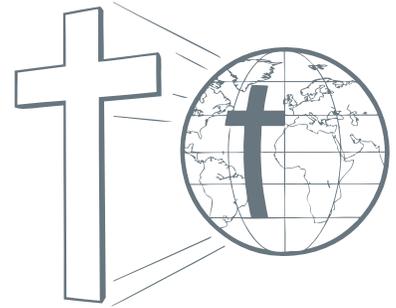


Foundation of Faith



GRACE



July 2013

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Editorial

Grace! – What a wonderful word!

Already in the Old Testament we read: “I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever...for I have said, ‘Mercy shall be built up forever; your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens’ ” (Psalm 89:1-2).

We know this saving mercy and grace appeared through the Son of God, our Savior, because the apostle John writes: “And we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth...and of His fullness we have all received grace for grace. For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:14-17).

Let me contrast the Law and Grace for you briefly:

The Law drives – Grace draws.

The Law deals with the action – Grace deals with the motive.

The Law requires your last penny – Grace is great-hearted and compassionate.

The Law expels the leper – Grace welcomes and cleanses him.

The Law condemns – Grace justifies.

In this issue our purpose is to magnify grace once again for our readers. It is summertime, and when after a great thunderstorm you happen to see a glorious rainbow, remember that God already promised Noah, the hero of faith: “I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth” (Genesis 9:13).

However, the rainbow can only break through the clouds if the sun begins to shine. Likewise, Jesus, our “Sun” of Righteousness had to appear in order to bring us grace, for “the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). You and I can now walk in the light and warmth of this saving grace! And, we can tell those who still walk in darkness that the grace of God is freely offered to all people.

H.D. Nimz

He Found Grace

I was 19 years old when I was accused of participating in a theft. While I did not actually commit the crime, I was not able to produce a convincing alibi. Thus, the saddest moment of my life came when I was sentenced to 15 years in prison.

It seemed as though everyone was against me. However, there was One who never lost sight of me. It was God, against whom I had sinned my whole life long. He had compassion on me and reached out His gracious hand of love to rescue me. In His sovereign plan, He imprisoned me in order to save me.

I had spent five years behind bars when one day I experienced a great surprise during a chapel service. Standing next to the chaplain was a man who knew me all too well from my previous life. I knew him just as well; he was a former acquaintance who had a history of wickedness. Now he was sharing alongside the chaplain. What kind of a change had caused this?

He began to share a gospel message. Every one of his words wedged into my heart. What kind of power could have transformed such a sinner into this completely changed person? When he finished, he stepped down to mingle with the inmates and talk personally with us. He wept freely as he spoke of how, by God's grace, he had

come to see himself as a lost sinner in need of a Savior. Then he had found Jesus! What joy radiated from his face as he shared. I was convinced that what he shared was genuine. In contrast, I felt so miserable, so alone.

The man then prayed with us. All of us were weeping now, so touched were we by his words. Finally, he shared some passages from the Bible with us. It was the book that I had never much cared for, from which now its merciful Author spoke such words of love and grace to my despondent soul.

I returned to my cell. As I was thinking over what I had heard, my gaze wandered aimlessly about my stark confines. Suddenly, my eyes caught a glimpse of something in a pocket in the wall that I had never noticed before. I reached for it. It was a Bible! It was ragged and dusty but otherwise unharmed and its pages still easily legible. This too was the hand of God, that I would not have noticed this book until precisely this moment. Had I discovered it earlier, I would certainly have ripped it apart in rage over my predicament. Now, I was humbly thankful for the discovery.

I was eager to find the passages that still rang in my ears. But because I had no idea where to find them, I had to start from the beginning. I must say that my interest



mounted with the reading of every page. At that moment, I would not have traded this book for even the most suspenseful thriller. I read until lights-out.

My eagerness to read that Bible never waned even in the following days. I read until I came to the stories of Jesus, of His life, suffering, and eventual death. I was so wrapped up in what I was learning, that one evening, as I thought again of the remarkable transformation of my former friend, I found myself pacing restlessly about my cell. I was suddenly gripped by a true hunger for a thoroughly new life. Could it be possible that I too could be completely converted, just like my friend? A voice inside me whispered: "Pray the prayer of the publican: 'Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner'" (Luke 18:13). I tried desperately to pray like this but I couldn't. My many sins stood as iron gates before me.

Then I suddenly remembered the word "whosoever". That was it! "Whosoever believes in Him will not perish..." (John 3:16b). I had read that! That gentle voice was back again, whispering, "That means you too."

"But I am so desperately wicked," I countered. "I am far too depraved to be forgiven."

A battle raged within me. It lasted for weeks, and at times I was at my wit's end. Indeed, what is a poor sinner to do when the only thing he sees between himself and God is a filthy life? I was praying constantly by now. My desire to get a hold of God was all-consuming.

One evening I decided that this time I would not quit praying until I had met Jesus, even if that meant staying on my knees until morning. I made good of my intention,

remaining on my knees as I cried out to God. Suddenly, in the middle of the night, at the climax of my desperation, something strange happened. I suddenly sensed a hand coming to rest on my head, and I heard the words, "My son, your many sins are forgiven."

Today I do not know if I audibly heard those words or not. I do know that in my heart I perceived them as being real. I now knew beyond the shadow of a doubt that my precious Savior had died for my sins too. This realization so profoundly gripped me that I sprang from my knees and began running up and down the short length of my cell, praising God with a loud voice. Heavenly light seemed to flood that dark, dingy cell.

My exuberance caught the attention of the guard. He came to inquire what was going on. "I have found Christ!" I exclaimed. "My sins have been forgiven, praise God!"

Naturally, the guard was unimpressed with my joy. He ordered me to be quiet, threatening to report me come morning if I would not. No guard could dampen my spirits that night, however. My joy was simply too new, too great, too over-powering. I will never forget that amazing moment...

Two years later this young man was released from prison. He dedicated the rest of his life to the service of the Lord Jesus. His greatest delight was to share with the deeply-fallen sinner about the love and sacrificial death of Jesus, and that "where sin abounds, grace abounds much more" (Romans 5:20).



Grace

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!” The apostle Paul uses this salutation at the beginning of each of his 13 epistles. He closes nearly every letter with, “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you!” Such a wonderful and important statement contains a wealth of profound truths for us.

Grace! – What does the word “grace” mean? If someone has been accused of a crime, he is brought before a court of law. If he pleads guilty, the accused might think to himself, “If only they would be merciful to me!” If someone then intercedes for him and pleads for clemency, and his sentence is reduced, then the criminal has experienced grace.

If above all other things the apostle Paul wished his audience grace, the question may arise, “Were his readers, then and now, convicts in need of grace?” We don’t like to think of ourselves of convicts, at least not in the common understanding of the word. Nonetheless, that is exactly what an unjustified person is. By nature we are sinners, and are as such under the Law and under judgment, even under the curse of God. We are transgressors of the Law and are subject to the judgment and punishment of God. “For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation” (Romans 5:16).

When a person recognizes his depraved nature and prays earnestly to God for grace, God will forgive him. Then he can joyfully confess the truth in the following song:

*The Lord has given me His mercy;
Such mercy I'm not worthy of.
He has refreshment for the thirsty.
His mercy's due to His great love.
Once my heart did not mercy crave;
Now I praise God, His mercy saves.*

*I had not earned but wrath and anger,
but God showed mercy unto me.
O Jesus saved me from great danger,
forgave my sins and set me free.
Why is this so? How can this be?
I praise God for His mercy free.*

God is a holy and righteous God, who visits “the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generations” (Deuteronomy 5:9). However, He is also merciful and gracious; He is a God of abundant mercy and faithfulness. In Psalm 103:8-11 we read, “The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy [...] He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor punished us according to our iniquities. For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him.” We have a God who does not deal with us according to our deserved punishment; rather, He allows grace to pass for righteousness, according to the conditions provided by Him.

God's grace, mercy, and love were clearly manifested in Jesus Christ, by whom also we can access them. Although the word “grace” was never used by Jesus, His coming to this world was grace in itself. His whole nature and works revealed grace, mercy, and love for mankind. Not only is it said of Him, “God’s grace was with Him,” but, “grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Therefore we read in the previous verse 16, “And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.”

Jesus Christ, the incarnate grace of God, overcame the source of sin and death and removed the wickedness that reigned in the hearts of man. “For if by the one man’s offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:17).

“Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God sent forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Romans 3:24-25). Thank God for the grace that is in Jesus Christ!

However, the doctrine of grace should not comfort the individual who persists in sin. On the contrary, we read in Titus 2:11-12, “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age.” We are exhort-

ed to “stand” in grace (1 Peter 5:12), and to grow in grace and knowledge. This occurs when we acquire the gifts of grace and receive out of the fullness of Christ “grace for grace.” Only then can we agree with Paul, “By the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Grace and Truth

God’s characteristics are described for us in the Holy Scriptures. They offer an initial glimpse of the nature of God. But the true nature of God was revealed in visible form when Jesus left the glory of heaven and came to earth. “For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9). Thus, the author of our introductory verse was able to claim: “We beheld His glory!” In connection with this vision, two specific characteristics are named: grace and truth.

Our Lord is the God of grace and truth. It is not only grace that is emphasized, but also truth. Many could not bear the words of truth because they struck the proud heart. They rebelled against the truth and hated Him who is truth. This describes not only the people of Jesus’ day, but also those of the 21st century. Not everyone is willing to listen to the voice of truth.

Do we also belong to this group of people? Do we say as they did: “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” (John 6:60) Yes, truth can be painful because it removes from man what he likes and does not want to let go of. There are favorite sins, from which people do not want to part. These are excused in hopes that one might still make it to heaven with them. But truth is inflexible and uncovers sin and its consequences.

It is also truth when God’s Word emphasizes “holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). In God’s eyes every sin, whether big or small, is a crime, and therefore no sinner will be able to enter into the place of eternal glory. Christ announced this truth to a group of religious people who, despite their religion, lived in sin: “I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come” (John 8:21). Neither religious traditions nor membership in a Christian church will grant us admission to heaven.

Dear reader, the words that the Lord spoke to Paul are meant for you also, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

B. E.

However, our Scripture also speaks about grace. Christ revealed to us the secret of grace. The Bible says: “Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Thereby it is emphasized that God wants to extend grace to those who are lost. The righteousness of God requires the punishment of the sinner because he has violated God’s holy law. God cannot forgive any sin unless His righteousness is satisfied. It becomes clear that each sinner stands under God’s judgment and is lost. After all, what can a person give God to reconcile Him and erase his transgressions before the Holy One?

The sinner cannot satisfy the righteous and holy God with pious poems, songs, and prayers; they can never suffice. Violating God’s holy law carries the death penalty, and therefore the entire world is lost.

But God in His love made a way through which we can be helped. With the coming of Jesus Christ came grace. He bridged the gap for us and took the sins of humanity upon Himself. The sentence of judgment was carried out on Him. He died for our sins. His death became our reconciliation, as we read: “God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation” (2 Corinthians 5:19). Another Scripture says: “Without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22). Jesus Christ gave His life and His blood for that reason. It was the only way the fountain of grace could be opened for mankind. Millions have found forgiveness and acceptance from God through their faith in the reconciliation that is through Jesus Christ alone.

Grace and truth still exist today, and everyone who desires to can experience them.

Gustav Sonnenberg (1898-1980)

Saving Grace

What does the world need? Our lost and sinful world needs Christ! This is the glorious gospel that we can proclaim to all the earth: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in the present age” (Titus 2: 11-14). God’s Word proclaims grace for all!

What is Grace?

The Bible teaches us that God, in His great love, seeks the sinner. He pursues the lost in order to redeem them and give them true happiness.

Grace is free and unmerited love. God’s grace is truly a divine gift. Almighty God has always had the best in mind for us. However, we grieved Him with our sins. We were disobedient and did not recognize that His commands were for our benefit and salvation. Yet despite our sins and our deserved punishment, the Lord wants to offer us His saving grace.

Yes, God has always envisioned the highest and the best in His plan for us. His best is a blessed, joyous relationship with Him. Even though man tends to continually reject God and turn away from Him, God continues to offer grace through Jesus Christ to all people—His redeeming, saving grace!

Why Did Grace Appear?

Grace corrects and lovingly rebukes. There is no greater power than the love of God. Man, in his free will, separated himself from his Creator and followed his own wicked desires. Despite this ungodliness, the great Creator wants to extend His mercy to those who are without Him.

For this reason God sent His Son, the incarnation of His love and mercy. He came to seek and save the lost.

He is a Faithful Seeker!

God has never given up. He has never grown weary or let evil and wickedness dissuade Him. Instead, He has let His love shine even brighter, to warm and soften cold and hardened hearts. The Son of God did not even let the fear of death stop Him. He did not abdicate from the will of the Father! If He had, how could the Scriptures have been

fulfilled?

When His hour had come, Jesus willingly gave Himself into the hands of His enemies. He brought the greatest sacrifice so that for all eternity He could obtain the salvation and sanctification of those who would believe in Him.

*Consider this most wondrous law,
quiet your soul in reverent awe,
then worship Him, and estimate,
the love of God most infinite.*

What is the purpose of Christ’s sacrifice? The answer is found in Titus 2:12: “...teaching us that, denying ungodliness...” Ungodliness is a life without God. The world has this nature and lifestyle. All who are unsaved live in this state.

This ungodly nature is often found in nominal Christianity as well. On Sundays, these people go to church, but during the rest of the week they think little of God. Certainly, now and then they may speak of Him in glowing terms, but in daily life He is ignored and denied.

The nature of ungodliness is also manifested by the pursuit of worldly things, like riches and fame. It is the striving for earthly comforts, good food and drink and anything that pleases our flesh. This kind of life is not one of grace!

The ungodly seek earthly things, and are slaves to the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and a prideful, materialistic life. Those who follow such pursuits are not Christians and are not children of God.

Those who love Jesus will flee from these things. They will fall on their knees and worship their Lord. One cannot serve both God and a sinful world—one negates the other.

“Soberly, righteously and godly”

Where – in heaven? No, God’s word says, “in the present age.”

God expects this of His children. Full salvation and the grace of God enable us to live according to His command. We do not do this out of compulsion, but because God’s

love has been poured out in our hearts.

We want to live a godly life because we are in Christ and we love Him. We are waiting for the blessed hope and coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The Judge of this world is that same Child who lay in the manger in Bethlehem. He is Jesus, the Lamb of God, who died

at Calvary for our sins. The coming Day of the Lord is a glorious consummation for the saved, but also the day where grace comes to an end.

Dear soul, seek this saving grace so that the day of Christ's coming is not a day of terror for you, but rather a day of eternal bliss!

Growing in Grace

To grow in grace is to grow in purity of motive, more and more to exclude selfish reasons, and to act increasingly more for the exclusive glory of God. An individual who grows in grace is more and more actuated by principle, and less and less by emotion or feeling. I do not mean that such a person has less feeling, but that he acts less under the influence of feeling or emotion. He does things less because he feels so, and more because it is RIGHT. Another important evidence of growth in grace is having more love for God, as well as more love for people.

The lives of growing Christians show a greater inclination to do good to others. Their hearts increasingly enlarge in benevolence to all people. Those who grow in grace think ever less of themselves, with a deep humility that comes as a natural result of a clear view of the greatness of God.

An increased abhorrence of sin is another mark of growth in grace. When a person feels an ever decreasing desire to compromise with any sin in himself or others, it is a sign that he is growing in grace.

He who grows in grace has less appetite for the world. His desire for its wealth, honors, and pleasures is always decreasing. These desires no longer influence his motives. He seeks wealth and honor only as instruments of glorifying God and of doing good to men.

Increasing delight in the fellowship of the saints is another evidence of growth in grace. The growing Christian loves to unite with others in acts of devotion and worship, and enjoys spiritual discussions.

He who grows in grace finds it ever easier to have a forgiving spirit, and to pray for his enemies. There is no

situation in which men in their natural state more closely resemble the devil, than in their harboring of angry and revengeful feelings toward those who have injured them. If a person is growing in grace, he will find that it becomes easier to forgive.

A decreasing anxiety about worldly things is further evidence of growth in grace. People who grow in grace have more and more confidence in God, and less and less love for the world, and of course will be less likely to feel anxiety about worldly things. If a person is growing in grace he will be increasingly ready to give, and more willing to give ALL that is in his power. His giving will be a part of his faith, and he will grow in it just as in prayer.

A person growing in grace feels less and less as if he has any separate interest in the things he might rightfully call his own. It is a great thing, in regard to growth in grace, to feel that all you have is Christ's, and will be used for His purposes.

It is an evidence of growth in grace when a person becomes more willing to confess faults before men. This is often difficult to do. If he is perfectly humble, he will be willing to confess, even if all the universe should hear. If he cannot do this, he can be sure that he is not growing in grace.

Finally, growth in grace raises a person higher above the world. The growing Christian regards less and less either the good or ill opinions of men. The frowns or the flatteries of the world will not be taken into the account when he sees his duty.

C.G. Finney (1792-1875)

Paul's Persuasion

As Christians, living a truly happy life is impossible without God exerting His love towards us. If this is true, if we are so utterly dependent on Him showing love to us, can we be certain that He will provide us with His love in every situation of life?

Paul uses the term “persuaded” in the sense of assurance. When he said that he was persuaded of an aspect involving God’s attitude, he meant that he was fully convinced that it was as it was stated to be. He meant that to him it stood out as a reality. It was a matter that he no longer questioned. In Romans 8:38 and 39, he speaks of one of the things of which he was persuaded. He did not seem to feel about it as some feel; and when they read what he says, they realize that they do not feel just as he did. He says, “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Some people are always worrying lest they should be separated from that love, lest God’s love should be turned into hatred against them. They walk before Him with fear and trembling. They are always questioning whether their conduct merits His approval. They are ever fearful lest they might do something that would bring His wrath upon them. Their life is a life of fear and of bondage. Paul had no such fears and no such feelings. He knew that the great heart of God is a heart of love, a heart of tender pity, compassion, and sympathy. He knew that God is tender toward His earthly children. Why even when we were sinners, Christ died for us! And the Father so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16). This love was for rebels. How much greater His affection for His sons! Instead of thinking that he might be easily separated from the love of God, and that he should have to be exceedingly careful lest he should be, Paul cries out, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Romans 8:35) By this he means, who or what shall be able to separate us?

Paul knew something of the strength of earthly love. He

knew mother-love – how tenderly it holds to its own. He knew that no matter where the son wanders, mother-love goes with him; mother-love calls him back; mother-love yearns over him. He knew love in other forms – how tenaciously it clings to its objects. But the love of Christ, or the love of God in Christ, is above and beyond all this human love. And so he cried out, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” Then he named some things and asked if they should separate us from God’s love, and when he looked at them all, he was still persuaded that nothing should be able.

Paul says, “Neither death nor life.” If death should lay its icy fingers upon us, it would be but the ushering into the more immediate presence of that great love. But if we must continue to live on in our earthly circumstances and surroundings, that very life cannot separate us from the love of Christ, for He will love us through it all. Through various changes, through all the trying situations that may face us, that love will hold us fast. Time and change cannot make that love grow cold.

Again, he says, “Nor angels.” God is in heaven, surrounded by the angels, but He wants us to understand that those angels cannot take up so much of His time and attention that He will forget us. Nor can those evil angels that hate God and hate us separate us from His love. Even Satan himself, their leader and master, has no power to come between us and the love of God. Therefore, dear Christian, do not be afraid. Satan has no knife sharp enough to cut that love. He has no strength to tear its tendrils out of our hearts. He cannot burn those cords that hold us. Even all His legions cannot touch that love, if we trust it and trust ourselves in God’s keeping.

Then he says, “Nor things present.” Dear fellow believ-



And the Father so loved us that He gave His

only begotten Son. This love was for rebels.

How much greater His affection for His sons!

er, do you believe that? Do you believe that the things of this hour, whatever they may be, cannot separate you from the love of God? “Things present.” How many things there are present. How many things there are that press in upon us! How many discouragements there are in life! How many perplexities! How many things that trouble! How many things that would draw us away! Yet, if we keep our trust in God, none of these things will make Him turn His back upon us.

“Nor things to come.” Do you look into the future with dread? Do you see with forebodings the dangers that appear there? Do you think, “How will I ever pass through it? How will I ever overcome?” Then be persuaded that those things that are ahead of you cannot separate you from God’s love. That love is going to securely hold you through them all. That love is going to be your strength and your safeguard, your hope and your all. Cast away your apprehensions. Look to God with confidence until the confidence of Paul enters your soul and you can say with the same assurance that he did, “I am persuaded.”

“Nor height, nor depth.” It does not matter that God is in heaven, high above us. It does not matter that He is so great, so majestic, so powerful. His height above us shall not prevent His love from reaching us and holding us up. “Nor depth.” It does not matter to what depth we sink, whether it be depths of fear or depths in the feeling of our own helplessness. It makes no difference that God is very high and we are very low, if He is very great and we are very small; our depth shall not separate us from His height. His love will bridge the gulf.

You and I must trust in that love. We must rely upon it. It will never fail us. It will securely hold you and me in the gales of life. Tribulation or distress or persecution or fam-

ine or nakedness or perils or storms - none of these things shall be able to separate us from Him. And the apostle continues to say, “Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (verse 37). Love will bear us up as with eagles’ wings. It will make smooth the rough paths. It will give strength to the fainting heart. It will preserve us while in the midst of temptation; and even when we have come short of our expectations, when we realize that we have in a measure failed, that love will not cast us off, but will hold us safe and secure until the end. Let us look to that love, and be confident, and rest in full assurance of faith, knowing that:

*When the storm-winds rage, and the rain falls fast,
And the clouds hang low above,
I shall be secure till the storm is past,
For I trust my Savior’s love.*

*And He knows the way, and He holds my hand,
And He will not let it go.
He will lead me home to that better land,
Just because He loves me so.*

*I will trust His love, for it e’er will last:
It is rich and warm and free.
Through the years of life it will hold me fast,
And my help and comfort be.*

*To my waiting heart all its treasures rare,
As a sparkling stream shall flow;
In the joy of God I shall ever share,
Just because He loves me so.*

- from the hymn
Because He Loves Me by A.L. Byers

Is it Possible to Fall from Grace?

by G. MIELKE *Hamilton, Ontario*

God's Word shows us that it is possible to live a victorious life through the power of the Holy Spirit. The Bible gives us examples of people who did not fall from grace. Sadly, however, there are also those who did fall from grace. Thus falling from grace is possible.

Falling Away is Possible

The Scriptures warn us to watch lest we fall after we have become Christians: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). We are promised the crown of life only if we remain true until the end: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2: 10b). "Behold, I come quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown" (Revelation 3:11).

Obviously, if there were no danger of falling away, we would not have to be warned. "But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24,13; Matthew 10:22b).

Now, what about those who do not endure until the end? "For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: 'A dog returns to his own vomit,' and, 'a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire'" (2 Peter 2: 20-22). Please note that they had already escaped! They are again entangled or fallen.

Hebrews 6:4-6 and Hebrews 10:26-27 teach us of a great danger if we, as children of God, spitefully and willfully turn our backs on Christ. Also note what the Apostle John tells us in this next verse: "Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward" (2 John 8).

The Bible tells us of men who were once right with God and fell from that position:

- a) Demas: 2 Timothy 4:10; 1 John 2:15; Colossians 4:14
- b) Saul: 1 Samuel 15:23-26; 1 Samuel 10:11
- c) Judas: Acts 1:25; Luke 10:17, 20
- d) Disciples of Christ: John 6:66

The following Scripture passage tells us that if we don't remain true to Christ, we shall be cut off as a branch, wither and die. It is very clear that branches in Christ are Christians, those who have already received grace. "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vine-dresser. Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:1, 2 and 6).

Consider also the Galatians, who began in the Spirit (Galatians 3:3), but of whom Paul says: "I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain" (Galatians 4:11). "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4). My prayer is: "Lord, help us to watch and pray lest we fall."

Our Faith is Conditional: IF

"But Christ as a son over His own house, whose house are we, IF we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end" (Hebrews 3:6). "For we have become partakers of Christ, IF we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end" (Hebrews 3:14). "Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness. Otherwise you also will be cut off" (Romans 11:22).

How can we fall or be cut off if those who teach eternal security are correct?

"Therefore you, O son of man, say to the children of your people: The righteousness of the righteous man shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression; as for the

wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall because of it in the day that he turns from his wickedness; nor shall the righteous be able to live because of his righteousness in the day that he sins” (Ezekiel 33:12). “When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die” (Ezekiel 33:13). (See also Ezekiel 18:24)

Selected Scriptures Explained

The following Scriptures are sometimes used in an attempt to prove eternal security.

“And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand” (John 10:28).

Praise God that as long as we don't turn our backs on Jesus, nobody can take our salvation from us, not even the gates of hell can prevail against us. We can lead a life of victory with the help of God. Those who walk with Him shall never perish, IF they stay hand in hand with the Savior, since no one can pluck them out of His hand.

“Who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 1:8).

Both of the Scriptures cited above are conditional. They are promises on the condition that we remain true and don't willfully turn our backs on Christ. Note also the “if” in Hebrews 3:6 and Hebrews 3:14.

“And he said: A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.’ So he divided to them his livelihood. And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living” (Luke 15: 11-13).

The story of the prodigal son is often used to argue that although the younger son was living in sin, he was still a son of the father and remained a son of the father even while leading a godless life. God's Word clearly shows us that unless our walk is with God, the legitimate claim to be a son or daughter of the Father is useless, and does no good if we are not in the will of the Father. The rich man in hell described in Luke 16 was even called “son” by Father Abraham, but he was nonetheless tormented in hell and without grace. Those who are backslidden may still call themselves children of God or children of the king-

dom, but Jesus himself says: “And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth” (Matthew 8:11-12).

Is this not clear? Children of the kingdom cast out are in the end no better off than those who are not children at all. When the prodigal son came back, the Father said: “This my son was dead, and is alive again” (Luke 15: 24a). A dead son has no inheritance with the living.

Another verse often quoted is: “And Jesus said to them: I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes in Me shall never thirst” (John 6: 35).

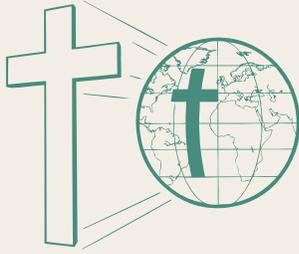
As long as we believe on Him, we will never thirst because we have the fountain of life bubbling within us (John 4:14), but if we stop believing, then also the living water will be lacking within us.

Consider one last Scripture passage: “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us; but they went out that they might be made manifest, that none of them were of us” (1 John 2:19).

John was writing his letter in opposition to false teachers who emphasized the divine nature of Christ but denied that Jesus was truly human. Even though they were mingling with the saints, their belief-system and their understanding of salvation was contrary to the teaching of Christ Himself. Some that fall away or leave the church never belonged to it. Others, however, lose their salvation (John 15:6; 2 Peter 2:20-22; Romans 11:22).

It must be emphasized, however, that falling away is not the norm. A spiritually healthy Christian will continue to follow in the footsteps of Christ. Even in dire temptations “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Corinthians 10:13).

“Greater is He that is within us than he that is in the world” (1 John 4:4). Victory is the norm for a healthy child of God. We are not talking about what routinely is expected to happen, but what is possible. We do not need to fear that we will fall away, because in Christ we are more than conquerors (Romans 8:37). But we must take our faith seriously and continue to watch and pray.



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Marvellous Grace

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.” (Ephesians 2, 8)

Every gift of God, whether it is an earthly or a spiritual gift, points us to God’s grace. The full extent of God’s grace comes from His incomprehensibly deep love of us. These are two notable facts.

But what is grace? The expression “grace” can be defined as “goodwill,” “mercy,” or even “helpful deed.” Grace is something that creates joy, works beneficial changes, or heals a painful relationship. It is a force that supersedes the power of the Law and can even surpass rules and rights. In this sense, we pray: “Lord, let grace supersede justice.” In other words, “According to your justice we deserve punishment; but let us instead find grace in your sight.” Even human rulers can extend judgment or grace based on the law. Solomon stated: “The king’s wrath is like the roaring of a lion, but his favor is like dew on the grass” (Proverbs 19:12).

A story from many years ago describes a royal servant who willfully trespassed against the king’s laws and was condemned to death. On the appointed day of his execution he was brought to the place of execution. Yet after all the preparations had been made, a peculiar incident occurred.

During the previous night, the king had recalled some of the merits of this servant and had therefore changed his verdict. Just as the executioner had lifted his arms to deliver the death blow, a messenger of the king dashed toward him on his horse and yelled “grace.” Immediately, the executioner let his arms drop and the convicted man was saved. This is the meaning of grace!

Our Bible text speaks of godly grace, and Paul describes grace as a gift. Grace is therefore not earned, but is completely a gift that comes from the free will of God. Based on His grace, God changed His position towards us, and based on this grace our position towards Him can also be changed. God’s grace is the power that can overcome our bondage and trespasses. Paul explains: “The law entered that the offense might abound. But where sin abounded, grace abounded much more, so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:20–21). It is for this reason that the apostle appropriately describes grace as the “saving grace” that has appeared to all people. Specifically, he writes: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:11–12).

Grace is not deserved; in other words, it is not something that can be earned. Instead, it is offered and given to us from God’s free will. If this were not the case, then fallen humanity would be in a desperate situation. Because of our fallen condition, no one can say that they do not need God’s grace. Even the physical existence of each and every person should be recognized as God’s grace. No person can determine the length, the security, or the well-being of his life. Everything is dependent on God’s blessing, and this blessing comes from His grace. Those who have meditated on this will come to the profound realization of the significance of God’s grace, through which we daily live.



The most significant grace is the grace of our salvation. This grace brings about our salvation from sin and our inner healing. The apostle Paul places emphasis on this saving grace in our Bible text: “By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works lest anyone should boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9).

The source of this grace is Jesus Christ. John testified: “The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). The Book of Hebrews warns us to “look carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God... lest there be any fornicator or unclean person like Esau... for he found no place for repentance though he sought it diligently with tears” (Hebrews 12:15–17). This is truly the greatest missed opportunity in the life of a person! Paul clearly emphasizes that God’s grace is a gift. But how can God give this gift if no one is willing to receive it? John says: “From His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). Everything depends on our “receiving” His grace!

In Genesis 6 we read of the increasing wickedness and ungodliness of humanity before the great flood. Yet there was one man of whom it was said: “Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord” (verse 8). This grace led to the salvation of Noah and his whole household! He found grace because he reached for it.

Often the opposite occurs: God’s grace seeks those who do not seek grace, for grace by nature searches. Frequently grace even rushes ahead of a person to encounter him there where he least expects it. That is to say that grace is also not far from you. Grace seeks you in order to draw you toward God. Those who allow themselves to be found by grace and experience its healing power will be able to say with the poet: “I’ll sing it out with glad, beaming face, O I’ve found the Lord, I’m saved by grace.”

The grace of God also fosters our spiritual development. It is through God’s grace that we become pleasing to God and useful to others. Through grace we can become what we’ve never been, and attain what we have not previously attained. Paul testifies: “By the grace of God, I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:10). In God’s hands, he became useful as never before, and he attributed this to God’s grace. He further praises the grace of God in his life by saying: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (through grace)” (Philippians 4:13).

If you want to experience God’s salvation and lead a powerful and victorious life, then seek His grace and remember that it is one of God’s greatest gifts.



Justification

What happens to my sins?

Justification is a term that originates from the legal world. In a court of law, the accused is sought by legal means to be justified. Although “acquittal” has generally replaced the term “justification”, we do find the latter term used in both the Old and New Testaments. For an Old Testament example, please refer to 2 Samuel 24:12-14. David was waiting to be justified before God.

In the New Testament, the term “justification” has a slightly different meaning. In the judicial sense, a person accused of a crime is justified when a court of law declares him innocent. He is set free from bearing the guilt and punishment of an act he did not commit. Obviously, this sense of the term cannot be wholly applied to the sinner in his relationship with God. The sinner is not merely accused of guilt; he is in fact guilty. His justification cannot therefore be based on an acquittal of guilt. The justification of the sinner is made possible only because of the cross on which Jesus Christ bled and died in his place.

In 2 Corinthians 5:21 we read: “Him who knew no sin he made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in him.” And in 1 Peter 2:24 we are told that Jesus “...Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness.” We must be careful not to interpret these passages literally, for we know that Jesus Christ is God; He is and always was sinless and holy. He was not literally made sinful or to be sin. Instead, we must view these verses in the sense of justification. The Eternal Father convicted His sinless Son as though He was the worst kind of murderer. He followed the conviction with the worst kind of sentencing imaginable: death on a Roman cross. And, in the moment of His Son’s greatest agony, the Father turned away from Him (Matthew 27:46). Although He knew His Son to be perfectly innocent, He regarded Him as the vilest of sinners.

It is for this reason that the sinner must come to the cross in order to be justified. God can only justify you when you look in faith upon the Crucified and Resurrect-

ed One. It is only when you believe that the Son of God took your place on the cross, and paid the punishment of your sin with His own blood that you can be forgiven. Thus, justification and faith are inseparably related.

An important element of our justification is the forgiveness of our committed sins. Our sins are not rendered non-existent, as though they never happened. Instead, God removes the penalty for those sins, and “remembers them no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). It is on the basis of our faith that God now regards us as righteous instead of ungodly and sinful. And God deals with us then as righteous people. Instead of handing us over to be punished as we deserved, He justifies us and sets us free.

Dear reader, please take your Bible one more time and read Romans 3:21-31. We have already looked at this passage for thoughts in previous lessons. Read it again, though, and read it carefully. Look for the thoughts we are discussing today in this passage and allow God to show you something new. You’ll find very clearly here that God demonstrates His own righteousness in relation to ours. He shows you the only righteousness that has any merit in His eyes. He shows you how faith is part of the picture.

Justification refers to God’s treatment of the sins we have committed in the past. We may therefore refer to justification as that element of salvation that deals with our past. In the next lesson, we will focus on that part of salvation that deals with our future.

Robert Witt
Gifhorn, Germany

Lesson 25: Redemption

Lesson 26: Justification

Lesson 27: Regeneration

Saved by Grace

In a small cemetery of a parish churchyard in Olney, England stands a granite tombstone with the following inscription: “John Newton, clerk, once an infidel and Libertine, a servant of slavers in Africa, was, by the rich mercy of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, preserved, restored, pardoned, and appointed to preach the Faith he had long labored to destroy.” This fitting testimonial, written by Newton himself prior to his death, describes aptly the unusual and colorful life of this man, one of the great evangelical preachers of the 18th century.

Who was John Newton? He lived from 1725 – 1807. His mother, a godly woman, died when he was not quite seven years of age. At the age of eleven, Newton left school and joined his father’s ship to begin life as a seaman. His early years were a continuous round of rebellion and debauchery. After serving on several ships, as well as working for a period of time on the islands and mainland of the West African coast collecting slaves for sale to visiting traders, Newton eventually became a captain of his own slave ship.

On March 10, 1748, while returning to England from Africa during a particularly stormy voyage, when it appeared that all would be lost, Newton began reading Thomas a Kempis’s book *Imitation of Christ*. The message of the book and the frightening experience at sea were used by the Holy Spirit to sow the seeds of Newton’s eventual conversion and personal acceptance of Christ as Savior.

For the next several years he continued as a slave ship captain, trying to justify his work by seeking to improve conditions for the slaves as much as possible. Eventually, however, he felt convicted of the inhuman aspects of this work and quit the slave trade altogether. Back in England, he increasingly felt the call of God to preach the gospel, and he was ordained to the ministry at age 39. Newton also established a strong relationship with William Wilberforce and other political leaders engaged in the crusade for the abolition of the slave trade. It is interesting to

note that the year of Newton’s death, 1807, was the same year that the British Parliament finally abolished slavery throughout all of its domain.

Until the time of his death at the age of 82, John Newton never ceased to marvel at God’s mercy and grace that had so dramatically changed his life. This was the dominant theme of his preaching and writing. Undoubtedly, the most representative expression of John Newton’s life is his appealing hymn, “Amazing Grace.”

- excerpted from *101 Hymn Stories* by K. W. Osbeck

*Amazing grace, how sweet the sound,
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found,
Was blind, but now I see.*

*'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
And grace my fears relieved;
How precious did that grace appear,
The hour I first believed!*

*Through many dangers, toils and snares,
I have already come;
'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far,
And grace will lead me home.*

*The Lord has promised good to me,
His word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be,
As long as life endures.*

*Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease;
I shall possess, within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.*

*The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine;
But God, who called me here below,
Will be forever mine.*

REGARDING MIRACLES

There are many people who question the miracles in the Gospels. They assert that this position has no impact on their faith. You and I need to understand, however, that the miracles of Jesus are not just embellishments to the gospel that can be overlooked. Rather, they provide evidence of the historic, unparalleled appearance of God in the flesh.

His miracles are expressions of Jesus' divine supernatural power as Savior of the world. They are factual proofs that Jesus came as God and not just as a devoutly pious person. As a matter of fact, here was Someone who had the whole power of God's creative genius at His disposal, in order to alleviate the ills of a world destroyed by sin, shame, and death.

The divine power of Jesus was experienced by people both physically and spiritually throughout His ministry. He can still be experienced this way today. However, we receive according to the measure of our faith. Merely examining the miracles of the Lord as a historical account is of no use to us. By believing these miracles, they become a part of our faith.

BELIEVING THE BIBLE

Someone once said to a man of God, "How can you prove that the Bible is God's word?"

The man took a lit candle and replied, "How can you prove that this light really is light?"

"Well, it needs no proof," was the reply, "it is lit. I see it."

"Neither does the Bible need proof," replied the man of God, "it shines and my soul rejoices in its light."

TRUE FAITH

True and living faith comes to Jesus, goes up to Him, lays its hand in Jesus' hand and enters into a everlasting covenant with Him through life and death. True faith says to the Lord, "You are mine and I am Yours, no one can separate us; I am Yours, because You shed Your blood and gave Your life for my gain."

True, living faith comes to the Lord Jesus and worships Him as God, Savior, and Redeemer. The worship of the Lord Jesus Christ is a main feature of true Christianity. Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God. Jesus is the faithful Lord of glory, the only begotten Son of God, God Almighty, praised forever, the true God and eternal life.

THE LORD SEES THE HEART

Remember that God is not as interested in our actions, as in the motive of love from which they spring. He is interested in the compliance of our will to His will. People judge our works and deeds based on what they see. The actions that people might regard most highly are of little significance to God. He desires pure intentions and motives, and a will which is always docile in His hands. He wants a sincere and utter surrender of our ego and self.

"Someday you will read in the papers, 'D. L. Moody is dead.' Don't you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all, out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal. That which is born of the flesh may die. That which is born of the Spirit will live forever."

D.L. Moody

QUESTION

How is the Scripture passage in Luke 8:18 to be interpreted? *“Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”*

ANSWER

When we want to understand the meaning of a verse, we always need to pay attention to its context. Jesus had just finished telling the Parable of the Sower, in which he emphasized the importance of listening to and abiding constantly in the Word of God. Without these, no fruit could be harvested. Jesus then adds these words: “Therefore take heed how you hear. For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him.”

Jesus is speaking here of progress in spiritual insight and the fruit in our life that follows. He who listens well and faithfully does what he hears in God’s Word, will then be given more light and insight. He who does not listen well and is not a doer of the Word, will also lose what little he believes he has.

We can compare this to the use of our muscles. If we use our muscles and exercise, they will get stronger, but unused muscles atrophy and lose the strength they once had.

In the same way that we build our muscles progressively, we also progressively build on our knowledge of the truth. Jesus said in John 16:12-13: “I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” They were still too “weak” to perceive what Jesus wanted to tell them now, but when the Holy Spirit came, they were listening well and were doers of the Word, and God was able to send them more light of truth.

Whether or not the Holy Spirit can give us “more”

while reading the Bible hinges on our listening attentively and our being doers of the Word. It should be emphasized here that hearing alone is not sufficient. God will not give us more light if we do not apply the light that we already have.

It is interesting to note that Jesus also uses this statement in other places and other contexts.

For example, in the parable of the talents and gifts entrusted to us (Matthew 25:14-30), Jesus shows us that we can use our God-given talents to increase the “profits of the work of the Lord.” Through the use and application of the talents entrusted to us, God increases our abilities, usefulness, success, and spiritual gain. Spiritual qualities expand themselves and we become more useful in the work for the Lord and bring more and more “profit for the affairs of the Lord.”

Sadly, there are also people upon whom God cannot endow certain talents and gifts, or to whom God can entrust only a few talents. They do not have the desire to be endowed with gifts and talents from God, or they are afraid or even embarrassed to work with these gifts. So they bury their gifts and allow them to perish. Thus the “little” with which they have been entrusted perishes, their skills and abilities are not enlarged, their value and effectiveness is lacking, and they bring no “profit for the affairs of the Lord.”

This compels us then to face these important questions: How do you and I listen? Is there a ‘doing’ aspect to our listening? What are we doing with what the Holy Spirit has shown us? Are we using the talents that God gave us?

John Reimer *Barrhead, AB*

A Boy Like Daniel

Sunday school had just been dismissed and the boys and girls were on their way home. Most of them were chattering happily about the upcoming strawberry festival.

One of the boys seemed distracted though by some very serious thoughts. He walked separate from the group, unaware of the other boys. One of them finally dropped back and inquired good-naturedly: "Why so deep in thought, Ralph? You've got the face of a wise old owl!"

"Well, I hope I'm at least as wise as an owl," said Ralph slowly, "but I was just asking myself, if I would have been as brave as Daniel to go into the lion's den. I never want to stop praying to God, but it sure must have been hard to face those lions!"

"Well sure," said Ned. "But my dad told me that we don't need grace to do hard things until we're faced with hard things. And, if we ask God, He will give us grace and strength at just the right time. All we need to do is fulfill our daily duties faithfully and conscientiously, asking God to give us the grace for it." Ned was a "Preacher's Kid" and had been the recipient of many a thoughtful lesson from his dad. "But my dad also said that we must often face other kinds of lions when we take a firm stand to do what is right. But I've gotta go! See you Ralph!" Ned turned into a side street and left Ralph alone with his thoughts again.

Ralph still had a stretch to walk. He took a country lane out to his family's farm, which was just outside of the village.

"Well, at least I won't have to go into the lion's den today," he said to himself, "and if it should happen, God will give me the necessary strength." He was suddenly at peace again, his steps became happier and confident. "It must have been wonderful though, to do what Daniel did," Ralph thought.

In that moment, two boys peeked out of the bushes that lined the lane, looking furtively about. "Hey, Johnny!" one of them whispered. "There's Ralph! He's going to tell on us for sure that we skipped Sunday school today.

Let's scare the wits out of the little snitch, quick!"

"Hey!" hollered Johnny. Startled, Ralph turned around and was surprised to see his two brothers approaching him.

"Are you going home?" one of them asked.

"Sure, Thomas. Aren't you?"

"No, not yet. If someone asks, then say that we were in Sunday school and will be home soon."

Ralph stared at his brothers with wide eyes. "But you weren't in Sunday school! In fact, your teacher asked me where you were, and I said I didn't know. I thought you would still show up."

"What's it to you if we were there or not?" Johnny replied angrily. "All that you need to say, IF someone asks, is that we were there."

"But I can't lie!"

"Sure you can, if you really want to!"

"But I won't lie!" Ralph said, more confident now.

"So, you'd rather rat on us then?! Is that what you're saying? You do know what's going to happen to you then, don't you?"

Ralph hesitated. He had a soft heart and couldn't stand seeing someone get into trouble, especially his brothers. And yet he was convinced that he must not lie. He decided right there that no matter what would happen, he would tell the truth.

"I'm sorry, brothers," he said sadly. "I'm going to ask Dad to forgive you and promise him that you won't do it again. But if Mom or Dad ask me where you were, I cannot lie."

"You cannot WHAT?" Johnny breathed, now grabbing Ralph by the arm. "Come here, you little saint! You're going to promise us to obey our order, or we're throwing you into the pond!"

A cold wave of fear washed over Ralph. He didn't know how to swim, and he had an awful fear of the frogs and other nasty critters that lived in the pond. Yet, in this terrifying moment, he suddenly remembered Daniel in the lion's den. Now he, Ralph, was being called to bravery! He understood that his moment of testing had come. His

personal lion's den was waiting, and God, who had protected Daniel so many years ago, would protect him now as well. With a courage that even surprised himself, he looked his brother in the eye and said, "You will not talk me into doing what is wrong. I will not bow down before the idol of untruth!"

Ralph's brothers were stunned. They had always considered their little brother timid and weak, and someone who could be pressured into doing just about anything. They hardly knew what to think. An "idol of untruth"? Where had that come from? Ralph had merely repeated the words of his Sunday school teacher, but his brothers didn't know that. Johnny finally regained his speech. "So, you're really going into the pond then, Ralph?"

"And no injury whatever was found on him, because he believed in his God," Ralph quoted from the Bible lesson. "God will save His faithful out of every trouble."

Giving up, Johnny turned around abruptly to go the other way. But Thomas caught his arm and said, "Wait a minute, Johnny." His two brothers noticed the tears welling in Thomas's eyes. "I have to congratulate our little brother for sticking to the truth. I'm going to talk to Dad myself and confess what we did. I'll promise him that we won't do it again."

"I'm coming too," said Johnny. "Come Ralph, let's walk home together. We don't need to be afraid of what we might face if we have a Daniel to lead us there."



REPORT

2013 Pentecost Conference *Herford, Germany*

The Pentecost Conference has been a fixture for the Herford congregation since 1979. Participants coming from all regions of Germany, the Netherlands, and from various parts of the world have, under the unity and blessings of God, celebrated and experienced the true meaning the Spirit of God has for their personal lives.

The motto for this year's conference was in the form of a question: Is Jesus Christ YOUR life? (Philippians 1:21)

This pivotal question was woven repeatedly into the themes of the sermons and songs of all the meetings. God was able to use Bro. Gerald Krebs as a special instrument for the blessed sounding of the glorious gospel. His first

message set the tone, as he reminded the congregation that it is God Himself who says, "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit" (Zechariah 4:6). It is this Spirit who desires to do every work in and through our lives, if only we will yield to Him. It is this Spirit also who leads a person to repentance and conversion. The example of the Good Shepherd, who had a heart for every sheep in distress, was used to show God's rescue call to all people. It is something truly special for any assembly of God's people when there is the sense and experience that God still calls today, that people still respond to this call, are made free, and receive true peace for their souls.

An opportunity for testimonies from the young people was arranged for the first evening of the meetings. Partic-



VIEW OF THE CONGREGATION

THE FEST CHOIR

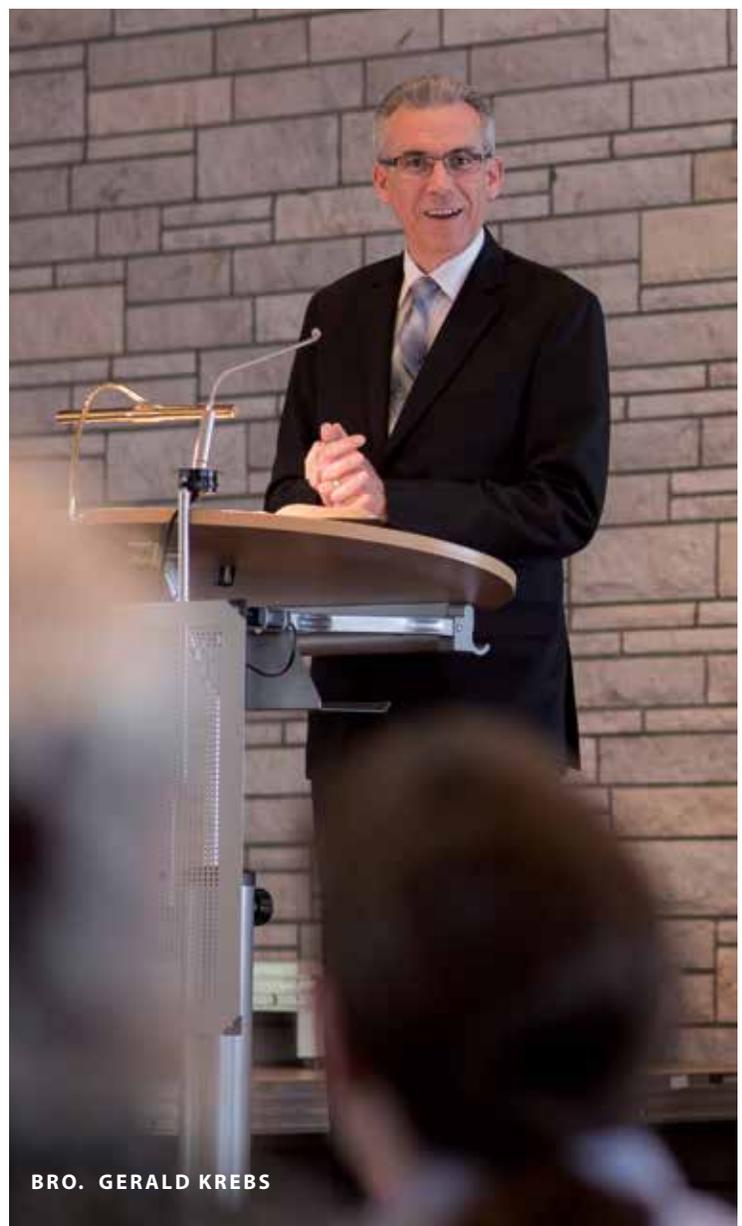


icipation was so overwhelming that some had to wait until the Youth Service the following day to share. How richly God has blessed His church when there is hardly enough time to share all of what God is so evidently doing in the lives of young people. It is so encouraging for the entire congregation when young people are making experiences with God, availing themselves of His manifold help, and truly proclaiming: Yes! Christ really is my life! Youth groups from various local congregations blessed the youth meetings with special musical presentations.

The closing of the Pentecost Conference was themed: Let us go in Jesus' name! Bro. Krebs showed from the Bible what this name means for us, how much blessing and security we have in it, and with what confidence we can go by it through this life. Whatever comes our way – in the name of Jesus, our every need will be met.

The congregation in Herford looks back on these services with special thanksgiving. We experienced God's presence and blessing again this year. We are thankful to all the visitors and to the family of God from all corners of the globe who faithfully supported this conference in prayer and made it possible for us to celebrate again in 2013.

Niko Ernst
Herford, Germany



BRO. GERALD KREBS

Professing Godliness

“In like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing, but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works” (1 Timothy 2:9-10).

When considering the adornment of a Christian, opinions will vary widely. This must not have been any different in the Apostle Paul’s time, because the Holy Spirit inspired him to address this issue in his writings.

The goal of the fashion industry is to promote a range of constantly changing styles in clothing. Many people, including Christians, buy into this ploy. This trend surreptitiously awakens a desire in the hearts of God’s people to imitate the world. This is nothing new! We read of God’s people in the first generations of mankind “that the sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair” (Genesis 6:2). Dinah, the daughter of Jacob, “went out to see the daughters of the land” on the journey to Canaan (Genesis 34:1). Things haven’t changed up to our time, and the temptation to have what the world has, and to be as the world is, continues unabated.

As in many areas of Christian living, the attitude of the heart will determine one’s position in regard to dress and adornment. God’s Word never requires His people to dress in a “uniform” or adhere to the fashion of a bygone era, but it does dictate clear principles that will determine the adornment of a Christian. These will reflect genuine love to God and the mind and attitude of Jesus Christ instead of the desires of the flesh.

In our text, Paul bases his exhortation to Christians on this premise as he uses the word “modesty” or decency as a goal in dress. The adornment of the body must breed the noblest, purest, and loveliest response in the minds of those observing us. Our dress should be neat and becoming, but it must also portray the inner purity and beauty of our heart. To strengthen his point, Paul goes a step further and uses the term “propriety”, which means “a sense of shame or honor, modesty, bashfulness, reverence, regard for others, respect.” In a word: purity. We need to guard against our dress becoming the cause of desire in others. This is often

the blatant and shameless goal of the world. Sadly, many Christians are drawn into this trend. God’s Word demands modesty and propriety in our adornment, a purity which avoids all traces of sexual enticement. If our manner of dress brings others into temptation of impurity, we will certainly not be professing godliness or portraying the mind of Christ.

Paul was also inspired by the Holy Spirit to include attention-seeking hairstyles and the wearing of jewelry in his exhortation. Once again, the attitude of the heart will determine the actions. Often there is a desire to attract attention or to be better and more expensively dressed than others around us. Some of those who are willing to obey God’s Word and refrain from adorning themselves with gold and pearls will, however, see nothing wrong with wearing “costly clothing” or the most expensive designer labels. Paul is not referring to rejecting good quality or well-fitting clothes here, but the desire for attention and even to be envied by others. The test should always be: Do I measure up to the standard of God’s Word? Are my motives godly and holy?

Our text clearly shows that we need to provide proof of godliness with our clothing and adornment. What is in the heart will always show itself outwardly. If our outward appearance is not godly, what must the heart look like? Often people have the attitude: “If you don’t like it, don’t look at me.” However, if we desire to profess godliness we will think and act much differently! We will have vastly different standards than the world does. We will also shy away from being offensive or even being a hindrance to other Christians. And, we will long to adorn ourselves modestly and with propriety. We will profess and display godliness!

Ron Taron
Steinbach, Manitoba

Glorious Liberty

by HERMANN VOGT Gifhorn, Germany

“Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2 Corinthians 3:17).

“Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage” (Galatians 5:1).

A few days ago I read an essay about the deep longing people have for freedom. Many people desire to be free of constraint, anxiety, capricious authority, and much more. Others more nobly desire to be liberated from the vices, addictions, and heavy chains of sin that encumber and ruin their lives. They long for release from the guilt, shame, and plaguing conscience that have brought them under God’s judgment. Bondage always involves two participants: the slave and the oppressor. A man oppressed by sin is a slave (John 8:34) who is owned, controlled, and brutalized by Satan and his spirits. He cannot lead a moral life because his lord is the source and the abyss of every evil and sin. It is the same oppressor of sin who chains the one to a relatively “harmless” sin – one that might even be socially acceptable – and drives the other to become a serial murderer who brutally and bestially destroys innocent children. Sin and its evil sire are never harmless.

Against such awful powers the fallen human being is utterly powerless. In the absence of any other help, any other salvation, the Son of God stepped into the void and, by His work of salvation, met the requirement for liberating man from bondage: “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8b; Colossians 1:13-14).

Paul wrote to the church in Galatia because he had a deep concern for them. They were in danger of stepping out of their newfound liberty from bondage and sin. And this was not because someone was forcing them back into bondage – they were on the precipice of voluntarily stepping out of the sanctity of their Christian liberty! Even today, children of God are subjected continuously to Satan’s enticing advertisements of his wicked wares. His sales pitch seems so logical, so harmless, so recommendable.

Among the many dangers and temptations is one that causes many of God’s people to stumble. It is the power of the “Zeitgeist”, or spirit of the times, especially in relation to fashion and vogue. This has become a dangerous entry point that Satan targets to recapture our souls for his do-

minion of evil. Victory in this area calls for resolute and relentless vigilance, available only by the power and leading of the Holy Spirit.

We need to remember that the Zeitgeist of fashion and vogue is a demonic power that promises liberality, personal expression and self-determination while covertly seeking to enslave us under its will. And how quickly self-determination yields to the peer pressure of worldly friends! This is a lurid, filthy spirit straight out of hell whose objective is the total shamelessness and immorality of society. It has, with calculating patience, pushed the boundaries of shame and propriety to beyond the pale. The 1920’s clothing choice of Parisian prostitutes was, in relation to our time, so conservative that it might be a commended standard for some of our worship services. Fashions considered normal today would have been condemned as scandalous and immoral back then. Surveying the last 100 years, it appears that since the 1970’s, society’s sense of shame has regressed with breathtaking speed. Indeed, where will it end?

This is why the apostle’s exhortation is so relevant for us today: “Beloved, guard the liberty that is yours by Christ’s full salvation. Do not let yourselves be deceived into bondage again!” Do not become misled by philosophy, liberality, or the confusion of ‘tastes’. It is important to be knowledgeable of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, not the latest fashion trends. Take a conscious stand against any dictate and folly of fashion. Do not flirt with what seems harmless. Pay no attention to the celebrities and icons of high fashion; do not be enticed by the glossy pictures of a thoroughly depraved entertainment industry. If you so much as step into their world, you’ll not escape untouched.

A final plea to the mothers of our girls: Display for your daughter, by what you say and do, what it means to live a God-honoring life that preserves modesty, purity, and dignity. May God help you so that one day she does not rise up as your accuser. Live out and teach her the glorious freedom that belongs to her as a child of God.

Now is the Time of Grace

Karl Renk was a master butcher. He and his wife were enthusiastic partygoers during the annual Fasching carnival celebrations. The raucous activities had been a habit of theirs for many years and they often celebrated many nights on end.

One Monday Renk met an old school friend and in answer to his question of how he was doing, Renk cheerfully replied: "Fantastic, fantastic, thank you! The day before yesterday we participated in a splendid costume party and today we are going to a Mardi Gras Ball. Are you coming along?"

"No," answered the friend, "I have nothing to do with that kind of thing anymore. I am a Christian and find no joy in those kinds of pleasures. Praise the Lord, I have been given something better. And to you Karl I would only like to say: Now is the time of grace. Take it from me. And one more thing: Soon the Lord Jesus will return to take His own home to be with Him."

Well, Karl Renk had no love for Bible verses. He turned away abruptly, muttering: "Gotta go." But, strangely, the words of his friend no longer let him go: "Now is the time of grace" and "Soon the Lord Jesus will return to take His own home to be with Him."

Arriving at home, he did not go into the shop; rather, he sat in his living room and pondered what he had heard. After a time his wife came, observed him with a shake of her head, and then asked if he had experienced something that annoyed him.

"Not exactly," said Karl, "I just met a school friend and he said some words to me that do not want to let me go."

"What did he say?"

"He said: 'Now is the time of grace, and soon the Lord Jesus will return to take His own home to be with Him.'"

"You don't need to take everything quite so seriously," said his wife.

But the next afternoon, Mrs. Renk came to her husband and said: "I cannot get rid of those words anymore either!"

* * *

William Renner received his caller kindly. After Karl Renk told him the reason for his coming, the elderly man explained in his thoughtful way: "The matter is quite simple. Since Adam's days, man is by nature sinful and therefore lost. But God prepared a way to His plan of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Savior died on the cross for us mortal men. According to His Word in 1 Thessalonians 4 and 1 Corinthians 15, He is coming soon to take those to Himself who have believed in Him. Whoever accepts the sacrifice of Christ and recognizes Him as the forgiver of sins will not face judgment, for he has gone from death to life. But all people must face judgment, regardless of whether they are still alive when the Lord returns or if they have already passed on.

A light went on in Karl Renk's heart. He gratefully took the New Testament that William Renner offered him, along with the challenge to read it diligently.

After only a few days he became convinced through the gospels that God had spoken to him. He found peace in the blood of the Lamb, and his wife did the same a little later.

The butcher couple remained faithful to their new-found Lord until the end of their lives. Earlier friends tried to entice them back to their old amusements, but they remained firm and steadfast. They passed away at peace with the Lord. When Jesus comes to receive His own, the call of the last trumpet will penetrate their graves, and along with all others who have died in Christ, they will be "raised incorruptible" and ushered into their eternal home to be with the Lord himself forever.



ANNOUNCEMENTS

Bible Course of the Church of God

Aylmer, Ontario August 12 - 23, 2013

Special Services

Canada

Fest Services in Edmonton: October 12 - 14, 2013

Argentina

Fest Services in Buenos Aires: September 10 - 15, 2013

Fest Services in Misiones: September 17 - 22, 2013

USA

The Fest Services in Swartz Creek, Michigan will not take place this year.

Germany

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

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While the Candle Burns

A story is told of a Scottish king who had conquered and scattered an uprising of rebels. Surprisingly, he then offered grace to the defeated. He arranged for a large candle to be set up and lit in the castle and had messengers spread the news: “Until this evening, as long as the candle is burning, you will find mercy and forgiveness! When the candle has burnt out, there will be no more mercy, but only judgment!”

Reader, do you understand this parable? The candle of your life is still burning – how much longer it will burn you do not know. We are still living in the time of grace! The Lord Jesus continues to knock on your heart’s door! O, let Him in, “so that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord” (Romans 5:21).