

Foundation of Faith

UNITY IN
CHRIST



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We all have daily cares and concerns to deal with. I am reminded of an old-fashioned clock. If even a small gear breaks, the entire clockwork is brought to a stop. Our newer models can be rendered inoperative by a speck of dust or a faulty battery.

No matter what area of life we consider, there has to be cooperation and unity for anything to run well. Is it not similar in the spiritual realm?

Let's look first to our personal lives; our own hearts. The Bible says: "The heart is deceitful above all things, And desperately wicked; Who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9) In one moment it can rejoice to the heights of heaven; in the next it can be depressed to the depths of death. Nothing can be as concealed from view as the human heart. Sin has sickened and torn it beyond healing. Indeed, "Who can know it?"

Only God is able to help in such a case. David prayed, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10). Only Jesus can heal the sin-sick, sin-scarred heart and bring true rest and peace to the inner man.

What else is defective and broken? Often, it is fellowship among people. The prophet asks: "Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?" (Amos 3:3) How can two live together when there is quarrel and conflict between them? Here too, it is only the Savior who can help to bring the forgiveness, understanding, and peace that unity of heart and soul requires.

The theme of this edition of Foundation of Faith is divine unity, which is made possible only through our Lord Jesus Christ, through His Word, through His precious blood, and through His Spirit.

God wants to show all of us His way. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" (Psalm 133:1)

H.D. Nimz
Kitchener, ON

A Kind Word

"He who wins souls is wise." Proverbs 11:30

A kind word is often of incalculable worth. This is apparent in an event in the life of Count Zinzendorf, who lived in Germany in the 1700's.

While the count was staying with friends at the Marienburg Castle, he met the elderly rabbi Abraham. It was a beautiful June day. The count kindly gave the rabbi his hand and said: "The silver-haired head is a crown of glory (Proverbs 16:31). I see from your hair and in your eyes that you have a wealth of life experience to look back on. Let us be friends in the name of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Never before had the elderly Jew heard such a greeting from the lips of a Christian. He looked at Zinzendorf in absolute astonishment. His lips trembled. He was not able to answer. His eyes filled with tears.

"I see we understand each other," continued the count and their friendship was thereby sealed. The count visited the rabbi in his humble home and ate at his lowly table.

The rabbi said: "My old heart longs for the rising of the sun. I am ill and yet I do not really know what I need. I myself do not know what exactly I am seeking. I feel like someone who is hunted and chased and yet I see no enemy other than my own old, evil heart."

That was the sign the count had long awaited. He began to tell the rabbi about the gospel of the glory of Christ. He led him to the cross of Golgotha and described the inexpressible love that came down from heaven, from the throne of glory, and appeared in order to save us. The count's heart burned within him as he spoke to the rabbi about his beloved Lord, and proclaimed the Lord's love, who had taken the form of a bondservant and had humbled himself to die on the cross so that all "who believe in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The elderly man listened to the fervent evangelist with rapt attention and yet with mixed feelings. He cried and wrung his hands. What was going on inside this son of Israel? Would he accept the crucified Christ?

Both men now climbed a hill that had a chapel at its peak. The sun was just rising. Its rays reflected off the cross that crowned the turret above.

"Do you see, Father Abraham, said the count, "a sign from heaven! God is giving it to you. The God of your ancestors is bringing it before your eyes. The rising sun is adorning it with heavenly brilliance. Do you believe in Him, whose blood your ancestors shed so that God's salvation plan could be fulfilled, so that all who come to Him are cleansed from their sin and find salvation in Him? Did not Isaiah say: 'But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed,' and 'The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all' (Isaiah 53:5 – 6)?"

"Yes, that is true!" answered the older man. While new, glorious light broke through the darkness of his soul, he cried out: "Praise the Lord who has shown me mercy!"

How Count Zinzendorf must have thanked God when he heard these words from the lips of this aged, dignified rabbi! So a son of the chosen people sank to the feet of his Messiah. The first step in this miraculous event was simply a friendly greeting! God often uses little things to accomplish great and glorious things.

May God help you and me to greet all those around us with friendliness! It could result in us being able to bring them to the One who gives eternal life.

One in Christ Jesus

The great English evangelist Josiah Nix once had the opportunity to speak to King Oscar of Sweden (1799-1859). “Are you a disciple of Jesus?” the king asked the evangelist, the question having been prompted by a comment Nix had made.

“Yes, your Majesty,” was Nix’s reply, “the very least of all His disciples.”

“Then you will address me no longer as ‘Your Majesty’”, said the king. “We are one in Christ Jesus.” He gave the preacher his hand before the two parted ways.

Most Memorable Experience

When G. A. Gedat was asked to recall the most memorable experience on his world journeys, he spoke neither of exquisite examples of nature nor of impressive displays of human creativity. Instead he recalled the unity of God’s children all across the world: “There is nothing more awe-inspiring than to join in the praise of God as it issues from every corner of the globe and from every tongue: ‘Jesus, Christ, Amen!’ In Tsing-Taou I sat with Chinese youth in a camp. Every morning we gathered around the

eternal Word of God. They opened their Chinese Bibles and spoke about God and Christ. Of all they said, I understood only three words, but these three words became in me that most memorable experience. They were engraved in my heart and mind so that I will never forget them. Even if I understood nothing they said, these three words were enough to draw me into sweetest fellowship and deepest communion with them: ‘Jesus, Christ, Amen!’ ”

The Spirit Unifies

The Bible tells the story of the tower of Babel. Ancient people pooled their efforts to erect a gigantic monument whose peak was to touch the heavens. However, because they ignored God in their endeavor, the project was terminated before it was completed. God confused the language of the builders, so that they were no longer able to understand each other’s language, and were ultimately scattered into various neighboring regions.

There is a deep truth to be learned from this event that remains relevant today. When we live far from God we will fail to understand each other. This is as true between family members as between acquaintances. It is true globally. An understanding between nations seems hopeless in today’s world. Instead, we witness recurring global conflict and wars.

But a great miracle suddenly occurred among the first New Testament believers. Representatives of various nations stood next to one another, all of them hearing and understanding the apostles as they give witness to the

great works of God, all of them assembled by the Spirit as the first Christian church.

Division and conflict among people cease wherever the Holy Spirit is at work, no matter how diverse the people may be.

The apostles’ message encourages us in our day to give room for the Holy Spirit to work His miraculous unification among us. We have no right to rise in judgment against others when so often we do not allow the Spirit of love and understanding to work in us. Instead, we must open ourselves completely to the working of the Spirit, so that He may remove selfishness, envy, and hatred within us and awaken the power of love.

This must be the primary objective for us today. All attempts at reconciliation and peace will fail without it. We face a great responsibility. If we accept it, then perhaps through us a small section of the great wall of conflict and strife can be dismantled, for the good of those with whom we travel through life.

Biblical Unity

Most people think that true unity among believers is unattainable in this lifetime. However, the Bible teaches the unity of all believers, and God desires for His children to be one in the Spirit.

Though many people believe that true unity cannot be achieved in this lifetime, the Bible teaches that unity among God's children is not only possible, but is required. God desires His children to be unified in Christ Jesus. In Jeremiah 32:39 we read: "I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and their children after them." Here we see that God wants to give His people one heart and one way. This leaves no room for division. Jesus says in John 10:16: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear My voice; and there will be one flock and one shepherd."

In Acts 10 we receive some insight regarding who these other sheep are that Jesus wants to bring in, so they can become one flock and one shepherd. The Jews had no fellowship with people of other nations. God gave Peter a vision in which it was made clear to him that he should go to the Gentiles. "What God has cleansed you must not call common." This was one of the first lessons that Peter had to learn. In Acts 10 and 11 we read how the Lord made a special effort to convince Peter that the Gentiles also had a share in the blessings of the gospel. The redeemed of the Gentiles are on the same level as the redeemed of the Jews, as Paul expresses in Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus." We also see that the other sheep are all people of every nationality and race who believe in the gospel and follow it, those who have come to Jesus and through Him have been forgiven of their sins.

Wherein should we be one? "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27). (Please also read: 1 Peter 3:8; Romans 15:5-6; 1 Corinthians 1:10.)

Why is there so much division today? The main reason is a carnal mindset. The heart must be fully cleansed

before we can have the attitude of Christ. Only the fully sanctified individual can truly understand the wonderful truths of God's Word. And a truly sanctified person who is wholly consecrated to God obtains joy from doing the will of God in all things. The text, "I delight to do Your will, O my God" (Psalm 40:8), applies to such a person. The Lord has a wonderful path onto which He wants to lead all His children. "A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others. Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray" (Isaiah 35:8).

Someone may counter that it was easy for the disciples of Jesus to be of one mind, but that in today's complicated world things are not so simple. Let us consider the words of Jesus in the High Priestly prayer: "I do not pray for these alone, (His disciples at the time) but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:20-21). Jesus wanted His followers to be one so the world would believe. And God does not expect the impossible from His own.

For many people, the splintered condition of Christianity is a stumbling block. Would unbelievers not be sooner convinced of the gospel if they witnessed a united church?

But how can we be one? Jesus says: "Now I am no longer in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to You. Holy Father, keep through Your name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are" (John 17:11). We see, therefore, that it is necessary to be kept in His name if we want to remain unified. Jesus says: "Keep them through Your name [...], that they may be one as We are." Division into denominations is not of God. Division is instigated by men and is the fruit of carnal attitudes. The Father's name is God. It follows logically then that He would name His church 'the church of God'. In fact, Paul repeatedly mentions this name in His epistles.

Someone may say that we must be organized. This is true, but a good foundation is necessary above all.

In Ephesians 2:19-22 we read: “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” Here it is said that we are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, in which Jesus Christ is the cornerstone.

Who sets the members into the church of God? The Scripture clearly says: “But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. [...] And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:18 & 28).

God Himself sets the members into His church as it pleases Him. We must hold near to God and be willing to take the place He assigns us, and to faithfully fill it. Isaiah writes: “And the government will be upon His shoulder.” Jesus Christ Himself rules His church and sets the members in their places.

Jesus says: “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture” (John 10:9). If we are in Christ Jesus, we are also in His church; then we are at home where we belong. “But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect” (Hebrews 12:22-23). Christ wants to commune and walk with His own. When the seventy that Jesus had sent out to preach and heal returned, beaming with joy, rejoicing that even

the demons were in subjection to them in the name of Jesus, the Lord said to them: “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in Heaven” (Luke 10:20).

In the morning time of the gospel age, when the Word of God was preached in purity, all believers were one and miracles and signs happened in the church. The spirit of God worked mightily. Then the apostasy set in. Many of the children of God had to flee, others suffered martyrdom. Soon the Word of God was taken from them. How vast was then the spiritual darkness! But after approximately 1260 years God was able to use people to translate the Bible and the truth of the gospel was brought to the forefront again.

But some teaching points were still hidden until God sent more light and insight. We read in Zechariah 14:7: “It shall be one day which is known to the Lord—neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light.” Now the children of God are able to walk in the light as in the morning time, for living water flows through the divine blessing and all may know, as it says: “And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—‘The Lord is one,’ and His name one’ ” (verse 9).

When the Lord Jesus alone is the head of His people, we do not gather around apostles and prophets and other Lords, rather only in His name. This results from divine unity.

The prophet Ezekiel had already foretold this in the Old Testament: “For thus says the Lord God: ‘Indeed I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock on the day he is among his scattered sheep, so will I seek out My sheep and deliver them from all the places where they were scattered on a cloudy and dark day’ ” (Ezekiel 34:11-12). God makes His Word true. He calls His people out of all dispersal and confusion and wants to make them all one in Christ Jesus.

The Basis of Unity

The basis of Christian unity or the fellowship of the saints is the act of being born into the family of God. "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free—and have been made to drink into one Spirit."
1 Corinthians 12:13

When a child is born, he is automatically a member of the family. The family of God is no different. Whoever is born into the family of God is accepted within the community of believers.

I was the fourth of ten boys. There was never any doubt as to what my family name would be. From the day my father married my mother, it was clear that all the children would carry the family name and that everyone was part of the family. Even if my brothers were born in different cities, they would each carry the name of our father.

We know that Jesus also considered His followers to be part of one big family when we read the words of John, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (John 1:12).

No Sin Permitted in the Lord's Church

The church is the fellowship of the saints. We read that after the events of Pentecost "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47). There are no sinners in the church because Jesus is the door, and He would never allow a sinner to enter through that holy entrance. He describes His Church as being free from any spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27).

Consider for a moment the words of the apostle Paul: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? (...) Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is

unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:14-15, 18).

When God's People are United

Today one hears a great deal about churches uniting or merging together. It is believed that the divisions within Protestant churches are a sign of weakness. Do we know what is needed to create an awakening among lost souls? The answer can be found in the Lord's prayer: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth. I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me" (John 17:19-21).

An awakening occurs when God's children unite. A magnet pulls pieces of iron together. However, the magnet is actually pulling the pieces to itself. So it is with the fellowship of the saints. We are pulled together through Christ.

The Nature of Unity

All Christians share the same experience of being saved from their sins. This experience unites all Christians, and there ought to be no division among them. We are not like links in a chain, but rather like pieces of iron that are welded together, thereby making one unit. Christian unity is dependent on personal unity with God. It is impossible to be unified in God without having fellowship with Him.



Unity strengthens our prayer. Jesus says: “If two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:19-20).

The Basis of Fellowship

The church is at once an inclusive and exclusive organism. It encompasses all who have found forgiveness of their sins, and excludes all who are still in sin.

The Lord’s church is big enough to include every single saved person. When a person is saved he immediately becomes a member of the church of God. This is the only church that Jesus built. In Acts 20:28 we read that He purchased it with His own blood.

The basis of fellowship should not be a declaration of faith, but rather the individual experience of each Christian. Many have a hard time understanding how a church can stay together if they do not have a system to monitor membership. Dear friend, our declaration of faith was instituted over 2,000 years ago. It was written by holy men of God who were inspired by Him. The method of our membership is explained clearly by Christ, “You must be born again” (John 3:7).

Unity’s Reward

“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren

to dwell together in unity!” (Psalm 133:1) David said that it is good when brothers live and work in unity. It is like precious oil that flows from Aaron’s head into his beard and drips onto his robe (Psalm 133:2).

Aaron and the priests were anointed with this oil to show that they were servants of God. The oil had a pleasant aroma, which was enjoyed by those in their midst. So it is with the unity of the saints. It is for their own benefit and adds to the joy of others.

Unity is refreshing like the dew of Hermon on the mountains of Zion (Psalm 133:3). Palestine has a hot climate and many regions are very dry. The cool dew freshens the air and creates a comfortable escape from the heat of the day.

Beloved brother and sister, the fellowship with God and His saints is also refreshing. Though you may experience trials, hold fast to God, and He will restore joy in your soul if you only let Him.

When the Lord returns, He will come for His church and the fellowship of His saints. He will come for those who have gone before us, and those who will come after us. He will return for His bride, His church.

If we want to die as saints, we must first live a saintly life. Our goal as Christians must be to die victoriously with the mindset of Stephen, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59).

Being Easily Entreated

Not long ago, I saw in the report of a meeting a statement something like this: "The brethren were easily entreated, and so all personal difficulties were easily settled." One of the greatest problems that ministers meet, and one that requires the most patience and wisdom, is the problem of settling personal difficulties. These difficulties are often found existing between those professing to be Christians. And sometimes they are very hard to get settled. There is just one reason for this: those involved are not "easy to be entreated." James tells us that this is a quality of that "wisdom that is from above." The quality of being easily entreated is a mark of true piety and of a Christ-like spirit. Where it is wanting, spirituality is always below normal. It is not hard to settle troubles if people want to have them settled; for if they really want them settled, they are willing to settle them the right way. Peace and harmony mean more to them than any other consideration, except truth. Division and discord cannot exist unless people are willing to have it so; that is unless one or both parties place a higher value upon something else than they do upon peace and harmony.

Abraham is an example of a man who was easily entreated. When strife arose between his herdsmen and those of Lot, it grieved him, and he said to Lot, "Please let there be no strife between you and me, and between my herdsmen and your herdsmen; for we are brethren" (Genesis 13:8). He therefore proposed to give Lot his choice of all the land and to take what was left.

What does it mean to be easily entreated? It means to be kind, just, reasonable and self-sacrificing in one's attitude toward others. The man who possesses this quality habitually manifests this temper in his life. There are those who are very tenacious of their rights. They feel that people do not respect their rights, as they should; so when any question involving them arises, they feel as though they must "stand up for their rights." They often lose sight of every-

thing else: kindness, mercy, forbearance, patience and Christ-likeness - in fact, nothing counts but their rights. Their rights they will defend; and very often their rights prove to be wrongs, or in insisting on their rights they do that which wrongs others. Really spiritual people are not so particular and insistent concerning their rights. They would far rather sacrifice their rights than to contend for them, unless something vital is involved, which is rarely the case. When a spiritual man is compelled to defend his rights, he will do it in a meek and quiet way, a way that has in it nothing offensive or self-assertive. When they were about to scourge Paul unlawfully, his only assertion was to quietly ask, "Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned?" (Acts 22:25) But there are those who will not yield in the least; they know their rights, and they will not yield to any one! Very often their rights would look quite different if such persons possessed more of the spirit of Christ.

Things sometimes look very different to different people, and no amount of talking and arguing will make them see alike; and the more of such there is, the further apart people drift. That is the reason so many church troubles are always being settled but are never really settled. The trouble is in their hearts. The members are not willing to be entreated. Let them get their hearts warm toward each other, and be filled with the spirit of brotherly kindness. Until such is the condition, one might as well try to weld two pieces of cold iron. As before stated, when people desire unity and harmony they can have it. But they must desire it enough to be willing to sacrifice for it all those things that prevent it.

Another thing that hinders is self-will. So many people like to have their own way. If others will do their way, such persons can be very gracious and kind; but if they do not have their way, they manifest a very different disposition. They are ready to 'balk'; their kindness is gone;



Pride is the root of many problems within the church and in our personal lives.

they become stubborn; if there is trouble, they are very slow to yield. It is very hard for them to submit even when they are convinced that they should do so. When they do seem to yield, it is often only an outward yielding, the heart remaining the same. How much trouble this self-will makes, and how different it is in spirit from him who said, "Not my will, but thine, be done!" We are commanded to submit ourselves one to another. When we demand that all the submission be on the part of the other person, it shows that we are self-willed, that we care more about having things go our way than we do about having them go right, or than we care to manifest a Christ-like disposition.

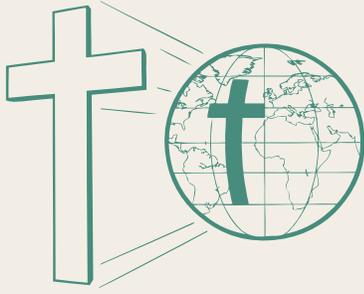
Still another thing that prevents our being easily entreated is pride. A lady was recently talking with me about a conversation she had just had with some other ladies. She had been advocating a certain doctrine, which they did not receive. In speaking of it she said: "I grew a little warm in the discussion of it. I did not mean to let them best me." So many people have this disposition. They will not be 'bested'. They will hold to their position even when they are in the wrong, and know it. If they did not take such a position, they might acknowledge the other to be right; but when they have taken the stand, they will not yield. What is the trouble? Pride in the heart is the secret. This disposition always has its root in pride; humility never acts in this way. Pride keeps people from acknowledging truth; it keeps them from changing their attitude. Pride of opinion keeps them from being willing to listen patiently to others who differ with them. Pride is at the root of many church and personal troubles; pride is what they feed on, and the only way to cure them is to get rid of the pride.

The minister who would settle such trouble has need to look for one or more of these three things. He may expect a search to disclose either selfishness, self-will, or pride;

for if the trouble is not easily settled, he may be assured that some or all of them are in the way. His task, then, is not so much to get at what seems to be the trouble, but instead to give attention to these underlying things, which are the life of the trouble. No trouble is truly settled till these elements are purged out of the heart.

O brethren! What we need in all the churches and in every heart is that "wisdom that is from above" (James 3:17). We are told that it is "first pure." By wisdom, James does not here mean what we usually mean by that term, but in it he includes the whole of the gift of God that comes to us in our salvation. It is "first pure," then as a natural consequence of that purity it is "peaceable." It loves peace; it seeks to be at peace with all. It is "gentle." That gentleness which was manifested in the life of Jesus reveals itself anew in the hearts of those who are "first pure." Love has no harsh words, no harsh feelings. It is full of mercy and easy to be entreated. Where this heavenly wisdom abides, there will not be a disposition to assert one's own rights, to be self-willed, or to hold fast to one's own ways; on the contrary, if its blessed presence fills our souls, we shall be merciful, kind, forgiving, long-suffering, full of pity, and we shall have the same tender feeling for our brother who has done us wrong as the father had for the prodigal. We shall be ready to run to meet him. We shall be ready to forget all the past. Our hearts will be filled with joyfulness at the expected reconciliation. O brethren, there is nothing needed quite so much today and every day, as that heart-quality that makes people "easy to be entreated."

C.W. Naylor



Radio Broadcast Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener, ON

The Unity of the Spirit

“I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Ephesians 4:1–3

Throughout Christianity today there is a pressing need for unity. Religious circles have tried various means to create unity, yet without success. Even the so-called “Christian alliance” has achieved little in this regard. The term alliance means partnership, however human efforts at partnership have evidently not led to unity.

If we were to hear ministers from various denominations preach about our Bible text, we would likely be presented with many different ways to achieve unity. These ways would surely correspond with the beliefs that each individual holds.

There are many perceptions and theories about Christian unity, and many methods have been devised to achieve this unity. Yet in our text, Paul speaks of “unity of the Spirit”, and thereby shows us a godly rather than human approach to unity. Much depends on whether we recognize, accept, and desire to walk this godly way of unity.

We can assume that believers in many Christian denominations think back to the unity of the first Christians and desire to have this unity today as well. Undoubtedly, it is possible to have this unity today; however this can only happen when we are prepared to let go of human theories, teachings, and methods. In general, every denomination has its own statement of faith to which it adheres and which it promotes. Yet in church history, we find it confirmed again and again that precisely these statements of faith have often led to schisms and have

steered masses of adherents away from biblical truth. The disjointed picture presented by the diversity of denominations may be observed by all; the world sees it too and scornfully turns away.

Let’s suppose that all denominations would distinguish themselves by wearing clothing of a different color. Wouldn’t that be a colorful display? And how would it be possible to present even just an outward display of unity to the world?

Yet since our Bible passage deals specifically with “unity of the Spirit”, our thoughts turn to the prerequisites for the foundational inner unity. We should note the actor here is clearly the Holy Spirit, who is also the author of the entire Holy Scriptures. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul emphasizes that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Timothy 3:16), and Peter adds to that: “Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21).

Can we imagine that the multitude of denominations comes from the Holy Spirit, and do we find them prescribed in our Bibles?

In Ephesians 4:4–6 we read: “One body and one Spirit... one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.” This was the teaching of Christ—which is also advocated by the Holy Spirit—and makes biblical unity possible. This was the doctrine and unity of the first Christians. With this unity in mind Paul writes, “[endeavor] to

keep the unity of the Spirit."

Hindrances to unity originate from mankind. In addition to denominationalism, legalism and extremism are also obstacles to unity. Extremism occurs where people place undue emphasis on outward things, which leads to adding to or subtracting from the commandments of God. The extreme left is often characterized by an unrestrained leaning towards the world, adaptation to prevailing societal norms, and complacency towards sin and unbiblical doctrines. In contrast, the extreme right shows itself through legalism and the type of self-righteousness exhibited by the Pharisees, "taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen" (Colossians 2:18). Both of these extreme positions are not from the Spirit of God and are therefore a hindrance to unity of the Spirit.

A further obstacle to unity of the Spirit is false teaching. It is impossible for false doctrine to come from the Spirit of Truth, however people are often bedazzled and led astray by these teachings. People seem to be especially drawn to new teachings. However, as Spurgeon once wrote, "Commonly it is found in theology that that which is true is not new, and that which is new is not true."

In Hebrews 13:9 we have a clear warning: "Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines." Unfortunately, this warning often goes unheeded. Even the church in Galatia did not observe this caution. False teachers had infiltrated the church, of whom Paul wrote, "we did not yield submission [to them] even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you"

(Galatians 2:5). The seriousness of this situation is evident in Paul's words to the Galatians: "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ" (1:6-7). Here unity was jeopardized more than they had realized through false teaching.

Turning aside now from all these hindrances, let us examine the clear foundation of Christian unity. The actual, unchangeable foundation for unity is the cross of Jesus Christ. In other words, we have to approach the topic of unity through Christ and His redemptive plan. Unity is only possible among those who have experienced Christ's forgiveness and have received new life in Him. There can be no unity outside of these parameters.

Another cornerstone of unity is the Word of God. The will of God and His divine standard is found within His eternal Word. People who voluntarily submit themselves to this standard and align their own will with God's, will discover that they stand in godly unity.

A third prerequisite for true unity is living in the Spirit. In Galatians 5:25, we read: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." People who walk by the nature of the Spirit of God and stand under His influence and direction will not be hindered in their unity. The Spirit of God makes us one with God; if we are one with God, then we will also be able to be one with one another. True Christian unity is not a human alliance, but rather a "unity of the Spirit".



Redemption

What is freedom from sin?

Redemption is at the heart of the salvation message. It is the most important news ever delivered to humankind. It tells us that “Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15).

From a cause-effect perspective, redemption is the effect. The cause is often hard to see at first. In the last issue's lesson we looked at reconciliation as being the cause. Today we take a closer look at redemption as being the effect. It is an effect that radically, visibly changes the life of an individual.

God said through the prophet Ezekiel: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them” (Ezekiel 36:26, 27). Here the true character of redemption is revealed. It changes the nature of the sinner. God promises that the sinful heart, which neither desires nor is able to obey the commands of God, will be changed. It is this change that makes the sinner happy and glad. He is not made glad while remaining in his sins; he is made glad because he has been redeemed from his sins.

We catch another glimpse of redemption in Paul's letter to the Colossians. Paul encourages the Colossians to thank the Father, “giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Colossians 1:12-14). This passage shows us that we are redeemed through the blood of Jesus, the Son of God. God delivers the sinner from the dominion of Satan, sin and darkness, and places

him in the kingdom of the Son of God. He is therefore no longer a sinner but a saint, and a member of the church of God. He is now qualified, or worthy, of partaking in the inheritance of the saints in the light.

Redemption is God's colossal and powerful work in the human heart. It is the greatest treasure that a person can find. There is no gathering of wealth, of estate, of precious jewels, of family and health that can compare to its value. All of these things lose their value at the point of death, if not sooner. In fact, any possession of ours loses its value the moment we cease being grateful for it. But we will be grateful for redemption even beyond the grave. We will be grateful for redemption even after billions of years have passed in eternity. When all the blessings we enjoyed during our lifetime have been forgotten, the memory of our personal redemption will remain keen, clear, and awe-inspiring.

As was indicated in Lesson 24, we will continue to study justification and regeneration consecutively. It should be noted, however, that these are not separate experiences that follow redemption. We are not redeemed, then justified and regenerated. Justification and regeneration, conversion and forgiveness are different attributes of the one experience of redemption. They describe unique aspects of the same divine work in the human heart.

Robert Witt
Gifhorn, Germany

Lesson 24: Reconciliation

Lesson 25: Redemption

Lesson 26: Justification



HYMN

Come Closer to Me

Dark days come to even the most enthusiastic of God's children - evangelists not excepted. In one such period of pressure, young Barney Warren went aside to tell his Lord about his worries. Fearing lest the pressure upon his spirit might be due to some willfulness on his own part, he sought afresh to place himself perfectly in line with the Will of God. The witness to his own integrity came in an increased assurance that God would make all the circumstances work together for his good.

Opening his Bible the young man's eyes fell upon Job's appraisal of his life: "My foot has held fast to His steps; I have kept His way and not turned aside" (Job 23:11). Why then the hardness of misunderstanding; why the torments of physical illness; above all why the hiding of God's face from such a one as Job, a man faithful to his own conscience and to all that he knew of his Creator? Did God permit that good man to go through the fire of human suffering that he might know how to sympathize with others? Is it necessary for those who fear God to endure the same human experiences as do the ungodly? Even our Lord Jesus took our experiences upon Himself and learned through His sufferings what it means to be human. Comforted by these meditations Brother Warren's longing to satisfy the heart of God took shape in the lovely words of this hymn:

*When I get weary with toils of the day,
Off in the secret I kneel and pray;
There I can hear my Lord sweetly say,
"Come closer, my child, to me."*

Refrain:

*Closer, my child, to me,
Closer, my child, to me;
Closer, my child, to me,
Come closer, come closer,
Closer, my child, to me.*

*When all around in this cold, dark land,
Nothing encourages me to stand,
Jesus says, holding me by the hand,
"Come closer, my child, to me."*

*When in afflictions I suffer long,
Jesus comes bringing this lovely song:
"Trust in my grace, and you shall be strong,
"Come closer, my child, to me."*

*When I am meeting with trials severe,
When I am parting with loved ones here,
Looking to Jesus, His voice I can hear:
"Come closer, my child, to me."*

excerpted from: To the Chief Singer

A Brief Story of the Work and Influence of Barney E. Warren by Archie
A. Bolitho, Gospel Trumpet Company Anderson, Indiana

THE INEXHAUSTIBLE POWER OF GOD

I recently had to think of Samson. As a Nazarite who was consecrated to God, he was a man who was given superhuman strength. With this gift he was to begin liberating the nation of Israel from the grip of the Philistines. The Philistines tried to capture Samson on a number of occasions, but each time, by God's power, Samson was able to evade them and then beat them into retreat.

Jesus knew the storms that every one of His followers would face. This is why He told us in Matthew 7:24-29 to build our house on the rock. Only then can our house withstand the elements. Jesus also told us that our spiritual house will have no firm hold if we build it on sand. In Luke's account, this same parable is given in a slightly different form:

Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them, I will show you whom he is like: He is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. And when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently against that house, and could not shake it, for it was founded on the rock. (Luke 6:47-48)

Here we read about a flood and a stream. Tremendous forces are brought to bear against the house. Human wit and strength cannot counter these forces. This is why it is so important that our house is built upon the rock. This is the only way that we will be able to withstand every storm and every flood. There will never come a time when Satan will cease trying to destroy your house. In early church history, Christians were persecuted and killed for their faith. We are subjected to entirely different kinds of tempests than they were. Today we are mocked for being so naive as to believe in an "old book". We are tempted with comfort and indulgence that are designed to cool our love and devotion for God. Some of us are tempted by the passions of the world, which damage and ultimately destroy the spiritual house. It is for good reason that the Bible warns us that the devil goes about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Samson had a particular weakness that Satan exploited repeatedly. And because Samson did not flee from this

temptation, but rather flirted with it, his life ended in tragedy. But God loved you so much that He did everything so that you, by His power, might overcome temptation.

In Nehemiah we read that the nation of Israel began to build up the walls of Jerusalem. Here too, there were "tempests" and "floods" to be endured from all sides. The surrounding nations were not at all pleased that Jerusalem was being rebuilt as a city. But the inhabitants of Jerusalem remained close to God and kept their weapons at the ready, even as they worked at building up the city wall. Satan does not want your house to be built up. He will pass up no opportunity to try and to sabotage the construction process. However, praise God, he will not be successful!

We also read in Nehemiah 4:6 that the enemy nations assembled against Jerusalem and threatened the Jews. How might they have felt in this situation? From a human standpoint, they were utterly helpless.

But Nehemiah put his trust completely in God. He encouraged the people with the words: "Wherever you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us" (Nehemiah 4:20). God will fight for you too! He wants your faith to become sight. At Easter we were reminded again of God's great love for you and me. He gave His life for us so that we could live and be with Him one day. Put your faith and trust in God! Build your foundation on the unshakable rock that will withstand every storm and every flood. God has faithfully demonstrated that He fights on behalf of His own, and His unending power will bring you to victory.

Allow God's power to work in your life (Colossians 1:29) by building your house on the firm foundation of Jesus Christ.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (1 Corinthians 1:18)

Eugen Igel
Kirchberg, Germany

QUESTION

We read that Hades was thrown into the lake of fire. What is the lake of fire? Is it what we refer to as Hell? If so, how can hell be thrown into Hell?

ANSWER

This question refers to a passage from the Book of Revelation (20:11-15):

Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.

The lake of fire refers to Hell. Many Bible passages confirm that the dead will rise at the Second Coming of Jesus, some to eternal life, the rest to eternal death (e.g. Daniel 12:2; John 5:28-29). The intermediate state between natural death and the Final Judgment is described as “sleep” (1 Thessalonians 4:13). This means that the dead do not pass directly into heaven or hell, but that they reside temporarily in the realm of the dead until the return of Jesus.

When Jesus returns, all the dead will be resurrected. The sea, death, and the realm of the dead will give up their victims (Revelation 20:13). When Jesus presides over the Final Judgment, He will finally and forever pronounce condemnation over the godless as well as that place where they spent their intermediate state, referred to as “Death and Hades” in our text, both of which will be thrown into the lake of fire.

Eduard Schüle
Tuningen, Germany

QUESTION

Why is Jesus still called Christ?

ANSWER

Christ is the title of Jesus’ office or position. The Greek word *Christos* is the translation of the Hebrew word *Meschiach* (Messiah), and it means “the Anointed”. The prophets of the Old Testament foresaw a King coming from the lineage of David; an anointed One who, as Priest and King, would fulfill all that Israel wanted in a true Prince of Peace. Thus, the dual designation of “Jesus Christ” provides the most concise testimony of Christianity: Jesus of Nazareth is in one Person the promised Christ (Messiah).

Robert Witt
Gifhorn, Germany

Experiences with God

Coming home from work late one night, I was stopped by the Checkstop program and was approached by an officer. He asked me, "Have you had anything to drink tonight?"

"No," I replied.

He asked again, "Not even one drink?"

I again replied that I had not had anything to drink, but then asked, "May I tell you a story?"

"I have all night," he answered.

So I told him my story. I used to be an alcoholic but am now a changed man. In August of 2011, I was working out of town and stayed the night in a hotel in Wainwright, AB. After sitting down on the bed, I opened the drawer of the nightstand and found a Bible. I took the Bible, opened it, and began reading. It was as if Jesus was sitting beside me, guiding me Scripture by Scripture. I realized that I needed to change the way I was living.

I was given the chance to do exactly that when I came back to Edmonton. That Sunday, for the first time in a long while, I attended the evening church service. The theme for the program that evening seemed to be tailor-made specifically for me: "How to Get to Heaven". After the service was over, I stopped at the door and asked to speak with the pastor. That same evening I repented and prayed for forgiveness of my sins. The Lord Jesus forgave me and the peace I now know and have in my heart is unfathomable. I know there is nothing in the world of more value than the grace of God.

The officer replied, "That's a beautiful story. Have a good night!"

I thank God for the prayers of my parents and relatives during the 40 years I spent lost in the world. They never gave up praying for me. I am so thankful that the Lord Jesus pursued me and rescued me before it was too late, and that I can share this story.

What miracles can God work in someone's life? If people would only allow Jesus into their heart when they are given the opportunity, they would know.

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened." (Matthew 7:7-8)

Bernie Mutschmann,
Edmonton, AB

God Sees the Sparrow

You have probably seen a sparrow. Sparrows don't migrate south like many other birds. They stay in the same place right from spring, through summer, fall and winter. Many people are rather scornful of the sparrow, thinking it a plain and boring bird, but this ordinary bird brightens our wintry days with its cheerful song.

Jesus thought the common sparrow was important. He used the sparrow as an illustration in Matthew 10:29-31. "Are not two sparrows sold for a copper coin? And not one of them falls to the ground apart from your Father's will...Do not fear therefore; you are of more value than sparrows."

Sparrows may not be the most eye-catching or beautiful birds, but they teach us that we should not worry unnecessarily.

I read a story of a little girl who learned about Jesus both at home and in Sunday School. More importantly, she learned to love Him. When she was eight years old, her parents died, and she was brought to an orphanage. She missed her parents terribly, of course. One day, when she couldn't bear it, she hid in a secluded corner behind the house and began to cry bitterly. Through her sobbing, she heard a sparrow twittering. She looked up and saw the small bird sitting on a branch not far away from where she was crouched.

The sight of the bird, and the cheerful song reminded the girl of a song she had learned from her mother:

*I sing because I'm happy,
I sing because I'm free.
For His eye is on the sparrow,
and I know He watches me.*

She dried her tears and knelt down and prayed: "Dear Jesus, please give me a new Mommy! You said that you love the sparrows and you look after them. Please look after me, too."

The song and the prayer made the little girl feel much better. She began walking along the road, feeling so glad that Jesus loved her and would take care of her. She began to sing the song again, and she was so distracted that she forgot to check for traffic. She was hit by a car as she crossed the road.

When she woke in the hospital, she saw a woman sitting at her bedside. "Oh, Jesus, you sent me a mother! I knew you would do that!" she cried out in wonder. "If you love a sparrow, then you will take care of me!" Then she lost consciousness again.

The woman sitting at her bedside was the woman who had been driving the car that had hit the little girl. She had come to see how the little girl was. When she discovered that this injured little girl was an orphan, she adopted her. God had indeed sent that little orphan child a mother.

We can trust God no matter what. From the sparrow we can learn that we need not worry about things. Jesus is there and He cares for us.



Do You Remember?

I am sitting at my desk and looking out on a beautiful summer's day. The birds are busy today – fluttering back and forth in search of food for their young. It won't be long and the summer will be over; autumn will set in, only to be replaced by a cold winter.

It seems only a few short days ago since I was a young boy, but in truth, many years have passed. I am old. Where has the time gone? This passage of time happens to all of us, of course, but it still seems to catch us by surprise.

I'd like to share something out of a book that is lying open on the desk before me. I have read this numerous times. It is a small sketch by Else Dörfler. I don't actually know who Else Dörfler is, but I like her story, and perhaps you will too. Perhaps you will relate to it, like I do. Here it is:

They ambled slowly through the garden. All around they could see new flowers poking their colorful faces out of the ground, just beginning to bloom. "Do you remember?" asked the old man. He stopped in front of a tall evergreen tree and looked fondly at his wife. "I planted this when our son was born – our first son."

"I remember," nodded the old woman. The sun shone on her simply combed white hair. "It was so beautiful that day." She looked up thoughtfully, reminiscing. "It was warm and sunny, just like today – and we were so happy, and so very young."

"And the tree grew," said the old man proudly, "just as our son did." His tired body quivered slightly. "Now he is buried in French soil."

"He is resting in God," corrected the small woman by his side gently. Her face mirrored the quiet acceptance of this fact.

"Do you remember..." began the old man again, as they walked slowly along the path to a tall slender birch tree whose leaves danced merrily in the wind. "I planted this tree when our 'little one' was born – our first little girl."

"Yes, yes," nodded his wife. Her face lit up at the memory. "She was such a happy child." She looked around. "She

was often content just to nap in her wagon in the sunshine when I came out here with her. We spent hours here – and there," she pointed. "That is where she took her first step as you held her hand."

"This is where the sandbox stood where she loved to play. Do you remember the day she chased the yellow butterfly? She was so determined to catch it," recalled the old man, "and then she cried so bitterly when her clumsy fingers squashed it."

"Oh," he continued, "and then I built that small bench for you, so you could rest. And I built the little table and chair so she could play beside you. Do you remember the cakes she baked for us? The sand cakes?" He looked at the spot where the empty bench and table stood, as though he could still see his little girl playing there.

"And then you dug this flower bed and planted it when our second little one opened her blue eyes," The gentle woman continued the trip down memory lane. "She was a sunshine, our second daughter."

The old man's voice grew tender as he finished her thought: "because she was like you." The couple walked a few more steps together.

They arrived at a tall oak tree. "This is the tree that I planted when our youngest son was born," murmured the old man.

"He had your eyes and your laugh," remembered his wife, but this memory brought a sadness to the old man's eyes.

"Yes, he did, until he got sick and lame." "He is at peace beside his sisters – would you call him back into the pain he endured?" The old man's wife touched his hand tenderly.

"Life is hard!" The old man stood bowed under the weight of it. The couple had arrived in front of a small shed. "I am tired. Let us sit down and rest." They sat down on the green painted bench, and looked back at the trees and flowers in their garden. "Life is hard," repeated the old man. "When I was young I wanted to conquer things and thought I could rip up trees with my bare hands – but age has made me

quieter and more peaceful. I think of the past as a beautiful and rich land, that I plowed with strength and energy, but... the storms..." A small, work-worn hand covered his own.

"Don't complain," encouraged his wife lovingly. "Are we not rich? We can remember our children with love and joy, not with the heartache that our neighbors must feel when they think of theirs."

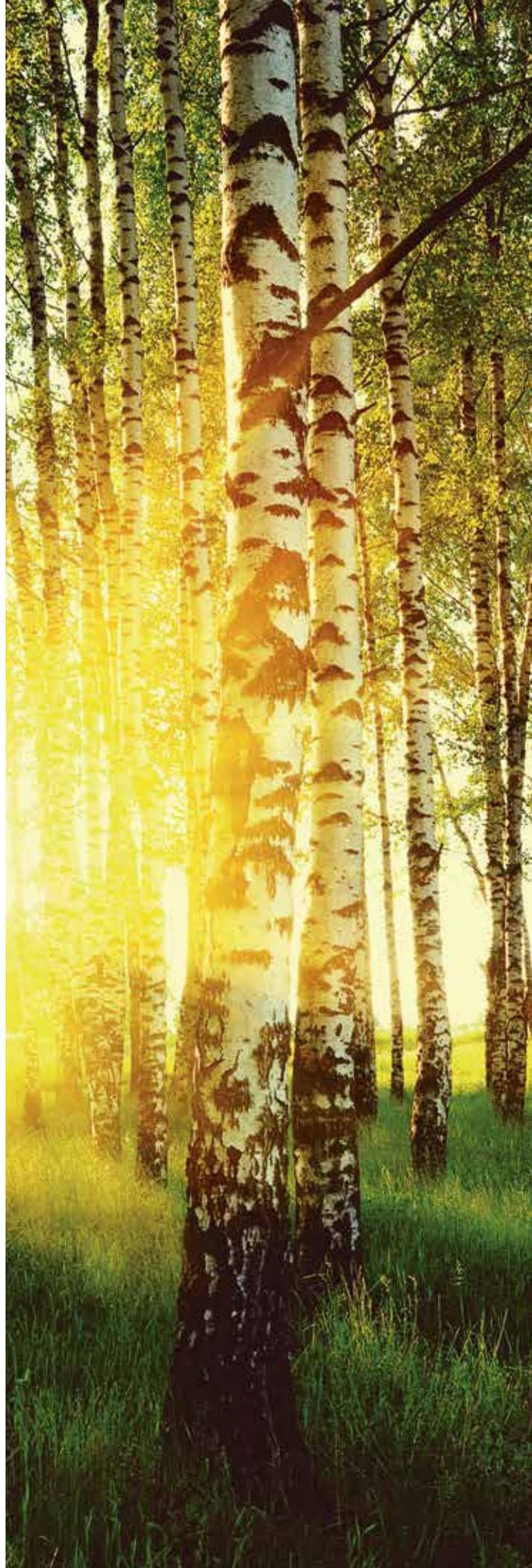
"And we still have each other. That really is a blessing," said the old man. His eyes were damp with unshed tears. "And we have Jesus, too, and that is the greatest joy of all. Who can separate us from that?" The smaller hand of his wife tightened around his larger, wrinkled hand, and he grasped it gratefully. A bird chirped in the distance. The soft scent of violets filled the air.

The Psalmist says: "Those who are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bear fruit in old age; they shall be fresh and flourishing, to declare that the Lord is upright; He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in Him" (Psalm 92:13-15). But that can only be said about people who rest in God and who have become still in Him.

There are people who are youthful in their advanced years. But years that are more difficult come to all of us. Those who measure their life only by what they can still accomplish may look at old age as winter, filled with nothing but barren trees. But even these years can bring us closer to God, and waken in us a homesickness for heaven. Johann Heinrich Jung-Stilling said:

"Blessed are those who long for heaven, for they shall reach that home." Homesickness lifts us higher than our trouble and sorrow. Homesickness makes the thought of heaven sweeter, and the hardships of our earthly life seem lighter. The strength of a Christian is a longing for our heavenly home. That homesickness keeps our soul young, until we reach that heavenly home by the grace of our Lord.

Otto Sommerfeld (1922-2008)



We are One in Christ

World War I was raging. An Austrian battalion received orders to march to a mountain village in Italy and take up quarters there. The previous billeting officer waited for the battalion at the entrance of the village. Two rooms were reserved for the commander of the battalion at the Catholic parsonage, but for some reason he declined them and left the rooms meant for him to his Adjutant Lieutenant.

Only after the four companies of the battalion were cared for and some official business was taken care of in the hastily constructed office building, did the Lieutenant make his way to his rooms at the parsonage. The priest, a middle-aged man whose aging mother lived with him, welcomed his guest with measured friendliness and led him personally to the rooms on the top floor. The Lieutenant declared he was content with only one room and left the other for his host's use. The room that would be the officer's home for several weeks was simple yet comfortably arranged, with a pump organ in the corner. In the first few days, the Lieutenant was unable to play the instrument because he was too occupied with official business, but he did immediately write home and request that some songbooks be sent.

On one of the following Sundays he finally found the time to play the instrument. The battalion, whose officers and ranks were almost entirely Catholic, had attended services at the church. In his room afterwards, the Lieutenant, the only evangelical officer, walked to the organ and began to fill the house with unfamiliar evangelical choruses and songs. As a finale, he sang his favorite song with a clear and loud voice:

*Near the cross with all your burdens,
Anyone who is oppressed!
Here you'll find the greatest comfort,
Here your soul will find sweet rest!*

*He took the judgment on Himself,
The One upon the cross;
He bled and died for you,
The Son, the Lamb of God!*

*He bore the penalty of your sins,
He who was unflawed;
See how He proved His love for you,
The holy Son of God!*

*He will calm your deep desire -
He will take away your pain.
Peace He wants to give to you
To replace those sinful stains.*

*Comfort, forgiveness, and eternal life
Flow from the cross to you;
At the cross you are giv'n
A peace that nothing can subdue.*

As the last chords faded, a tentative knock was heard at the door. At his "Come in!" the priest entered, asking repeatedly for forgiveness that he would dare disturb his guest. The Lieutenant, although surprised, told him he was most welcome and invited him inside to take a seat.

"Oh, Sir Lieutenant," began the priest, "I really hope you are not offended at my boldness, but your music came through to my room downstairs and captivated me so that I sneaked to your door to listen more closely. The last song especially moved me. Most of the text I could understand, and that was the reason I knocked. Would you do me the favor of singing it once more?"

His request was gladly granted. While the officer sang the song of the cross once more, the priest leaned back in his easy chair and closed his eyes so as not to miss a single word. It really seemed to speak to him, as he reverently

folded his hands and nodded approvingly several times. When the song was finished, he paused a little and then said as if to himself, “so deep... so true... what pure glorious gospel!” And turning to the Lieutenant, he asked,

“Sir Lieutenant, where did you find this song? How is it that you have this attitude toward God? I can see that you love this highly-praised Savior with all your heart. The other officers don’t care to sing such songs. And another thing: The songs that you played and sang, I have never heard them in our Catholic church. You are a Catholic Christian, right?”

The Lieutenant pulled his chair closer to the priest and answered, “It depends on how you interpret ‘Catholic.’ If you take it at its actual meaning: ‘Katholikos,’ which means ‘universal,’ then yes, I place myself in the universal Christian church, the fellowship of the saints in Christ.”

“With that you are saying that you also believe in our church, which alone can save.”

The Lieutenant gently, but firmly disagreed: “You said before with full assurance that this song expressed the pure glorious gospel of the cross. That is my opinion as well. It is the good news of the Savior Jesus Christ; He alone can save. Can there be anything else that alone can save?”

“Quite right, Sir Lieutenant, but fellowship with Christ can only be attained through the church, and therefore, because the church is able to do this, it alone can save. It has the power to bring someone to Christ and also to lock someone out, a power that Christ Himself gave it.”

“To make sure I understand you correctly, is it your opinion that Jesus receives no one unless they first turn to the establishment that you call ‘the church?’”

“Exactly right, that is my opinion. There is no salvation outside of the church.”

“Instead of answering, allow me to ask you this: What was it that spoke to your heart so completely before in the song? Was it some reference to the church or maybe a priest that administers the sacraments? Was it not rather the immediate invitation to the cross without any mediator? You see, it is because the words of the song correspond to what God Himself says through the Holy Scriptures, that the song captivated your heart so and made you want to worship only Him who died on the cross for us. Allow me to show you several proofs out of the Bible.” The Lieutenant took out his pocket Bible and read, “To Him all the prophets witness that, through His name, whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43); “...and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses” (Acts 13:39); “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1); “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:26); “...that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

“From these words of the Holy Scriptures, it is certainly clear that he who believes in Christ and turns his whole life to Christ, thereby receives all of salvation’s blessings that Jesus purchased for us, as they were listed in the previously read Scriptures: forgiveness of sins, righteousness, peace with God, kinship with God, and eternal life. Where does it say anything about a church that alone can save?”

The priest had listened attentively and seemed to be a little embarrassed. “I see that you don’t just sing songs, Sir Lieutenant. You are clearly a theologian. I must admit that it is difficult to give an answer after your explanation. Allow me to take some time and come back to this question at a different time.” He had risen from his seat and reached his hand to the Lieutenant in farewell. At the door he turned around again.

“Sir Lieutenant, would you do my mother and me the

honor of being our guest tonight for dinner?”

The Lieutenant delightedly answered, “With all my heart, my friend, and the honor is completely mine.”

Dinner and the rest of the evening gave them the opportunity to continue their discussion. From that day on, the priest and the officer sat together almost every evening and the relationship between the two only got stronger.

Several weeks had passed when the battalion received the order to prepare to march. When the Lieutenant told this to his host, the priest was visibly affected. He had gotten attached to his guest in the last ten weeks and the thought of an imminent farewell filled him with melancholy. This mood was felt by all three at the table that evening. Each felt that something would soon be taken from them. The conversation took on a somber tone. The hands of the old clock on the church tower had long already shown midnight. The clock had not struck midnight, for the chimes were strictly forbidden in wartimes. The village lay in deep darkness outside and nothing stirred on the normally animated streets. Only the heavy mountain boots of the guard were occasionally heard on the cobblestoned sidewalk.

The three friends had gotten quiet. The elderly mother folded her hands in her lap and sighed. The priest and the Lieutenant also had their hands folded. The Lieutenant broke the stillness: “Should we not speak together before God in prayer? Allow me to begin!”

The two men knelt before their seats; the mother bowed her head over her folded hands. God’s Spirit was noticeable among the prayers. The Lieutenant’s prayer was steeped with strong faith. Then the priest began to pray a loud prayer of thanksgiving and petition, and the longer he prayed the more his prayer turned into a joyful psalm of the saving power of the cross of Golgotha.

The men had risen from their knees. They stood silently for a while and looked the other in the eye. All of a sudden, the priest’s body shook and the tears ran over his cheeks, “Sir Lieutenant,” he said with a tremulous voice and reached his hand out to him. “Dear Sir Lieutenant, allow me to call you ‘brother’ from now on; for today salvation is come to our home! I have the living testimony in

me: You and I, we are one in Christ, in fellowship with all who worship the name of the Lord in spirit and in truth.”

In this hour, the Italian priest and the Austrian officer became brothers in Jesus Christ. The elderly mother also stood there, laid her hands on them and stammered among tears of joy, “God bless you, my beloved sons!”

Two days later a dispatch rider brought the commander of the battalion the order to march. The enemy was nearby and the reserves were being pulled to the front line. In a short while, the battalion was in the village square ready to march. A quick command and the column of soldiers pushed out of the village towards the enemy.

The adjutant stayed behind with a small division to make sure the transfer of accommodations went smoothly. Then he went once more to the parsonage to say his final farewell. In the priest’s office, two brothers in Christ squeezed hands and commended each other to God’s protection.

The battalion had been in battle for many days. It was night, and sheet lightning appeared far above the mountains. Spotlights from both sides shone with mighty beams that slowly crawled over the heavily clouded skies and the steep ridge of the Dolomite Alps. Now and then lightning flashed, followed by thunder 100 times louder than cannon fire. Intermittent machine gun fire chopped through the air.

The Lieutenant sat in the shelter that he shared with his comrades and was cleaning his pistol. There was a knock at the door and the post-sergeant entered. “A package for you, Sir,” he announced. He laid it on the table, saluted and left.

The recipient opened the package and took in the bouquet of red roses carefully bedded in moist moss. Next to it lay a small card: “Dear Brother! My prayers are with you. Comfort, forgiveness, and eternal life flow to you from the cross! Greetings, Luigi and Mother.”



As Sweet Strains of Heav'nly Music

*As sweet strains of heav'nly music blend in one harmonious sound,
So the members of Christ's body in blest unity are found—
One in mind, and one in spirit, one in doctrine, faith, and love;
One in name—oh, precious union, like the angel hosts above.*

*Not like waves upon the ocean, tossing wildly, rolling high;
Or the tempest's great commotion, as it sweeps across the sky;
But like twilight, gently stealing o'er the verdant, shady lea,
So the holy saints in Zion rest—from all their sins set free.*

*Blood-washed pilgrims on the highway chant the sweet, melodious strain,
Of their freedom from confusion, angels join the glad refrain;
One with all the hosts of heaven, there their names are written down;
Jesus only, Jesus ever, in their hearts as King they crown.*

*Love, the theme of all their praises, doth in holy bond unite
All their hearts, in Him made perfect, turned from darkness unto light;
Thus the saved in Christ together dwell in sacred unity,
In the secret of His presence— hid away, dear Lord, in Thee.*

CLARA MCALISTER BROOKS

Faithful to the End

St. Moritz, Switzerland, evokes in most of us an image of skiing, wealth, luxury, pleasure, and recreation. We are unlikely to associate this beautiful place with martyrdom.

Moritz (Mauritius) was a Roman Officer. He was the leader of the 22nd Theban Legion. This legion was formed in the Thebe region of Egypt, and consisted primarily of Christians. It is said that there were 6600 men in this legion. When Diocletian, the Roman Caesar at the time, recruited this group to persecute the Christians, they refused to do so, and they refused to worship false gods as well.

Maximian, who was Diocletian's co-emperor, responded by ordering Diocletian's regent to brutally punish the Legion. Every tenth man was executed in cold blood as a deterrent to the others. The Legion of Christians did not fight back, but none renounced their faith either. Maximian allowed the slaughter of the men to be repeated until the entire Legion of men was wiped out. Moritz died alongside his men in the year 302 near Agaunum, called St. Moritz today.

"He who endures to the end will be saved." (Matthew 10:22)

Dieter Jeske
Herford, Germany

Unity in Action

If we really desire to be like Jesus and to walk in love and power as He did, we must humble ourselves.

We cannot just underline Scriptures on humility in our Bibles and never implement them into our lives. Scripture is practical, and we must live it out to experience its transforming power in our lives and relationships. We have to be willing to bend and break and live a life of "not [thinking] of [ourselves] more highly than [we] ought to think" (Romans 12:3). We have to "honor [and give] preference to one another" in real ways, everyday (see Romans 12:10).

Because Scripture tells us to humble ourselves (see James 4:10), let us look for ways to do just that. Let us seize the opportunities God puts before us to love our neighbors as ourselves and to consider them better than ourselves. Be sensitive to other's needs, and when you are wrong, say so. "I am sorry for saying that. I didn't know it would hurt you. I didn't mean it that way." Often I am not sensitive enough to even know when I am being insensitive! Let us all pray, "Lord, make me more sensitive to my brothers and sisters."

This is what I believe the Lord desires for each and every person who confesses His name, whether in full-time ministry or not. God is looking for lowly hearts that are ready to be filled with His love and power. He is looking for a Body ready to be broken for the millions who are spiritually starving because they do not know Jesus. Only to the measure that we are willing to bend and submit to one another will we experience the unity and love that Christ can bind us together with. And it is the people who dwell in unity on which He said He would command His blessing (see Psalm 133).

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Editor

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

Editorial Team

Dieter Jeske

Sieghard Schulz

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

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Questions and suggestions can be sent to:
contact@foundationoffaith.cc

Please address all other correspondence
and subscription requests to:

Christian Unity Press

Post Office Box 527

York, NE 68467-0527

Tel.: (402) 362-5133 Fax: (402) 362-5178

or email us at

cupress@thechurchofgod.cc

www.christianunitypress.com

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bible Course of the Church of God

Aylmer, Ontario August 12 - 23, 2013

Special Services

Canada

Fest Services in Aylmer: June 29 - 30, 2013

Fest Services in Edmonton: October 12 - 14, 2013

Germany

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

Beautiful Unity

At the end of the 19th century, a Petersburg newspaper published a derogatory article about a church meeting. The content of the article is paraphrased as follows: “Strange meetings are taking place in the home of Ms. Lieven. There stands an old Englishman, speaking passionately in his native tongue, while an elderly woman interprets his message one sentence at a time in the Russian language. Listening to them, and sitting side by side, is a carriage driver, Ms. Lieven herself, a steward, a student, a cleaning lady, a baron, and a factory worker. All listen with rapt attention and then kneel together for prayer...”

How perfectly this description harmonizes with what the apostle Paul once discovered: “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Colossians 3:28).