notice this parental tendency, even while they're still young. Parental capitulation only encourages the children in their "begging." When children notice that their parents' resolve can be shaken by persistent begging, and that they will get their way in the end, then their proper training is compromised. And who is to blame if such children end up on the wrong path? It is not the innocent child, but the parents who knew better. In James 5:12 we read, "But let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No,' lest you fall into judgment." These words apply not only to those who take an oath, but to all areas of life and to every situation, including parenting. God has made parents responsible for their children. Parents therefore need a steadfast heart in the many tests that parenthood brings.

Parenting also calls for the father and mother to be united. It is detrimental to the child when one parent shields the child from a punishment determined by the other parent. Imagine for example that the father admonishes his child. But mother feels the admonition is too harsh (mothers are usually softer by nature) and disagrees with her husband in order to protect the child. Though her intentions come from a kind heart, her actions will have negative consequences. Her intervention causes the child to think, "I'm being wronged by my father." The end result will be that the child becomes resentful and disobe-

dient to both parents. The child begins to think, "What do my parents know anyway? Why should I listen to them?"

Dear parents, if this describes your parenting habits, you must realize that you are wronging your children and heaping sin on your conscience! By planting rebellion into the heart of your child you contribute to their disobedience to God and His Word. You are guilty if you act this way and share the blame if your children one day end up on a destructive path.

In Proverbs we find further guidance in raising children: "He who spares his rod hates his son, but he who loves him disciplines him promptly" (Proverbs 13:24); and, "Correct your son, and he will give you rest; yes, he will give delight to your soul" (Proverbs 29:17).

You are not only responsible for raising your son or daughter in discipline and obedience, but you must also monitor their behavior. Pay attention to the friends your child has. Children naturally have a lot of energy, and the noise and chaos they bring with them can leave their parents longing for some peace and quiet. It is understandable that parents might be relieved when their children are out of the house. But where are the children? With whom do they play and communicate? Parents, the school system deprives your children of enough of your control, your supervision, your presence; don't abandon them in the remaining time to the dangers of the neighborhood! Keep them at home and in your presence! Be aware of the danger of becoming disconnected from your children.

You should not just be your child's parent; you should become their friend as well. They should not only be obedient to what you say; they should be able to trust you with all their concerns. They should feel comfortable enough to find protection and comfort in you. Many

children would rather not be at home in the company of their parents, and sadly, many parents simply let them go. Later, when such children have grown up and fallen in love with the world, refusing to listen to the counsel of their parents, mothers and fathers begin to weep and pray. Now they desperately entreat God to intervene and help. In Proverbs 29:15 we read, “A child left to himself brings shame to his mother.” In such a situation parents have missed the window of opportunity to carry out their God-given duties.

Parents, make your home a haven for the nurture of your precious children. Furnish it to be the place your

children love most, not with stimulating gadgetry like the TV, etc., but by your ready presence. Take time today for your children. Get on your knees and ask God for the wisdom you need as a parent. Keep your “no” as a “no.” Do not oppose the stance of your spouse in the presence of your children, even if it may seem incorrect at the time. Apply every effort into raising your children. If you do these things, you will have children trained to obey you, and inclined to obey God and to walk in His ways.

O. S.

To Raise Children

Raising – it’s a word that conveys the sense of drawing up. Let us think of an object such as a little wagon that is slowly, steadily, and continuously being pulled up an incline to a certain destination. Pulling is altogether different than pushing.

Many parents push their children ahead of them – ordering them to the right or the left, today differently from yesterday, tomorrow differently from today, all according to the whim of their present mood, or, if irritated, according to whatever haphazard solution immediately comes to mind. A child’s misbehavior is vacuously ignored for days, and then suddenly, in an angry rush and without warning, the parent screams and hollers, slaps and yanks, and the little wagon tumbles off course.

Raising a child is something entirely different than this; again, it is more like pulling. It means going ahead and letting the child follow behind. Go ahead of your child and leave clear footsteps for him to follow in character, word, and deed. Do not simply say: “You must pray, you must love the Lord Jesus, you must go to Sunday school” etc. Instead, walk ahead of him on the good path, so that it will become familiar and dear to him.

Five siblings who suddenly lost their mother made a unanimous decision: “We will walk in the way our mother walked. We have seen that it is the way to both temporal and eternal happiness.” Blessed is the mother or father whose children are also able to say this. Their influence will reach far beyond the grave.

Lead the way Mother! Lead the way Father! If you want to raise your children to become men and women of integrity, industry, and organization, of purity, gratefulness, loyalty, and truth – then your example must show them how, and that means you have to lead the way.

Raising means both a continuous and steady upward pull towards the destination. The task of parenting is a slow, grinding, daily, yearly, decade-long task. Don’t lose courage, and never lose patience.

We are told of a certain master craftsman who could not pass by a block of marble without seeing a figure inside calling out to him, not letting him rest until he had brought it out of the hard stone with his hammer and chisel. To accomplish this, he needed many days and years, much thought, effort, and patience. So much skill and sacrifice went into his great works! Think of your children as waiting, unchiseled works of art – precious diamonds in the rough. It is our duty to define their shape, to knock off the edges, to bring them into clear, beautiful relief. This cannot be done overnight. It is a slow, tedious work – our life’s work, very similar to chiseling marble. But do not sigh; rejoice that the task is not done all at once, but step by step as your daily obedience and faith allow. And never forget to take comfort that our Heavenly Lord and Master Himself adds His very best efforts in the raising of your children to His glory and honor.

The Family – Will it Survive?

Do the institutions of marriage and the family still form the basis of our western society, or are they the relics of a bygone era? What tips does the Bible give for a happy marriage and family life?

Marriages and families are generally in a deplorable state today. Divorce rates are climbing, and abuse of women and children is becoming more and more common. Some people feel that marriage has outlived its time and no longer has a place in today's society.

It is as if the enemy has decided that his final attack on the people of God is to annihilate the last existing God-appointed institution – the family. It is obvious that this trend affects the people of God. Believers can no longer take a passive position if this trend is to be stopped, if the family is to continue existing.

I believe that the marriage of an Old Testament couple can still provide helpful suggestions today on how a marriage can be happy. 1 Samuel 1 tells us of a family that faithfully observed their God-given duties and traveled to Shiloh every year. It is the story of Elkanah and his wife Hannah. We read something of Elkanah that Paul later commands of all husbands: "He loved Hannah". His love had lasted past the honeymoon phase and had only grown stronger. This love will have been obvious to Hannah because in trying to comfort her he was able to say, "Am I not better to you than ten sons?" (v. 8). Such a claim could surely rest only on the existence of a truly loving relationship. Hannah does not deny this, so we can safely assume that Elkanah really was kind to her.

Another noteworthy characteristic of this man was that he led his family in spiritual matters. He brought his family to Shiloh, to the sanctuary of God. He brought the requisite sacrifices of the Law. Many wives wish for

a man that will be the spiritual leader of the home. Unfortunately, many men take a passive position and allow their wives to assume this responsibility. The fact that Elkanah did not stop Hannah from fulfilling the vow that she had made before God also proves their loving relationship. According to the Law, he had the authority to invalidate her vow, but he did not. He trusted her and did not hinder her in acting on the decision she had made before God.

If Elkanah provides us with an exemplary character for husbands, then Hannah is also a good example for wives and mothers. She was submissive in a situation that would be considered far less than ideal by most women. As was common in those days, Hannah's husband had a second wife. (This practice was not sanctioned by God from the beginning, and has been emphatically prohibited in the New Testament.) However difficult this time may have been for her, we do not read that she ever complained or blamed her husband for it. She was content in her situation; she enjoyed the devoted love of her husband. The root of many problems in the home lies with a discontented wife and mother. She looks at what others have and believes she can only be happy if she has that as well. This attitude can cause strain between husband and wife, often to the point of jeopardizing the relationship. The Bible says: "Be content with such things as you have" (Hebrews 13:5).

Hannah is a good example in other areas as well. She brought her cares and troubles to the Lord. We may assume that she and her husband had already brought their



great concern – that they had no children – to the Lord together. Hannah showed no jealous resentment against the other woman. Her refuge was in the Lord and it was there that she poured out her heart. Prayer must be part of marriage and family life. Even when a husband and wife cannot pray together, each believer still needs to pray personally.

Hannah's character is further revealed in the way she kept the vow she made to God. She had become a mother, just as she had so prayerfully hoped. Her heart had certainly attached itself most ardently to her son, and her motherly instincts would have objected to any separation from this child that she had so fervently wished for. But her commitment to the promise that she had given God superseded her maternal feelings. She was prepared to bring the sacrifice, even without knowing how her beloved son would react. Unfortunately, many mothers make their

children their first priority, and when it concerns their child, they make every kind of exception. Their feelings towards their children overrule even their commitment to making God number one in their lives. God disapproves of this attitude and His blessing and His presence will be diminished in such a home.

If the institution of the family is to have chance of survival, the marriage needs to be built up in true love for one another. It must be a spiritual home where the husband takes the position of leader, thereby building the foundation for a God-pleasing family. There is contentment here, even if temporal luxuries are missing. A home that keeps God as its center will be a blessing and will survive, even in our times.

Peter Ens
Neustädt, Mexico

OF WHEELBARROWS AND BOOKS

Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev used to tell of a time when a wave of petty thievery hit the Soviet Union. In an attempt to stop it, authorities posted guards at factory exit doors. The guard at a timberworks plant in Leningrad was well familiar with the factory workers. One evening, Pyotr Petrovich came out pushing a wheelbarrow. On the wheelbarrow was a large bulky sack with a suspicious-looking object inside.

"All right, Petrovich," said the guard, "what have you got there?"

"Oh, just sawdust and shavings," Petrovich replied.

"Come on," the guard said, "I wasn't born yesterday. Tip it out."

But when Pyotr emptied the sack, out came nothing but sawdust and shavings. Stupified, the guard allowed him to put the emptied contents back into the sack and go home. But when the same event repeated itself every night of that week, the guard became frustrated. Finally, his curiosity overcame his frustration.

"Petrovich," he said, "I know you. If you just tell me what you're smuggling out of here, I'll let you go."

Petrovich looked at the guard and then responded: "Wheelbarrows, my friend. Wheelbarrows." (Quoted in *The Devil's Gauntlet*)

Scripture warns us to "be sober, be vigilant; because [our] adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). In Genesis 3:6 we read: "So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate." Satan tempted Eve with "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1 John 2:16). The devil continues to walk about seeking and tempting his prey. The tools the evil one uses may have changed, but his methods have not. He boldly parades "stolen wheelbarrows" before our eyes, drawing our focus to the decoy in the wheelbarrow. Satan knows that in 2013 he cannot tempt young people into wagering on chariot races or other outdated pursuits, but he has a bag full of tricks at his disposal, and it is helpful to know what these tricks

are so that we can be vigilant. Satan's tools are numerous and varied, but how he uses them is similar enough that studying one tool will enable us to know how to distinguish between what is right and wrong.

Walking through a large chain bookstore, it would seem obvious to a seasoned Christian that much of the reading material offered there would not be God-pleasing. Unfortunately, modern attitudes have nourished the idea that reading books with sinful ideas is okay as long as we do not act on those ideas. What many fail to realize is how damaging prolonged exposure to harmful influences from written material is. It can be likened to a person becoming hardened to drugs and alcohol. Someone experimenting with alcohol for the first time may begin to feel lightheaded after only a few sips, but after a time, it will take more and more alcohol to get the same effect. Similarly, the young person reading books that contain things harmful to the soul will be okay with reading something only slightly shocking (such as a few instances of mild profanity) – but after repeated exposure, the profanity goes unnoticed. He has become desensitized and begins to compromise his soul more and more with books that he would formerly have rejected as "un-Christian".

But Satan does not use just secular books to mislead and tempt. He knows that there are many Christians who would not read books that glamorize the occult or illicit affairs, so he offers books that wear the cloak of Christianity, yet will lead astray just as surely as a smutty novel. Several years ago there was a very popular book written by a "Christian" author. It was widely available in secular and Christian book stores. I heard from one person after another what a blessing this book had been to them. Before passing judgment, I got a copy of the book and began to read it. I did not have to read far to come to a conclusion. Touted as being a theological gem that would reveal the nature of God, I found it to be blasphemous to the core. It contained page after page of wild imaginations with no biblical basis. As the book was written to appeal especially to young Christians, it

grieved me to know that this was a tool that Satan would use to lead new believers, seeking answers, astray. I saw in it a new methodology for Satan to distract from the truth. Matthew warns: “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits” (Matt. 7:15-16). So many young people, earnestly seeking answers, will turn to any book they find in a Christian bookstore and accept it as biblical. Many writers (false prophets) are influencing Christians with psychology and fantasy under a sheep’s cloak of religion. This can be more dangerous than a blatant secular book that we would not intend to use as a guide in our spiritual walk.

In Revelation 12:9, Satan is described as being one who “deceives the whole world”. Books are just one of the tools that he is using to distract, deceive, and eventually destroy the youth of today. The famous 17th century Puritan minister Cotton Mather once said, “That there is a devil is a thing doubted by none but such as are under the influence of the Devil.” Sadly, we may have heard about the devil our entire lives, yet not recognize his approach

when it is our turn to be tempted.

It is wise for young people to respect and accept the guidance of those who have clearer spiritual vision. Parents, a pastor, or a trusted older friend who has been walking with the Lord for a longer time are great sources to talk to when you have questions. Sometimes we are blind to danger that is evident to others. Proverbs 1:5 says “A wise man will hear and increase learning, and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.”

Young people, I would like to encourage you to seek wise counsel. Understand that the older generation is not trying to sabotage your youth or take away your fun – they see the bigger picture and are interested in your future – your eternal one. But first of all, bow your knees in prayer and turn to Scripture for the guidance you need. James 1:5 assures us: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.”

Nettie Mueller
Seminole, Texas

QUESTION

Was there a real, physical Garden of Eden or is this merely a symbolic representation?

ANSWER

To give an adequate answer to this question we must turn to the Word of God itself, the Bible. As believers, we can trust that it will give a reasonable answer to this question.

Genesis 2:8-15 describes how God planted a garden “eastward in Eden” and made all kinds of trees to grow in it. We are also told in this passage that a river of water went out of this garden, which divided into four river-heads that flowed into four different geographical areas. One of these rivers, the Euphrates, retains its name to the present day.

God placed the first man into the Garden of Eden for the purpose of tending and keeping it (Genesis 2:15). God visited Adam and Eve in this garden in order to have communion, or fellowship with them (Gen. 3:8). Later, after Adam and Eve sinned against God, they had to leave

the Garden of Eden and eke out a living outside of it. An angel of God was posted at the entrance of the Garden to bar Adam and Eve and their offspring access to the Tree of Life (Gen. 2:24).

This biblical description clearly shows us that the Garden of Eden was a literal reality and not just a symbolic idea. If we assume that the Garden of Eden did not exist literally, then we must also conclude that there was no Tree of Life, for we read that this tree grew in the middle of the Garden. Without the Tree of Life, we would then be forced to question the fall of man, and thus corrupt the entire salvation message of the Bible.

Alexander Groß
Eppingen, Germany

Experiences with God

“Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me.”

Psalm 50:14, 15

I am from the church in Tuningen. At the age of 16 I was diagnosed with metastasized Stage 3 cancer of the liver. I had no idea what that meant, however, that would soon change. My treatments, including an operation, were completed in seven months. That's pretty quick, all things considered, and can only be attributed to God's help and the prayerful support I received from so many. I put the matter behind me as something that happened to me for the first and last time.

In October 2012, a few days after my 18th birthday, the cancer was back. Humanly speaking, the situation seemed hopeless. The doctors' only option was to operate, as the tumor no longer responded to chemotherapy or conventional radiation treatments. There was a good possibility that the operation would render me a paraplegic. But the doctors saw no other way, and if I did not consent to the operation, there was nothing more that they could do for me. This was probably the greatest shock that my family and I have ever received. However, I knew that there was still Someone else who could help me. I was greatly comforted during this time by the words of David: "...though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me" (Psalm 23:4).

From October to January I had severe pain in my spine, and many days I had no strength. During those days, I remembered that "they who wait upon the Lord, shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). This was another comfort for me and I was able to keep going.

The future seemed more uncertain than ever before. We did not want to go through with the dangerous operation. A proposal to remove only part of the tumor followed by radiation was presented to us, however, there were some delays. We saw this as a sign from God that He did not want this for me, and so we de-

clined this proposal as well. During this time I found a treatment alternative in Munich. We continued to pray though that God would open and close doors for us according to His will. Soon I was informed that the alternative treatment was possible and could begin almost immediately. We only needed to provide confirmation of coverage from the health insurance. Our insurance provider did not want to cover the cost, however. Christmas came and the alternative therapy was scheduled to begin on the 2nd of January. Once again, we did not know what to do. But people continued to pray for us.

On January 2 we drove to Munich and began the treatments anyway. Approximately 10 days later we received notification that the insurance would cover the costs! We were amazed and clearly saw God's hand in the change of events. We had another reason to thank Him.

I experienced no problems or side effects during the course of the treatments, and I give God glory and thanks. It lasted six weeks, and today I am home again, back at school. The six weeks went by slowly, but I recall being deeply moved by the words, "If I ascend into heaven, You are there; if I make my bed in hell, behold, You are there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Your hand shall lead me, and Your right hand shall hold me" (Psalm 139:8-10).

Currently, I feel very good and am thankful for each new day. I am most thankful to my Heavenly Father, but also to so many people. Thank you for praying for me, even though I don't know who all of you are. I am praying that God will bless all of you. Never before did I receive so many gifts, greeting cards, and letters. I was so blessed by them all. May God reward each of you for every kindness you showed me!

In Jesus' love,

Anita Rösch
Tuningen, Germany

Am I a Christian?

Peter slid into bed and pulled his quilt up to his chin. Like most evenings, he was waiting for his mother to come in and say good-night, but today he waited anxiously. He had a question for her.

When she was standing beside his bed, the question seemed harder to ask. "Mommy," he said slowly, trying to find the right words, "am I a Christian?"

His mother sat down on the edge of the bed and put her hand on his shoulder. "What made you think of that, Peter?" she asked. "Did something happen today that put this question in your mind?"

"Well, yesterday in prayer meeting, Mrs. Mueller said that she knew the exact time and place where she became a Christian. I can't say that. I don't know when that happened to me." Peter sounded a little worried.

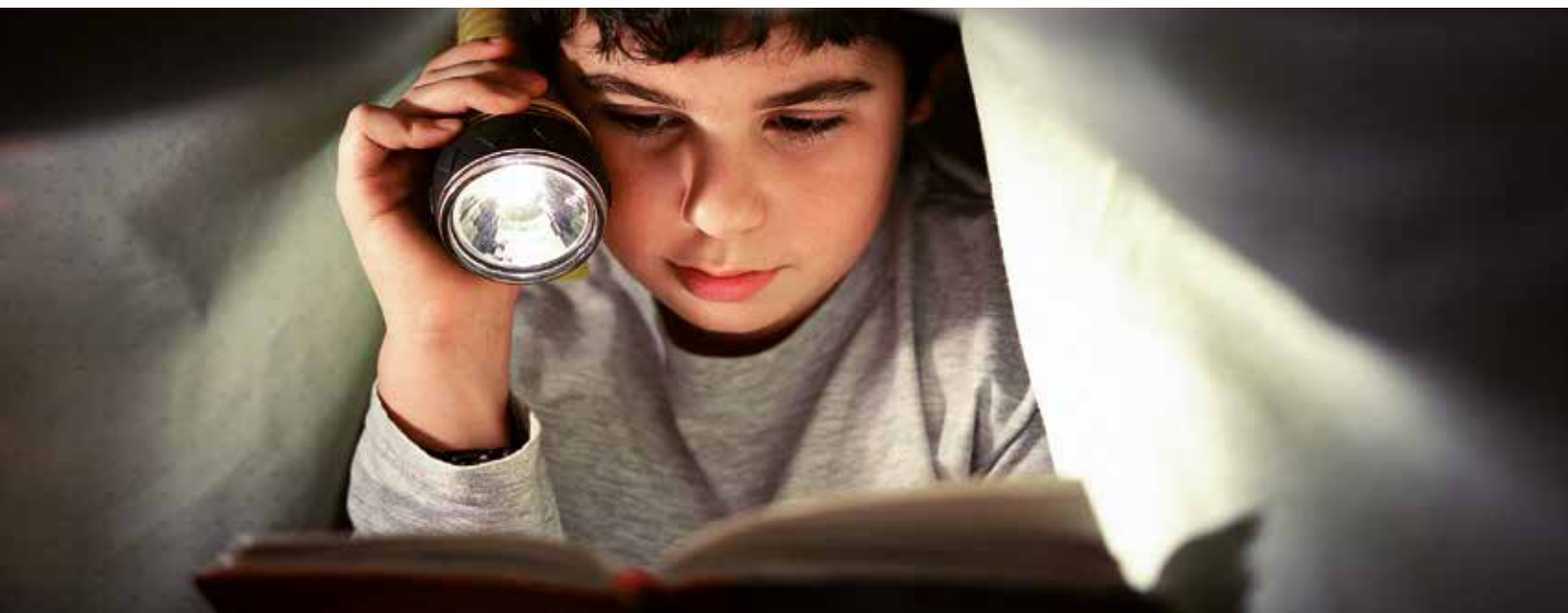
Peter's mother closed her eyes for a moment, and Peter thought she was probably praying. Then she opened her eyes and smiled at Peter. "We have been telling you about Jesus since you were a little boy. As you got a little older, you came to know more about Jesus, and grew to love him more. We taught you to be honest and trustworthy, and to be kind and friendly to everyone. The things you have learned at home and in Sunday School have helped you to become a good boy, but they don't make you a Christian. You don't become a child

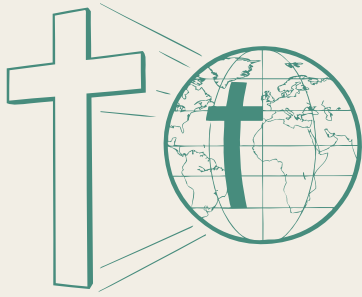
of God just by obeying your parents and knowing about what we believe. Now you are old enough to decide whether you want to be one – and this is a decision you need to make for yourself. Does that make sense to you?"

"It makes sense," said Peter, "but I don't know what to do now."

"Even though you have tried hard to be a good boy," said Mother, "you have sometimes gotten angry or done something that was not completely honest. I know that you are sad when you do things that are wrong, and that you would like to ask Jesus to forgive you. That is the first thing you need to do. You need to admit that you have done some things that make Jesus sad, and you need to ask Him to forgive you. He has promised that He will forgive if we confess our sins. Then you need to promise to become a follower of Jesus. He will always lead you and show you the right things to do. If you ask Jesus, He will be your friend and will always be with you."

Mother and Peter knelt beside Peter's bed together and Peter prayed. It was not a long prayer, but he meant every word of it with all his heart. He asked Jesus to forgive all the wrong things he had done. He invited Jesus to come into his heart. When Peter crawled back into bed, he was so happy. Something had changed inside him, and now he no longer needed to wonder whether or not he was a Christian!





Radio Broadcast Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Led By the Spirit

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God... The Spirit also helps in our weaknesses... Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:14, 26a, 27).

God’s Word clearly and repeatedly speaks about the spirit of man, as well as the Spirit of God. The indwelling, prevailing spirit of a person demonstrates itself through the person’s thoughts, will, judgment, behavior, and lifestyle. The Spirit of God is revealed in a similar way. He shows us the character, the mindset, the thoughts, the will, the workings, and the power of the invisible God. The nature and will of God was never more clearly revealed than in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. Jesus Himself confirmed this when He said: “He who has seen Me has seen the Father” (John 14:9). The visible revelation through the Son only lasted for a certain time period. In contrast, God continues to reveal Himself through His Spirit until Jesus returns.

The Bible speaks of many inimitable works of the Holy Spirit. He draws the lost to God and enlightens and awakens the sinner. He works to bring us to repentance, to belief, and to new life. He gives the born-again believer the testimony of being a child of God. He helps us in our weaknesses. Among many other things, He comforts us, helps us to do what pleases God, and leads us, as we read in the Bible passage above.

The Lord Jesus once compared the Holy Spirit with the wind. In John 3:8, we read: “The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from or where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.” This verse also indirectly speaks of the leading of the Holy Spirit. In the first place He draws and urges a person to God through the cross of Jesus. Then, when someone has experienced the new birth, he is placed under the direction of the Holy Spirit and from

then on experiences His “blowing”, working, and leading towards things that please God. This is a wonderful privilege for children of God. Blessed is the person who stands under the influence of the Holy Spirit, perceives His prompting, and follows it.

In Ephesians 6, the Apostle Paul describes evil spirits – “spiritual hosts of wickedness in heavenly places” (verse 12). He warns us about these spirits because he knew that they also have driving power. Their leading is evident in all the world, both back then and today. When we observe a person who is constantly angry and unjust to others, be it to family members, neighbors, or coworkers, we might wonder what type of spirit is driving their behavior.

Years ago, there was an older woman in our area who had the habit of stealing something every time she went shopping. Several employees would watch her immediately whenever she stepped into a store. Although she was repeatedly caught shoplifting and was embarrassed by her actions, she could not give up this habit. She was obviously driven by an immoral spirit. People are similarly driven by spirits of pleasure, impurity, hostility, hate, envy, divisiveness, pride, love of money, lying, and deceit. All these spirits have a powerful driving force that they exert over individuals. Their influence is evident everywhere. Many people do not want to do what they do; however, they are being driven by an evil spirit and cannot free themselves of this power.

However, “as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.” They have been set free from evil spirits and have the privilege to be under the influence of the



Spirit of God. They are the exception! Yet every other person can similarly be made free from the constant plaguing influence of evil spirits.

Our opening passage gives us a guideline to test whether or not we are children of God. Are we being led by the Holy Spirit to serve, to love, to endure, to do good? Do we experience His restraining and cautioning? Do we hear His quiet and clear speaking and notice Him directing our thoughts and hearts? Do we perceive His clear prompting for certain tasks? The speaking and leading of the Holy Spirit will always be in harmony with God's Word. In order to experience this, we must distance ourselves from the noise of our world and search for quiet. We must also abdicate our own will and purposes so that Jesus Christ can have the preeminence in all things (Colossians 1:18).

It is also worth noting which direction God's Spirit leads us. He will never lead a person away from God, but always towards God. He will never lead us into inner poverty or onto a spiritual plateau, but will instead lead us to spiritual growth and depth. He leads the children of God

into prayer and into a closer relationship with God. "My soul thirsts for God," (Psalm 42:2) declared David. Paul also testified of the joy he felt in prayer (Philippians 1:4). Those who experience this direction may be certain that they are being led by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit will also lead us to worship, to the "place where God's glory dwells" (Psalm 26:8b), where "glorious things are spoken of...the city of God" (Psalm 87:3), and where the longing soul can receive light and blessings. By these characteristics we can recognize the leading of the Holy Spirit. We identify Him in the direction of His leading, and we can be certain that no other spirit will lead us in this beneficial direction. He will first lead every person to the cross of Jesus, and from there our life will go in the right direction.

Of a young man in Scripture, we read: "And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him" (Judges 13:25). This all-important beginning is also possible for you, dear reader. God wants to begin with you today.



Does God's Fire Burn Within Us?

Even in temporal things, little goes right without zeal. Should things then go right in the Kingdom of God with a cold or lukewarm heart? Laboring in God's Work is impossible without godly fire, without burning love. The Lord Jesus came to send fire on the earth and what could He wish, but that it was already kindled! (Luke 12:49)

Anything lukewarm is abhorrent to God. It disgusts Him and He will spit it out of His mouth (Revelation 3:15 – 16). “I could wish you were cold or hot!” The word that is translated here with “hot” is much stronger in its original definition and means “boiling hot”.

Upon reading the epistle to Laodicea, the recipients will have thought of the acidulous hot springs at the sanitarium in the neighboring city Hierapolis. The water flowed down a rock terrace, depositing pearly white or other luminous colored limestone and losing its heat. It became lukewarm and stale.

Do we truly understand how it must grieve our Lord Jesus when, despite jolting events in the past and in the present, Christians continue to stay lukewarm? This manner completely contradicts the nature of Christ. He wants to find us not lukewarm, but boiling, steaming hot! The Lord Jesus does not want to find us warmed over, occupying the middle ground. We are to be saturated by the heat of the Spirit. We are to have a burning faith, a flaming hope, a blazing love, a fiery devotion and a fervent longing.

Only with a heart directly connected to the Lord are we able to acquire a burning love. His love becomes our motivation. His longing for lost souls becomes our longing. His commitment to God and people becomes our commitment. “Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men. They immediately left their nets and followed Him” (Mark 1:17–18). Jesus continues to go through towns, cities and countries, looking to save people. Whoever follows Him will, yes, must, and can do

no different but to win souls for Jesus, pray for the lost, and sacrifice for the Lord's kingdom. Unwavering men and women, full of the Lord's burning love, have throughout history clasped the torch of the gospel and carried it into the night of unbelief and paganism. What we notice about each one is their complete surrender.

One of them, Samuel Hebich, once said: “All your speech and prayers are not worth one farthing if you do not completely surrender your life to the Lord. The Lord Jesus wants to have the entire heart, and only those who give the Lord their entire heart know the secret.”

As a young man, Karl Studd risked a promising career, millions of his fortune in China, and finally his life in Africa. Studd was thoroughly awakened from his lukewarmness and later said of himself: “After my conversion, I should have gone and shared the message of Christ's love with others. But I thought only of myself. I kept for myself the new knowledge that had been given me. Then my love for the Lord started to cool and the love of the world moved back into my heart. I spent six years in the unfortunate condition of the unfaithful.”

God's fire burned in these men and also ignited their surroundings. Young people were especially affected. Between 1883 and 1923, about ten thousand young men and women went into the mission fields. The slogan among young people was: “We give our lives, you give your money!” It led to heartwarming calls to prayer and to the founding of prayer circles. It formed a virtual missionary home-front.

And today? "Our merchants, our soldiers, our researchers go out – what about the gospel? Europe has brought such evil to non-Christian countries; it must now not deprive them of its best: the wonderful message of the grace of Jesus Christ" (Adolf Schlatter).

We have a sacred duty, for as long as we are here and able, to tell everyone about the gospel. It is not the duty of only a few, but is the call to the entire church. It is a duty for you and me. But it will not succeed with a cold or lukewarm heart. What could our Lord Jesus wish, but that His fire was already kindled – in you and in me!

E. S.

What is Entire Sanctification?

Entire sanctification is a work done by Jesus Christ in the hearts of true believers. It is the baptism of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification is a work that follows conversion and is as unique and distinct from it as Pentecost is to Calvary. Only those who have experienced true salvation can be sanctified. Anyone who has not been born again will not be successful in any pursuit of sanctification.

Everyone who has repented of their sins and has become a new creature in Christ is eligible to receive the filling of the Holy Spirit. However, there are requirements:

1. The crucifying of one's "self" (Romans 6:6)
2. Earnest, heartfelt prayer (Acts 1:14)
3. Pure, childlike faith (Acts 15:9)

Whoever fulfills these requirements and consecrates himself fully to the Lord will be sanctified. His heart's prayer will be, "not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42b). It is someone with this attitude of consecration who can, by faith, be sanctified.

Jesus clearly explained that sanctification is not "for the world," but for those who are "not of the world" (John 17:9, 16). This shows us that sanctification is for the saved—the followers of Christ. Jesus prayed for the sanctification of those who belonged to Him. He also promised His disciples that they would be endowed with power from on high after His ascension.

This prophecy was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when Jesus' followers received the Holy Spirit and were sanctified. "Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate" (Hebrews 13:12).

The Bible clearly teaches that sanctification is for all believers. It is a work of God completed and performed by the "God of peace," (1 Thess. 5:23); through "the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 John 1:7,9); by the "word" of "truth" (John 17:17); and "by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:16).

Sanctification purifies the heart. God gives the Holy Spirit to those who are sanctified, and purifies their hearts through grace (see Acts 15:8-9). It is a purification of our inherited sin, our natural tendency to sin or to do evil. Sanctification does not free us from temptation, since every child of God is tempted. However, the sanctified Christian has the power to remain victorious over every temptation. Sanctification does not make the Christian perfect in knowledge, but it does perfect him in love. It does not take our humanity away, but it does cleanse our carnal nature. Sanctification does not remove our free will. As before, the sanctified Christian has a free will, but it gives him joy to do God's will because he loves Him above everything else. It is natural to want to please those we love. If we love God with all our heart, then we will desire to remain in close fellowship with Him.

Sanctification does not make it impossible for someone to sin again. As long as temptations exist, the possibility exists for a Christian to yield to temptation. Thank God, however, that we need not yield to these temptations. The sanctified Christian has greater strength to resist temptation through the power and grace of God.

It is God's desire for every child of God to be entirely sanctified.

EP

Sanctification - The Second Work of Grace

God desires that all His children be sanctified and experience the blessed rest that He has promised them. Every justified believer can attain this glorious state of entire sanctification if he is willing to consecrate his all, lay himself fully on the altar of God, and accept in faith that the Lord will fulfill His promise to him personally.

Sooner or later every believer will come to the realization that he is struggling to live fully for God. He is battling with his depraved nature, with the inborn tendency to sin. This makes it difficult to sustain real spiritual progress. He is justified, his sins are all forgiven, but the inborn tendency to do what is evil remains. But, praise God, the heart can be cleansed of this depravity by a second application of the blood of Christ. The power of the blood reaches into the innermost recesses of the soul and removes even the last surviving spot (1 Thessalonians 5:23, Hebrews 9:13-14). Only the wholly sanctified believer can enjoy the complete fullness of salvation.

Sanctification after Justification

The first disciples did not attain entire sanctification until after they were justified. They had been cleansed of their sins and justified by faith. They had peace with God. Likewise, every justified believer has obtained forgiveness of all of his sins. He has received life from God and become a new creation. He no longer sins, for "Whoever has been born of God does not sin" (1 John 3:9).

Entire sanctification is an experience that can only be had after one has been justified. Often it is said that God doesn't do an incomplete work, and this is true. Justification is a definite work in itself. The disciples were justified and satisfied in their walk with Jesus. The Lord did not send out sinners to preach and urge other sinners to repent. He sent out the twelve and also the seventy, and they were successful in their endeavor. And no one can say that God writes the name of sinners into the Book of

Life if they are not saved and members of the family of God! Jesus Himself gave testimony that the names of His disciples were written in heaven. Also, Jesus' words in John 17:6, "They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word" unmistakably prove that the disciples were born of God.

Luke 24:50-53 shows us the blessed fellowship they enjoyed after they returned to Jerusalem following the ascension of Jesus. "And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God." Sinful hearts cannot genuinely engage in such worship.

The New Testament account leaves no doubt that the disciples were born of God. They were converted by the ministry of Jesus and rejoiced in their newfound spiritual life and sonship. It is clear that they were in a justified state even before the crucifixion of Jesus, and yet we read of a great change that occurred in their lives at a later time.

Jesus and Sanctification

In John 17:17, Jesus prayed for the sanctification of His disciples: "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." Jesus knew that they were not yet sanctified and that they had great need of this experience, otherwise He would not have petitioned the Father to do this work in them. Many say that this prayer was just about equipping them for their life's mission. However, Jesus prayed not only for the Apostles, but "also for those who will believe in Me through their word" (v. 20). Verse 9 clearly shows that Jesus prayed for the sanctification of all those believers who had come to faith in Him during the time of His ministry.

It is sometimes said that Jesus sanctified Himself so that we too can be sanctified in truth. It has been pointed out that the sanctification of Jesus was a consecration and not a cleansing, because Jesus was already completely

clean and pure. This argument is used to maintain that our sanctification also cannot include more than a consecration.

The sanctification of Jesus opened the way for our sanctification. It consisted of His suffering and death; the shedding of His blood. “Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him” (Hebrews 5:8-9). He gave Himself as a sacrifice so that we, by His blood, can become a sacrifice that is acceptable to God. Because Jesus was constantly holy and free of sin, His sanctification did not include a cleansing of Himself, but an enabling of ours. He made it clear to His disciples that a great change needed to occur in them!

A short time after Jesus’ ascension to heaven, when His disciples were gathered in Jerusalem, the Holy Spirit came upon them. They were baptized with the promised Comforter and were sanctified.

A Wonderful Change!

The experience of entire sanctification transforms the believer so that he can fully accomplish his purpose on earth and be prepared for his future home in heaven. It is the wonderful privilege, but also the responsibility, of every born again child of God to attain this experience.

As a result of their sanctification, a wonderful change took place in the disciples. The love of the world was totally gone from their hearts and their love to God and each other was greatly enhanced and deepened. The perfect love that they attained in sanctification became the “bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:14) that sustained unity and love among them. This glorious experience made them “one heart and one soul” (Acts 4:32a).

After this experience, the previously visible signs of inborn depravity were no longer recognizable. They no longer strove for honor and recognition, and there were no more disputes about rank among them. By the sanctifying blood of Jesus, they had passed through the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit and were thereby cleansed from every element detrimental to their Christian walk. They now demonstrated to the world that glory which Jesus had given them, the beauty of true Christian humility, unity, and love (see John 17:22). Truly a great and glorious change had taken place in them!

In addition, they were delivered from all fear. After

the crucifixion of Jesus the disciples were filled with fear. When they gathered together, they locked the doors out of fear of the Jews. After the day of Pentecost, however, they boldly and fearlessly proclaimed the gospel to the multitudes, and even to the bitterest opponents of the Lord Jesus!

Another great change was evident, in that the disciples were endued with great power. After Jesus’ death they were discouraged and returned to their previous occupation as fishermen. But they were cleansed of all these tendencies by their experience of sanctification. The cleansing of their depraved nature and the infilling of the Holy Spirit gave them strength and courage to fulfill the mission entrusted to them, regardless of all opposition and hindrances. Their work was marked by intense manifestations of power, so that many souls were led to God and many sick were healed.

This work of grace also resulted in a wonderful spiritual enlightenment of the Apostles. Prior to this, many of the simplest teachings of Jesus were incomprehensible to them. After they had received the Holy Spirit and the “anointing” that “teaches you concerning all things,” they were enabled to interpret and apply the Word of God correctly. They were filled with heavenly wisdom. And many things, which previously had seemed so perplexing to them, were suddenly clear and understandable.

Sanctification and You

The experience of sanctification worked a wonderful change in those first disciples. Shouldn’t that also be the case in all believers who have experienced sanctification as a second work of grace? If the first disciples had such great need to be sanctified and endued with this power from on high, then surely this experience is just as necessary for us!

We read in God’s Word that the believers attained sanctification by faith, and that their hearts were purified by faith (Acts 15:8-9). They could not grow into this grace, nor could they achieve it by works. The Holy Spirit worked this second cleansing in them in response to their prayers and faith. And by earnest prayer and faith we too must attain this glorious experience.

Dear child of God, can you call this experience your own?

A Church that Lives Out its Doctrine and Profession

"You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? [...] You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?" (Romans 2:21–23). "For in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. [...] And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God?" (Romans 2:1–3)

These Scriptures speak of the urgent need in our time for every believer to live out what he professes and teaches. If we do not, we rob our message of its power and effectiveness. It finally comes to the point that we become a mockery and – what is worse – we fall under God's judgment.

There are too many unrealistic preachers and sermons. Before a building is constructed, an architect designs a blueprint. Sometimes he also produces a true-to-life drawing of the planned building. And so the Bible, especially the New Testament, contains the blueprint for the church that describes its character in detail. Furthermore, it uses many pictures to demonstrate the harmonious beauty of the New Testament church of God in its authenticity. It will not suffice, however, to continually present people with merely a blueprint of the church found in the Holy Scriptures. They will soon tire of only seeing a historical account of it. They want to see and experience the church in action, and so they should. God's Word makes it our duty to not only show a picture of the church, but to show the church of God itself.

During Pentecost, Peter initially pointed to an image portrayed by the Prophet Joel. (Compare Joel 2:28–32 with Acts 2:14–21.) He did not stop at this though- by pointing to the events of Pentecost, which the people had all witnessed, he was fearlessly saying: "That is it." The listeners were personal eyewitnesses and that convinced them of the truth of what was said, so that 3,000 souls were converted on that one day. We need this in our time. Sometimes pastors spend a lot of precious time describing the early church in the New Testament, drawing for the people a glorious picture of a theoretical church. Yet they are frustrated when their listeners do not 'see' the church. If the listener is to 'see' the church, the preacher must be able to point to actual believers in the visible, local church who have allowed the good news to call them out of their old life.

It is completely futile for a pastor to portray a wonderful picture of the New Testament church and at the same time show his listeners an old rundown house, with the remark: "That is it." It would be even more illogical to indignantly remark: "Why do they refuse to recognize the church? They must be completely hard-hearted, otherwise they would see it!" The truth is, people do not recognize the church because the reality does not match the image portrayed. We must practically demonstrate what we profess and preach. Generally speaking, the visible gathering of God's people is what others will see in their mind's eye.

Only when one identifies a Spirit-filled flock, a church of the Holy Spirit in a local congregation that is unified, filled with fervent love, walking fully in the



light, and living out its doctrine and profession, only then will the skeptical people recognize the true church of God.

Our experience must agree with biblical truth. It means therefore that we must truly be saved and then also sanctified. Our life must be in agreement with the biblical image. That refers to our hidden walk, our family life, our life as a citizen, as well as our business or other relationships with the world. Suppose that you stand up in a church service to testify of your salvation and sanctification and a businessman or someone else to whom you have not paid your debts is sitting in the same service. Your testimony would be a bitter joke to this person.

Do you have a good reputation? Do your children and those with whom you are in close contact everyday have an untarnished faith in your profession? Would they call you to pray for them if they were sick or in distress? If you are a pastor, would your previous neighbors call you to their deathbed? Do you, like Paul, have “a conscience without offense toward God and men?” (Acts 24:16). If we preach and profess something that we do not strive towards in our practical life, we mock Christianity and the church. A church that wants to be successful must live out its doctrine and profession.

H. M. Riggle
The New Testament Church

The Best in Life

*The best in life is now and after,
With all your heart to serve the Master.
Not just in passing, now and then to please Him,
To think of Him just when you need Him.
Not praising Him that you are His child today,
But tomorrow unfaithful in what you say.
Oh no, that's not the way to serve Him
Unwilling to go through thick and thin.
Beware that you do not fall into that plight
That you will be a stranger in His sight.
So you cannot stand on Judgment Day,
When surely you'll need Him, so serve Him today.
He gave you His all, His life and His blood
So nothing for Him can be too good.
O give Him your best, hold back not a thing -
Your life and your all, for Jesus your King.
Then you have gained the best part in life
United with Him, a soul without strife.
The best in life, is now and after,
With all your heart to serve the Master.*

Ascended on High

“When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men” (Ephesians 4:8).

What triumphant rejoicing we perceive in these words! How the heavens must have exulted at the entrance of the Champion of Calvary who had so wonderfully fulfilled the will of God! How could one better describe the meaning of the triumph of the Son of Man than with the words of the Scriptures: “He led captivity captive”? He destroyed the works of the devil and loosed the chains of sin’s bondage. No one needs to remain enslaved to sin and the devil anymore. Everyone can now be freed through Him, if they want to be. If you are united with Jesus, dear soul, then you are free! Outside of Him there is no true freedom, only bondage and enslavement to sin.

And He, the Savior of the World, the eternal High Priest of His people, is the Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle (Hebrews 8:2). He has bountiful gifts for all who come to Him. He is a King and gives royally.

But how many do not value these gifts that He has prepared for all! How many have no longing for them; rather they chase after the things of this world that are not able to satisfy. May you and I, having experienced the truth of this refrain personally, worshipfully proclaim its message to the world around us.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit

The coming of the Holy Spirit was the most important event for Christianity after Jesus’ ascension. He promised His disciples that the Holy Spirit would come. He commanded them to remain in Jerusalem until this promise was fulfilled. Jesus knew that they needed the Holy Spirit.

In the Old Testament we see God, the Father, as ‘God for us.’ The Gospels go further and reveal God, the Son, as ‘God with us.’ In Acts and the letters of the Apostles we see the Holy Spirit, as ‘God in us.’

In Galatians 3:13-14 Paul writes, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

A few people of faith in the Old Testament were able to see the Son of God as He passed by them in some physical form. However, the gift of the Holy Spirit was saved until the end times. Pentecost was the long-awaited day of the New Covenant and the dividing line between the two Testaments. The gift of the Holy Spirit was meant for all Christians and not just for the Apostles. It is a privilege to receive the infilling of the Holy Spirit and then to live a Spirit-filled life.

In His final words to His followers, Jesus said, “It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you” (John 16:7).

Therefore, it was good that Jesus left. He said so Himself. He was forced to physically part from His disciples in order to reconcile them, and us, to God through His death on the cross. After this, however, He sent us the fruit of His sacrificial death, the Holy Spirit.

The coming of the Holy Spirit and His power was necessary in preparing the hearts of people to accept salvation through Jesus. The disciples needed the Holy Spirit for unity, enlightenment, leading, consolation, and protection. After all, their divine leader and Lord, Jesus Christ, was no longer with them.

We rejoice greatly that Jesus went to heaven so that He could send the Holy Spirit to the world. However, it is only Jesus’ physical form that has left us. He continues to dwell in all His followers through the presence of the Holy Spirit; in all who have given themselves completely to Jesus and are obedient to Him in all things.

Does He dwell in you? Is your life empowered by the Holy Spirit?



Jesus at the Right Hand of God

Let's immerse ourselves in this beautiful concept: Our exalted Savior is to be found right now at the right hand of God! This is where He is enthroned in majesty and power. From here He looks down on His own, and to this place they look when they are searching for strength, comfort, and help.

This majestic expression is found in multiple places in the Holy Scriptures. David sings: "The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Psalm 110:1). Mark tells us in his succinct style: "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God" (Mark 16:19). Stephen looked up in the hour of his death and saw heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God (Act 7:55). In the epistles, and especially in the book of Hebrews, the expression is used in connection with the glory of the High Priest.

Even Jesus said it of Himself in the hour when He was mocked and ridiculed: "Hereafter you will see the

Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power" (Matthew 26:64).

Paul says, "It is Christ who died... who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Romans 8:34). What a glorious thought: Jesus intercedes for us right there at the right hand of God! He became man and that is how He is able to make intercession for mankind at God's throne. The One who intercedes for us is sitting at the right hand of God and knows us and can understand us - He loves us with an eternal love. Christ, by whom we are justified before God (Romans 8:33), also intercedes for us before God. Yes, it is because He justified us that He can make intercession for us before God and also before the enemy. He spreads His banner over His own and they are safe there. The single condition is that we commit ourselves to Him completely and fully. When we place ourselves completely in His mighty hand, we are safe and secure for time and eternity.

Faithful to the End!

A Christian soldier named Marinus was serving in the Roman army. He was the son of distinguished parents and owned a large estate. As a soldier, he was known for his competence. His commanding officer appreciated him and wanted to promote him to the rank of captain. One of his peers jealously pointed out to the colonel that Marinus was a Christian and would not bring a sacrifice to the Emperor or to the gods. Because of this, he should not be promoted.

The officer gave the young warrior three hours' time to consider whether he wanted to sacrifice to the gods and become a captain, or remain loyal to Jesus and die.

Marinus went to the bishop of the town to strengthen his faith and to be prepared for his death. The bishop comforted him by reminding him of the promises that are given to those who remain faithful to the end. Then he offered him an officer's sword in one hand and a Bible in the other and said: "Choose!" Marinus reached for the Bible and the bishop released him with the words: "Abide in the strength of God! Go in peace!"

The young hero confidently died as one who believed and whose soul was saved.

Living Life to the Full

by W. Dale Oldham

Some years ago, a 94 year old widow died in her 3rd floor room in a house on Jackson Boulevard in Chicago. She was widely known as a collector of antiques, and the administrator of her estate found an astonishing collection. There was a 50 year old accumulation of valuable chinaware, paintings, unopened crates and trunks, piled so high they crowded the ceiling. In a River Forest mansion that this woman had purchased in 1932 there were 20 more rooms full of antique furniture.

A fortune in diamonds was found unexpectedly in the false bottom of a trunk. A desk or two gave up \$5,000 in cash and \$2,200 worth of uncashed money orders and checks. Several hundred dollars' worth of money orders had been kept so long they were unredeemable locally and had to be sent to Washington for redemption. Many of the uncashed checks were so old they were worthless under the 10 year statute of limitations. The writers of some had died or disappeared.

What would you have done, had all those treasures been yours? You would have cashed the checks, redeemed the money orders, and invested the money. You would not have missed a single opportunity to better your situation.

Many people remind me of this eccentric widow. They leave their privileges and promises in God wholly unredeemed. Centuries ago, Jesus said, "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full" (John 10:10 NIV). How many people do you know who are really living life to the full? There are indeed some who live out of the rich overflow of God's grace. They go forward expectantly, inspired and motivated by the indwelling presence of Christ, optimistic and enthusiastic about their future in God. On the other hand, you probably know dozens of Christians whose lives are drab with monotony. They dream no great dreams, follow no bright guiding stars, invest themselves in no worthy causes. For them, life is but a meaningless round of existence in which they seem totally unaware of Christ's willingness and ability to change things for the better.

William James once compared our position in the universe to that of a dog in an ornate Victorian drawing room: Just as the dog is surrounded by a world of experiences, values, and powers entirely beyond its comprehension, so there is around us a world of ideas and powers that few of us are ever able to comprehend.

Let's apply the illustration. Imagine a young man who has everything he needs by way of talents and ability to make his mark in the world. Yet with golden opportunity knocking at his door, he dawdles, wastes his time, squanders his talents, and works at a job that just anyone could do. You say impatiently to yourself, "Why doesn't he wake up? Why doesn't he take hold of the advantages life offers?" You know he is far from living his life to the full and you long to arouse him to action.

But are you living your life to the full? Do you suppose there are undeveloped talents or abilities still dormant within you? A friend of mine majored in mathematics in college, expecting to teach that subject later on. But when there was no demand for mathematics instructors at the school where he served, he entered the door that was open and has served significantly in the instruction of young musicians.

The inspiration of Christ's abiding presence often opens up new areas of talent within us. A certain businessman had never won a soul to Christ until he was 65 and retired from industry. Since that time, he has won dozens of people to the Lord. You are never too old for something new in God. Pity the Christian whose boat remains tied to the pier when there is such a vast ocean of God's love, grace, and service to explore.

Most of us experience but a fraction of the joy that should be ours, a fraction of the peace we should know, a fraction of the divine guidance that is always available but unappropriated. Like Martha, we are so occupied with matters of secondary value that we cannot appreciate what the Lord is saying (Luke 10:38-42). We lack joy because we are doing nothing to deserve joy. Joy is a by-product of devotion and service.

Some time ago, you began a new life in Christ. Don't stop now: Keep walking with Him! Christ would fill your life with power, radiance, and glowing victory. Why settle for less?

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Special Services in 2013

Canada

Fest Services in Winnipeg: May 18 - 20, 2013

Fest Services in Aylmer: June 29 - 30, 2013

Fest Services in Edmonton: October 12 - 14, 2013

Germany

Pentecost Conference in Herford: May 18 - 20, 2013

Youth Bible Conference in Tuningen: July 28 - August 2, 2013

Down! Down!

Many years ago, a Russian emperor came to the Rhine River and wanted to cross it just below the Rhine Falls at Schaffhausen. He boarded a small boat that only had room for himself and the ferryman. The stately gentleman stood upright in the little vessel.

The boat had barely left the dock and neared the eddy with its powerful current when the ferryman called to the emperor: “Down! Down!” He pointed to the floor of the boat, motioning for his tall passenger to sit flat on the bottom. The emperor hesitated momentarily, seeing the filthy, wet floor. The ferryman repeated himself more forcefully now: “Down!” – and the emperor obeyed.

Had he remained standing to preserve his imperial dignity, he would certainly have been lost. The boat would have capsized regardless of its royal passenger.

What does this story teach us? We are also sailing along in a swaying vessel on the river of life, with its dangerous eddies and currents. Many a person stands upright with a feeling of power and self-assurance. Then comes the call: “Down! Down!” – “He who humbles himself will be exalted,” says the Lord. What does it matter if on life’s short passage we have to crouch low, so long as we can make it to safe harbor?