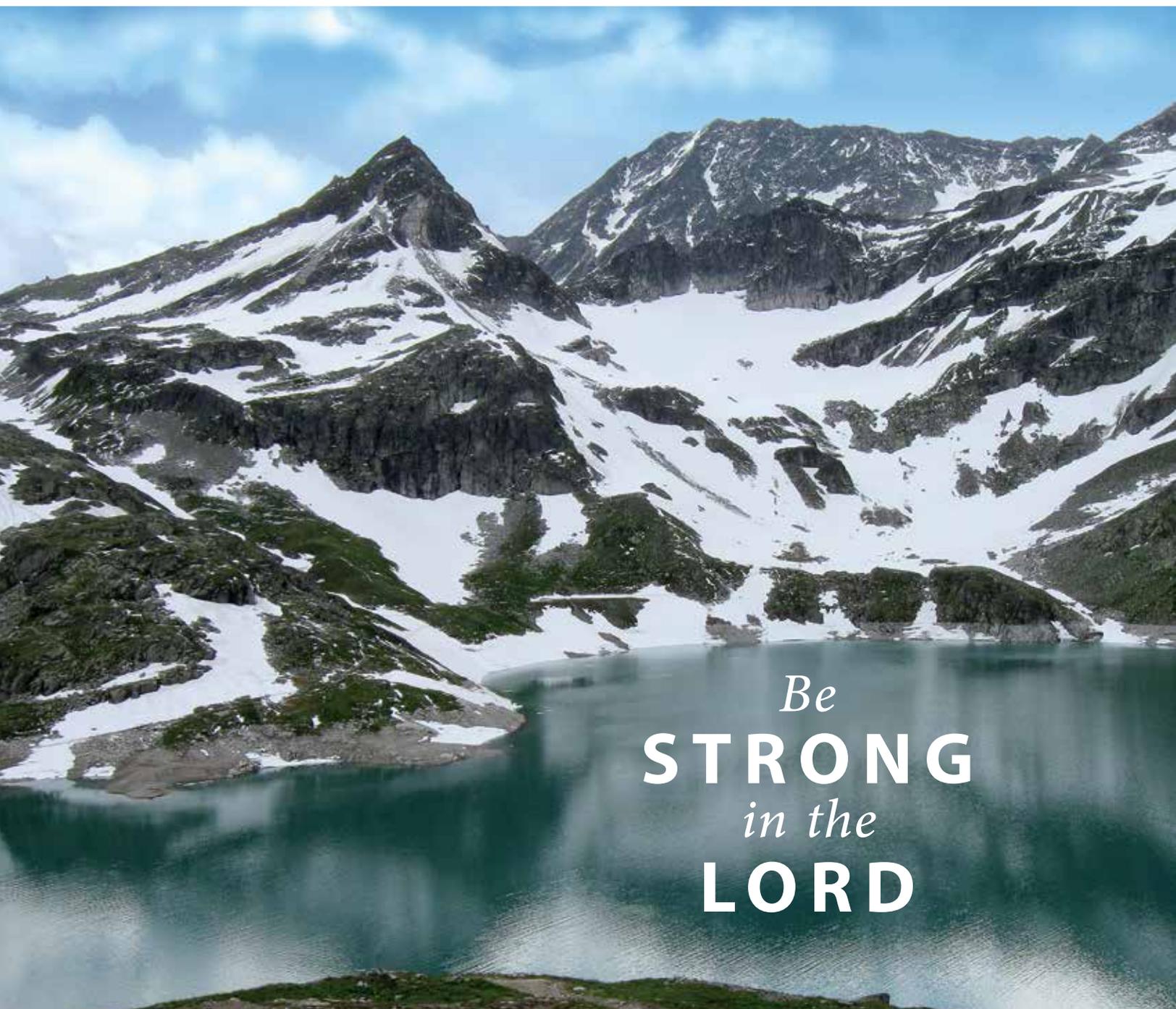
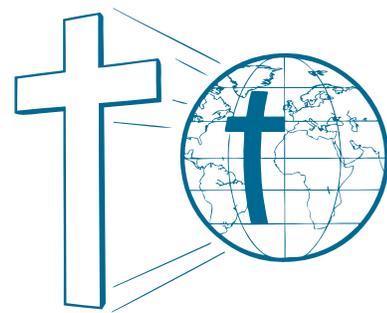


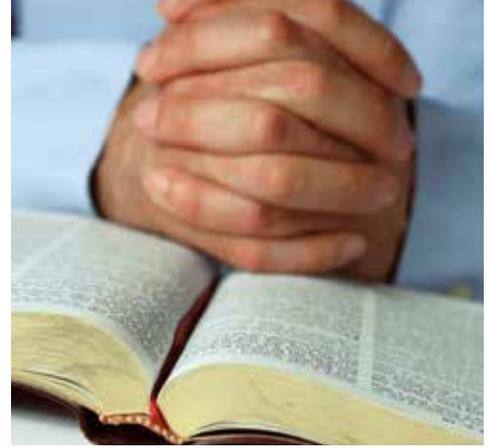
# Foundation of Faith



*Be*  
**STRONG**  
*in the*  
**LORD**

*February 2014*

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# Editorial

The theme of this issue is power and strength. Those words may cause us to think about nuclear weapons, the global arms race, and humankind's insatiable ambition for influence and power. How many conflicts, wars, and even World Wars have resulted from this thirst for domination!

However, we are speaking about another kind of power. The apostle Paul writes: "Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10). He points to an entirely different source and purpose for power. God wants to give us of His power not to dominate others, but to serve them, care for them, and to bless them. He wants to fill us with His strength to increase our faith and dependence upon Him. This divine purpose is directly related to God's love and holiness.

Every other pursuit of power and domination originates in sin, with Satan as its evil instigator. This problem of sin must first be removed before a person can become strong in the Lord.

We read: "And the inhabitant will not say, 'I am sick (weak)'; the people who dwell in it [in Zion, the church of God] will be forgiven their iniquity" (Isaiah 33:24). We receive salvation only when God forgives us. Only then do we receive the divine power and grace to come into a right standing with God. Salvation connects us to the source of God's power. By praying to God, we receive from "His fullness...grace upon grace" (John 1:16). Through the saving power of the gospel we are given the inner strength and courage to trust in Jesus, and to follow Him faithfully. When we encounter temptations and trials in the Christian life, it is by God's strength alone that we can overcome them. It is by the power of God's Word and the Holy Spirit that the disciples received power from above to become faithful witnesses and messengers of Jesus.

Dear reader, are you strong in the Lord and in the power of His might?

H. D. Nimz



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# Finding New Strength

It was in the dead of winter. I left my bedroom that morning after a night of very little sleep. The day with its many tasks stretched out before me like an exam for which I had no solutions.

I was not halfway down the stairs when the youngest of our children came bursting towards me: “Daddy, Daddy, guess what! Last night the water pipes froze and we only noticed now. There’s water everywhere! Why, you could sail a boat all over the basement! The water is half a meter deep. Potatoes, vegetables, bottles, everything is floating around!” And so it was. But what heartily amused the children did not necessarily improve my mood any. With so much to do besides, I had to begin the day hiring workmen to make the repairs and clean up the mess. In addition to this, there was considerable damage to our basement.

When I finally sat down at my desk, a beggar who showed every indication of being a liar and a hypocrite came to visit. I cannot help myself: any whiff of hypocrisy upsets me even on the best of days – and now this! Today?! While the man was still speaking, one of the children came limping towards me; he had fallen on the slippery floor and sprained his ankle.

But that wasn’t all. “Good morning!” said the mailman. He brought many more letters than I wished to receive. This was his usual custom, but among the many letters that I did not want there were two that required excess postage to be paid. And so he came inside. When one of the letters revealed highly aggravating content, it was very nearly the straw that broke the camel’s back. It most likely would have been, had not at that moment a dear man arrived, a man whose visit that moment was not exactly welcome.

“You preached a powerful message on faith last Sunday,” he said. Well, that got my attention. I had preached powerfully about faith and now, dear me, I was at the verge of believing the devil must rule the world! Theory and

practice! The man asked me to write down one of the poems I had mentioned in my sermon.

*Giver of all good things,  
Give me faith unshakable,  
Like a rock in stormy seas,  
Stands firm though billows roll.*

I began to copy the poem for my visitor. “What a rock you’ve proven to be,” I muttered to myself under my breath and had to laugh. Laughter. Thank God for it! Laughing at yourself can be worth more than gold; it is often worth as much as shedding tears over yourself.

When my dear poetry lover, who had unknowingly performed the work of an angel to me, closed the door behind him, I locked it and did not soon open it again.

When I did open the door, my study was full of sunshine, even though it was snowing outside. Now I could laugh at the little trials that before had seemed so great. Had I not sought tranquility in God, who knows what else would have happened on that day. A disgruntled person is a dangerous creature; I don’t even want to imagine how dangerous!

When the events of daily living begin to overwhelm us, let us withdraw from the world and seek holy tranquility. We should not be ashamed about our need for this. It was great need that often prompted our Lord Jesus to withdraw from the world and from His work to seek peace and rest for His body and soul. He sought quiet places away from the voices of people where he could only hear the voice of the Eternal Father. A quiet room, a lonely hilltop, by a peaceful river, or in the desert—it did not matter. If the Lord found it necessary to seek solitude, how much more should we!

Therefore, dear reader, always seek this strength in prayer and in solitude as soon as you notice that by your own strength you will not make it through the day!

# He Gives Strength to the Weary

To become weary is not a sign of weakness. Not only the weak grow weary, but even the strong can grow weary. Elijah sat under a tree and wished to die. Even Jesus was tired, so that before the storm swept over the Sea of Galilee, He had fallen asleep in the back of the boat. Every person grows weary when they are taxed beyond a reasonable capacity. This is not only true physically, but spiritually as well.

Spiritually it is possible to grow weary under the load of a heavy cross. It is possible to grow weary fighting the battle against sin and against the powers of darkness. Working in the kingdom of God, it is possible to get tired, physically and spiritually. There are few Christians who will not admit that they have experienced weariness either under the weight of a cross, or due to the stress of worry. Most workers in the vineyard of the Lord and most warriors on the spiritual battlefield have experienced physical and emotional fatigue. However, we need not fear that the stress must result in a breakdown. God's promise is there for them and for us: "He gives power to the weak and to those who have no might He

increases strength" (Isaiah 40:29).

All are invited to come to the fountain and drink freely in order to go out in the power of His strength.

The waters of life from which we can draw strength are found in the Word of God. Every promise in His Word, relative to our case, is there to strengthen our faith, meet our need, and be fulfilled in us. Each promise is a source of strength and designed to give us what we need so that we are strengthened and refreshed.

Elijah was spiritually and physically exhausted, so God provided him with bread and water to refresh his spirit and body, and to equip him for the journey that lay ahead.

The source of the fountain that gives us new strength is God Himself. The waters of life flow from His throne for all who thirst and come to the throne of grace in supplication and in prayer. We know that we do not have the necessary power and ability without God, who strengthens and works within us. It is God's power alone that will give us the strength to overcome and to be victorious even unto death.

# Have I Lost my Strength?

In the Bible we read about Samson, the strong man, who was able to perform some amazing feats. But he lost his strength and became a weakling. This happened because he disobeyed God.

How about us? In God's Word we read: "Be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10). Is it possible that we can lose our strength through some neglect of our own? If I change my direction and can therefore no longer pray in faith as fervently as before, it must follow that the strength I used to have is also lacking.

Am I preoccupied with something that interferes with my prayer for spiritual and physical needs? Do I think

about things that are a hindrance to my spiritual walk? Do I sometimes speak in a manner that doesn't reflect a Christ-like attitude? Do I engage in activities that hinder my close relationship with my Heavenly Father?

If I want to be victorious over sin and all evil, I need strength from above and a rich measure of grace. I also need spiritual power in order to help others on the way of life instead of being a hindrance. It is imperative that no one robs me of the strength I need. I must not tolerate things in my life that will weaken me.

With God's help I want to stay close to Him, walking carefully and watchfully, so that nothing will rob me of the strength that comes from above.

# Power for the Persecuted

*“Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.” (Jeremiah 15:16)*

Sometimes when a respected citizen passes away we hear people say, “He had no enemies.” Usually these are people who try to win everyone’s favor by being good, showing understanding, and being helpful wherever possible. It is impossible to fight with them because they are simply too “kind”. The prophet Jeremiah was not one of these people.

## **Persecution, a Normal Occupational Hazard**

Jeremiah suffered at the hands of his enemies. They persecuted him, fought against him, cursed him, and generally made his life difficult. This is the sad reality for a man who zealously pursues the service of his God. Jeremiah was not a preacher loved by all; instead, he preached God’s Word amidst great opposition. He was a prophet who had to live through many painful experiences.

Yet, amidst all this persecution Jeremiah did no wrong. He did not betray anyone or receive dishonest gain from them. If he would have, the actions of his enemies would have been understandable. No, Jeremiah was scorned by his countrymen because he stood up for what was right. He was attacked and oppressed because he faithfully preached God’s message. He experienced what the psalmist wrote: “When I speak, they are for war” (Psalm 120:7). Obviously, this experience is the distressing reality of those who are God’s witnesses. When they choose to stand on God’s side, they make themselves enemies of many. Whoever wants to be God’s friend will raise the ire of God’s enemies.

## **Must Christians Suffer Persecution?**

Do Jesus’ followers experience similar persecution, like the prophet Jeremiah of the old covenant? Do they also experience enmity with the world? Or is it possible for a Christian to go through life without enemies, respected and honored by all? How does the New Testament respond to this question?

We must realize that Jesus had many enemies. In fact, His adversaries came from the “righteous camp”; they were the self-appointed “guardians of righteousness”. Jesus’ words

and actions not only found favor among believers, they also stirred up fierce hatred. His foes persecuted Him up to His death on the cross. The benefactor of the poor had to die the death of a criminal. He who preached and lived a love for His enemies had to experience irreconcilable hate. Despite His humility and compassion, He had to endure persecution. As always, evil was the enemy of good.

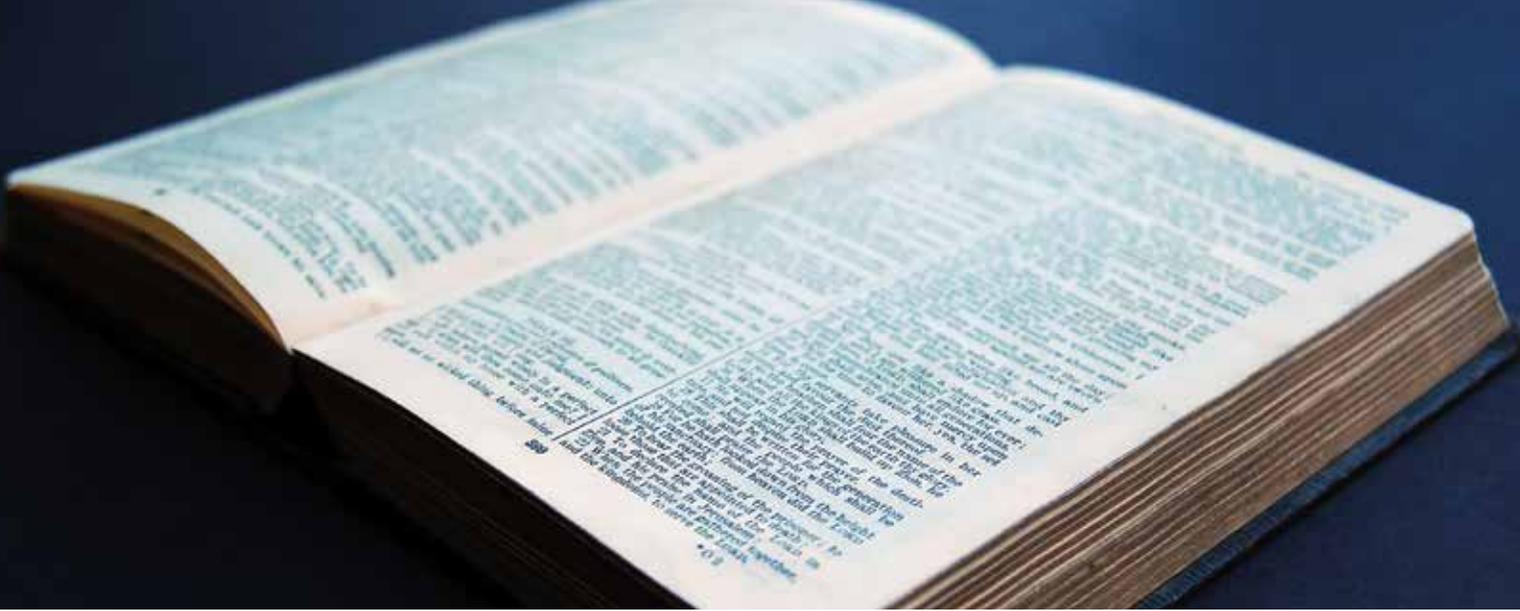
We must further realize that Jesus proclaimed the same fate – a prophet’s fate – to His disciples. He had no doubt that His followers would attract the hatred of the world. Often, the most “righteous” brought the fiercest fight against Christians. We only need to consider the persecution of the early Christian church in Jerusalem, or the sufferings inflicted on the apostle Paul by the pious Jews.

In our country, we experience very little persecution for Christ’s sake. Things are different in other countries, where the church of God suffers martyrdom and the followers of Christ pay a high price for their faith. Why are we spared from this? Is our testimony so compromised that it no longer stirs up outrage?

## **Trials: The Sad Downside**

The prophet Jeremiah fell into deep despair because of the persecution of his foes. He wished he had not been born. With no friends, he suffered in his loneliness, which was the result of his prophetic duty. All the suffering he had to endure was for God’s cause. For him there was no light at the end of the tunnel, everything appeared dark and grim. Similarly, Moses, out of desperation over the people of God, wished to die. Elijah experienced this also. He lost all courage in the face of Queen Jezebel’s persecution and wished death would come.

In the New Testament, we also read of people in God’s service who went through very dark times. While in prison, John the Baptist sent Jesus the frantic question: “Are You the Coming One?” (Matthew 11:2) In a lonely prison cell, John began to doubt whether Jesus was really the promised Messiah.



Even Jesus suffered in prayer with trembling and fear in Gethsemane. Did He not cry out on the cross of Calvary, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (Mark 15:34)?

Paul also describes circumstances in Asia that were so terrible he and his companions gave up hope. The trial was so severe they expected their death was imminent.

### **God’s Word: The Hidden Source of Strength**

Jeremiah suffered amidst this persecution and his trials tortured him. However, he also experienced the power that helped him to withstand the persecution and endure the trials. God strengthened him through His Word.

Just like our daily bread gives us the energy we need for our day’s work, the child of God is nourished by God’s Word, through which God draws near to His children. The Word becomes their life’s sustenance. They receive a fresh supply daily. Their hearts, just like the prophet’s heart, are restored again and again through His Word, and filled with joy and comfort.

Despite this source of comfort and strength, Jeremiah’s persecution did not cease nor did his trials come to an end. Yet, despite all the depression and sadness, the prophet was able to receive the Word of God and it raised him up. The light of godly comfort shone into his darkness.

God meets and helps His persecuted and oppressed children in this way. God’s Word is a light that illuminates our darkened way. It is a sword with which we can battle the attacks of the wicked one. It is a spring that refreshes us on the dusty roads of our life’s journey.

Jesus used the Word to repel the attempts of the tempter. With the Word, the apostles encouraged and strengthened the persecuted Christians. Through God’s Word,

Paul learned to bear the thorn in his flesh and continue in his ministry.

### **Can Christians Live Without God’s Word?**

There exists a basic spiritual law that no one can ignore without experiencing harm: All spiritual life originates from and is sustained by the Word of God. The Word is the seed of the new birth and brings forth new life. At the same time, the Word is also the source of food that ensures the spiritual growth of this new life.

This is why it is so important that all people hear and read the Bible. Without the Word, no one can experience living faith. As believers, we will spiritually wither and waste away if we neglect to tap into the living power of God’s Word. Nothing grows in the kingdom of God without the Word of God.

The illustration of food makes this clear. Without nourishment we grow gaunt, lose our strength, become susceptible to illness, and eventually die of starvation. We know what this looks like when we see pictures of people in poverty-stricken countries. Without daily nutrition we cannot sustain our life.

In God’s eyes, there are many emaciated “Christians” today. They do not cultivate earnest contact with God’s Word. Occasionally, a Bible verse or short devotional will provide a little nourishment, but many Christians are spiritually malnourished and therefore lacking strength and power. In this malnourished state, it is easy to fall away and die spiritually, at which point a person is no longer a Christian. We can be so thankful that by the treasure God has given us in His Word, the true Bread of Life, we can receive the spiritual nourishment we need to remain healthy Christians.

# Nevertheless!

*“Though I were to receive a thousand shekels of silver in my hand, I would not raise my hand against the king’s son.” (2 Samuel 18:12)*

*“Thus my heart was grieved, and I was vexed in my mind [...] nevertheless I am continually with You.” (Psalm 73:21-23)*

*“But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up.” (Daniel 3:18)*

These statements came from prominent people. Perhaps by appearance they were insignificant, but inwardly they were genuine and pure as diamonds. All martyrs have possessed this inward nature. Christ did too. His “nevertheless” in the garden of Gethsemane brought salvation for us all. Your “nevertheless” will bring you through—your spiritual “nevertheless”.

## **The Warrior of David and Absalom’s Time** (2 Samuel 18:12)

Although he is only mentioned briefly, this man possessed enough reverence to share with David’s captain the “nevertheless” of his heart. He still remembered the words of the king and clung to them. Even the appealing offer of quick wealth did not lead him astray. We are faced with many opportunities and offers as well. They are often presented by those who appear innocent and are unknowingly tools in the enemy’s hand. However, we know God’s will. What is our attitude toward anything that goes against His will?

Perhaps the conversation turns to someone in the Lord’s work. He did this wrong and behaved improperly there. The sharp sword of the tongue is quickly unsheathed and pierced into the side of the defenseless absentee. There exists occasion, opportunity, and evil incentive to join in. Yet, if we stand in the fear of God we will surrender the sword to Him who searches the heart and say, “though...I would not raise my hand against the king’s son.”

Hidden in a cave, David had the opportunity to put an end to his evil-minded enemy forever. No one would have thought badly of him; in fact, his men tried to persuade him to do so. However, he restrained himself from raising

his hand against God’s anointed out of reverence to God (1 Samuel 24).

Tell yourself, “Even if my situation is twice as bad, and on the other side the remedy to it seems twice as good, nevertheless I will not...” Have the fear of God that says “nevertheless” in the moment that counts.

## **The Psalmist Asaph**

Wave after wave of trouble threatened to drown righteous Asaph. The world and its ways were a mystery to him. His body was plagued with illness. His soul was tortured by worry and trembling. He imagined himself to be a fool, like an animal before God. He knew nothing. Nevertheless, he would remain faithful to Him whom he did not understand, yet whose unchanging love and righteousness he believed in.

Can our soul say “nevertheless” in times of trial if we do not have godly fear? It is impossible! Can we do so without believing in God’s eternal and unchanging character? Never! Too many souls have drowned in the turbulent sea of temptations, challenges, and trials! Will you also drown, dear soul? You who are drifting on the waves while the Lord is sleeping? Is this “nevertheless” too hard for you? Truly, how can I say “nevertheless” when I have no sure footing? Think of Jesus! “My God, My God, why have you forsaken Me?” (Matthew 27:46). Following this heart-wrenching cry came the words, “Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit” (Luke 23:46). Close your eyes during your moments of trial and imagine Jesus. Considering Him during His worst moments, where He neither felt nor experienced God’s presence, say with assurance, “Nevertheless I am



continually with You; You hold me by my right hand. You will guide me with Your counsel [which cannot always be understood because it is so much higher than ours], and afterward receive me to glory” (Psalm 73:23-24).

*Let me say “nevertheless” in all my ways,  
As Asaph You once taught,  
When in my baffled and troubled days,  
Everything appears as naught.*

*Though the world continue in its way,  
As it has from ages past,  
Nevertheless by You I will stay,  
Jesus Christ, My Guide, I trust!*

### **Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego**

These three rescued heroes give us a valuable example of an unwavering “nevertheless”. King Nebuchadnezzar, who during his reign possessed virtually limitless power, had never before witnessed such stalwart courage. Their bold and daring dissent ignited his wrath. These three servants of God were aware of his anger. Yet they also knew that the God who parted the sea and the Jordan, who crumbled the walls of Jericho and turned back the powerful army of Syrians without the lifting of a sword, was higher than this king: “Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us from your hand, O king. But if not, let it be known to you, O king, that we do not serve your gods, nor will we worship the gold image which you have set up” (Daniel 3:17-18).

They were not certain whether God would save their lives,

nor was their declaration based on the condition that He would. Their strong faith gave them power to live out this martyr-like “nevertheless”. The greatest victory was not their rescue from the fiery furnace. Instead, the highest honor and greatest reward was waiting for them in eternity, and would have been instantly theirs had they perished in the flame. “Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35).

### **And Us – Our “Nevertheless”?**

Many a “Nebuchadnezzar” still presents a commanding golden image. Yes, there are many images that rob our Savior of His glory. The masses bow down to these when the music sounds. Loss of rights, ridicule, and contempt await those who remain standing, those who attract attention by striving against the zeitgeist. Amidst the masses, they call out an unwavering “nevertheless.” “In regard to these, they think it strange that you do not run with them in the same flood of dissipation, speaking evil of you” (1 Peter 4:4).

We serve God and know His will. This always forces us to make a choice. Jesus made it clear to His disciples: “You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. And you will be hated by all for My name’s sake” (Luke 21:16-17). Satan’s forces will continually try to persuade us to deny our Savior through temptations and fears. Do you and I, who have experienced the precious, redeeming blood of Jesus, remain true to Him?

Dear brothers and sisters, let us not be dissuaded by anything! The demands of the world and the devil will only harm us and bring eternal condemnation. What God expects of us may be very, very hard, but it will lead to eternal glory.

# How Can We be Strong in the Lord?

In Ephesians 6:10 we are commanded: “Be strong in the Lord.” We must be spiritually strong in order to be victorious in life’s struggles and effective in our Christian walk. Regular attendance at church services is a great help for us in this regard. The Bible gives us many tips on how we can truly be and stay strong in the Lord.

Faith is of great importance in making us strong in the Lord. Paul tells us that Abraham had a strong faith and gave God the glory. Without faith it is impossible for us to stay standing and victorious through life’s struggles, for without faith we are weak and helpless.

Jesus said to a father who had brought his incurably ill son to Him: “If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23). The father had said to Jesus: “But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us” (Mark 9:22). After the man heard the words of Jesus, he cried out: “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (Mark 9:24). Once the father believed, the Lord Jesus helped.

Courage is another necessity if one wants to be strong. When your cross seems to be too heavy, when discouragement comes and friends fail you, do not forget that God promised to make us strong. The only requirement is that we do as He says. “Wait on the Lord; be of good courage and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord!” God does not drop the victory we need in our laps. We need to do something ourselves: we must wait on the Lord. For this, faith is absolutely essential, for without faith there is no waiting on the Lord.

David surely had faith that God would give him victory, and this faith gave him the courage to bravely approach the Philistine giant. An unfaltering, holy courage combined with faith is necessary to gain victory in spiritual battles. A faith that does not waver will give us the necessary courage and fearlessness to dare to do something at the urging of

God’s Word. Herein lies the difference between effective and fickle Christians.

Many people believe they can only serve God with joy if, figuratively speaking, the sun always shines and there are no dark and dreary days. However, we can be strong in the Lord at all times and in all circumstances if we simply cling to God’s promises in faith, and courageously and determinedly keep moving forward.

Paul writes to Timothy: “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 2:1). This essential grace is offered to us through Jesus Christ. Yes, Christians should be strong in grace and generously extend this grace to others. Christ was full of grace, love and kindness. Are we falling short in these areas?

What kind of impression do our friends, neighbors, relatives, or fellow Christians in the local church have of our life? Are we weak in grace? Paul tells us: “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ” (2 Corinthians 8:9). Grace enables us to be who we should be and to do what we should do.

The Bible also mentions other types of strength that we should attain. There is the strength or power of wisdom and knowledge; the strength that comes from patience; the strength that is attained through prayer; the strength we are granted through genuine humility and meekness. When all these fruits of the Christian life are combined, woven together like young branches, they become strong and unconquerable.

There is no magic remedy for making men and women strong in the Lord. To become strong in the Lord, strong in spiritual strength, we must obey God’s Word in all things. Then our reward will be great.

H. G. Neal

# Rooted in God

*We are far too easily impressed with outward appearances, flowery speeches, and exceptional deeds. However, a stellar character is often demonstrated by that quiet, inward strength that marches forward, undeterred, undiminished. Spiritual maturity happens away from the limelight; it is becoming deeply rooted in God.*

A man who had faithfully served and worked for the Lord for many years, spoke with me about the opportunities and privileges of the Christian life. Among other things, we discussed how to successfully work for the Lord. He particularly emphasized the necessity of perseverance and spiritual strength and power.

He pointed to a group of fir trees nearby. "Look at those trees," he said. "Among them, you will see some that are nothing but overgrown beanstalks. These trees are green only at their peaks. They have used most of their strength to grow vertically, and they have saved very little strength to grow deep roots or to increase in girth. If you would take the surrounding trees away, they would soon fall because they depend on these trees for strength and protection. They cannot withstand the wind because they have never had to stand alone."

"Many people are like these trees. They have never needed to take responsibility for anything. Their lives have been protected from all storms and winds. They rely on other people, and they do not help to carry the load. As long as things go well, they remain standing, but as soon as they must stand on their own, they fall."

Pointing once more at the group of trees, he said, "Look again at the trees, and notice the strong and healthy trees on the outside. See how far their branches spread! How thick and strong the trunks are and how deep their roots go! The only difference between these trees and the beanpoles in the middle is that these trees had to weather many storms. They could

not lean on others. Certain demands were made of them, and they had to grow deep roots to survive."

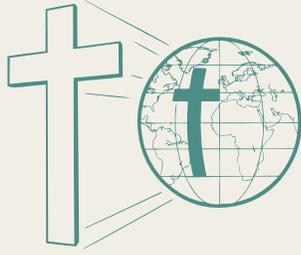
"I believe that the only way to become a strong Christian is to go out and take on responsibility – to be active. It is of little use to tower over others if we lack the heart, soul, and strength of character needed to help carry the load."

The man continued to speak, but I had to think over what he said. "Beanpole Christians." Yes, I was familiar with them. They want to do great things so that they are esteemed with those who are at the top, but they do not want to carry any responsibility. They do not want to help actively in service. That is why they do not develop deep roots. They only grow to the extent that they can rely on others.

Then, I had to think how hard it would be for a "beanpole" tree to develop into a strong and healthy tree. If, from the beginning, the tree had faced resistance like the trees on the outside, it would have become strong and healthy like the others.

In our lives, youth is the best time to grow and become strong. Young people who become accustomed to relying on others and avoiding responsibility will never be strong. Only those who stand against temptation and faithfully complete the tasks they encounter, only those who take up their load and carry it, will have success in their spiritual life.

Therefore, it is important that people develop strength early in life so that they can remain strong and firm in the Lord in all temptations and hardships.



# Radio Broadcast

## The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs  
Kitchener, Ontario

# Praying is Manly

*“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13 ESV)*

I recently read the statement “Praying is Manly” in a daily devotional. This simple sentence had a profound impact on me. It is the kind of thought that we can let sink deep into our souls and on which we can build our faith.

The word “manliness” is interpreted very differently by secular society. The world understands “manly” to mean strong, burly, daring, diligent, adventurous, and brave. Men are doers; they dominate and seek control. Yet one thing that our society does not associate with manliness is prayer. For many, prayer is seen as something for the elderly, who naively concern themselves with matters of faith.

A courageous Christian was walking through the streets of his hometown. Suddenly, he saw a good friend come toward him. He took the opportunity to give his friend a gospel tract. “Thank you,” his friend responded, “I’ll gladly give it to my grandmother.”

The Christian replied: “No, this is specifically for you.” Many are of the opinion that worship, the Bible, Christian literature, singing, and prayer are only relevant to their aging grandmothers and grandfathers.

The Bible presents a very different perspective. In God’s eyes, prayer is something of particular importance for men. Paul wrote: “I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Timothy 2:8). The Apostle specifically states that prayer is relevant to men. He expresses the wish for strong, godly men of faith to be influential and exemplary in their prayer life. And they are to provide this example not only in church but also while on the

road, at work, at home, and wherever there is opportunity for prayer. One could naturally ask then, where are the people of prayer as in years gone by?

Let’s take a look at several people of prayer throughout history. In Scripture, we read that Moses was “very great in the land of Egypt, in the sight of Pharaoh’s servants and in the sight of the people” (Exodus 11:3). How did he come to have such an influential position? Again and again, we read of him bowed before God in prayer. Because of his prayers of faith, he and the people of Israel experienced amazing miracles. In two such situations where it seemed there was little hope for an answer from God, Moses later reaffirmed: “But the Lord listened to me at that time also” (Deuteronomy 9:18-20).

Elijah was a very influential man of prayer. He saw himself and the people of Israel in such tremendous difficulties that the only thing left for him to do was pray. “I have been very zealous for the Lord of hosts,” (1 Kings 19:10) he said, and prayed: “Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that You are the LORD God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again” (1 Kings 18:37). He prayed with such earnestness and vigor that the heavens themselves opened before him and God answered with fire! When the people saw this, they fell on their faces and cried: “The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!” (1 Kings 18:34). Through prayer, Elijah led the whole nation of Israel back to faith in God.

This type of prayer neither ceased with the prophets nor with the apostles. While there were certainly powerful men of prayer among the apostles, our Lord Jesus was greater yet. The Lord’s disciples were so impressed

by the prayers of their Master that they asked Him: “Lord, teach us to pray” (Luke 11:1). In Gethsemane, a few hours before His death, He prayed so hard that His sweat fell to the earth like drops of blood. “Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him,” Luke reports (Luke 22:43). He wasn’t trying to force some sort of response from His Father, but He did need to earnestly pray to achieve a spiritual victory with regard to His imminent and innocent death on the cross.

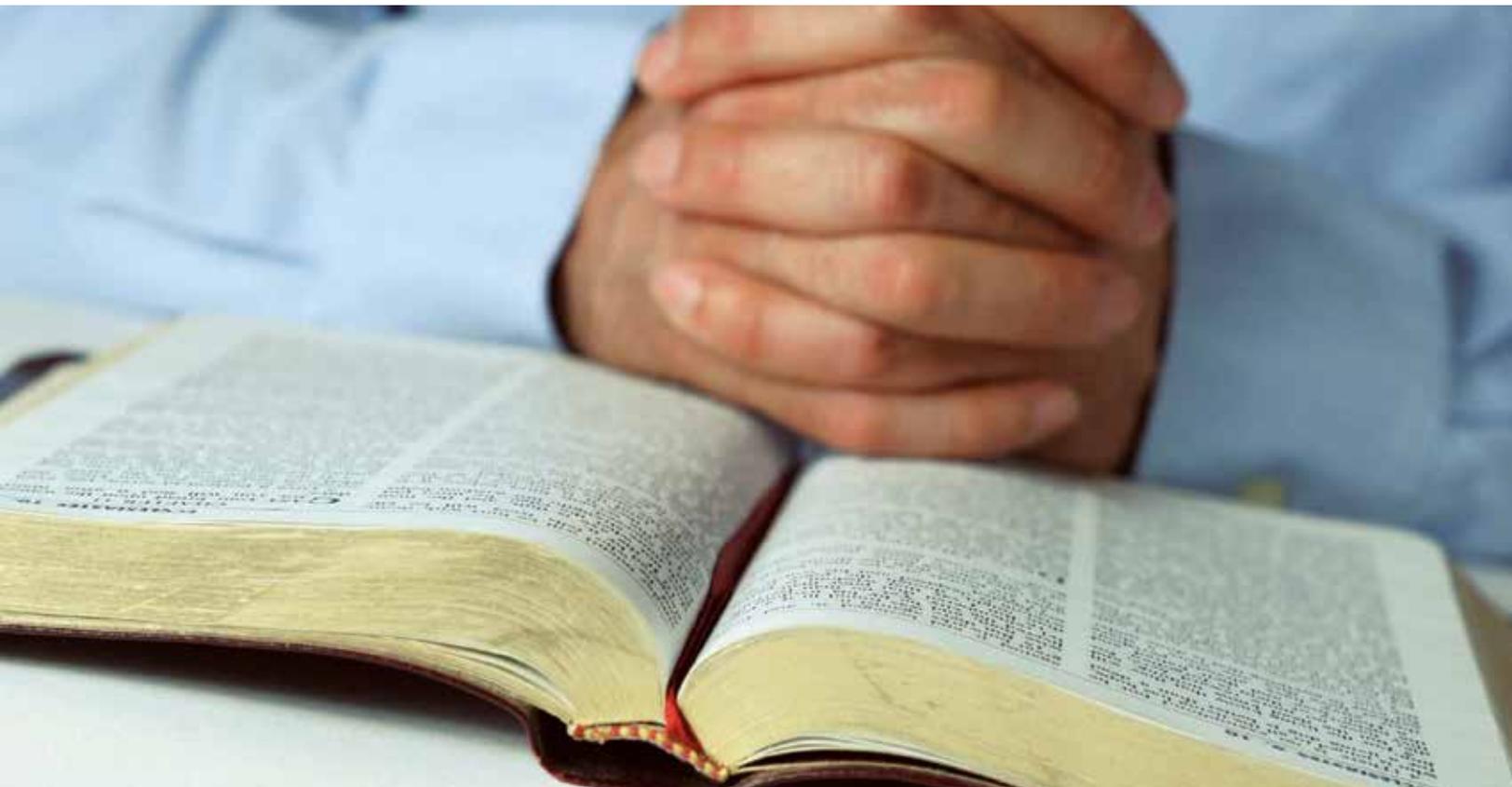
There have been mighty men of prayer in more recent times, and some continue to this day. The well-known George Müller (1805-1898), director of the Ashley Down orphanage in Bristol, England comes to mind. He literally turned God’s promises into personal experiences. He consistently tested the keys to faith and prayer and always found them to be reliable. Thousands of children received accommodation and a future in the orphanage that he founded. Müller’s prayers carried them through great difficulties and times of need. He prayed with such success that at the end of his life he could look back and say that he was never disappointed!

Similar men of prayer were also among our pioneer brothers. One of them, a highly gifted Bible teacher, temporarily had a young preacher as an intern in his

congregation. One morning they had both climbed up to the attic of the church to tidy up. The young preacher reports: “We found a great number of crutches, and in astonishment I asked, ‘Brother Borbe, why are all these crutches here?’ Evidently moved he answered, ‘These are a silent witness to the mighty works of God that we have experienced. Many of the sick prayed the prayer of faith in our camp meetings and were divinely healed—they left their crutches behind.’” The prayers in this place moved mountains!

Let me introduce you to one more “mighty man.” He was a sergeant who lost a number of his men in a heavy battle. One of the survivors, badly wounded, begged of his comrade, “Friend, I am dying. Please pray with me.” “I can’t pray,” came the reply and he went to get an officer. The officer said, “I can’t pray either,” and he went to find the sergeant. “I just learned how to cuss; I don’t know how to pray,” the “mighty” sergeant sadly admitted. None of these distinguished men could pray. What a tragedy!

Prayer is a thing of greatness. Prayer is manly. And prayer is godly. The spirit of power and victory is nurtured in prayer. No, prayer is not to be scorned or cast aside. Prayer is holy—prayer is manly.



# Getting the Kernel

*No time – it's a familiar refrain today. We find no time for those things that are truly important, no time even to be mentally engaged in our many occupations. This is why so much of what we do is done so superficially. Even our study of God's Word is affected, if we find the time to study it at all. And yet the treasures of heaven are unlocked only by careful, patient, intentional effort.*

One afternoon a mother with her children at her knees sat cracking nuts. The older children picked out the kernels for themselves, but the mother stopped now and then to pick out some for the smaller children, who watched with eager eyes and ate the kernels with keen delight. Suddenly, a nut fell to the floor. The smallest child picked it up; and as his mother went on cracking more nuts, he held it up to her and in his baby language asked to have it cracked. He knew that there was something good inside of it. The shell was dry and hard. He might bite on it all he pleased, but the delicious kernel he could not get until the shell was broken.

The Scriptures are just like that nut. If we wish to enjoy their richness and sweetness, we must, so to speak, get them cracked, and thus obtain the kernel, the inner hidden meaning that will enrich the soul. But many are content to know so little of what is really contained in the Word! How full of meaning, how rich, how wonderful is a single expression! One single phrase may contain enough, if you get the "kernel" of it, to make your soul bubble over with joy all day. A single word may give you strength to fight victoriously through a hard conflict. The trouble is, often people do not take the time to get this understanding. They are too ready to think that they cannot understand.

Learn to take a sentence, a clause, or a word, and meditate on it. The more you think of it, the longer you consider it, the richer and fuller it will become. To illustrate my point I will take a text familiar to all and try to show you what I mean by getting the kernel out.

"The Lord is my shepherd" (Psalm 23:1). I have often heard people quote this text when I knew it meant little to them. But suppose we study it a little and place emphasis

on each part in turn. Every word has its "kernel" of meaning, every word is full of richness and soul-satisfaction, if we can only get it out!

"The Lord"—not just any Lord, for there are many lords. It signifies one definite, particular Lord; not one of a number of equal lords, but one standing out separate and distinct from all others—the One above all others. This is the Lord who is "my shepherd." When rightly considered, this one little common word as it is used here contains a world of meaning. We could profitably study it for hours. There is a whole sermon in it.

"The Lord is my shepherd." It is not a man nor even an angel who is my shepherd; it is the Lord, the Almighty One—He who created all things, who stretched out the heavens, who upholds all by His might; the Lord who speaks and it is done; the Lord who wills and it comes to pass; the Lord unchangeable, unfailing, glorious in strength, perfect in wisdom and understanding. Baal is not my shepherd, but He who sits upon the throne of the heavens, whose face is as the lightning and whose words are as the rolling thunders, whose love is more tender than a mother's, whose touch is as soft as the kiss of a sunbeam, whose eye is tender with pity, and whose heart is a fount of compassion—this is the Lord, my shepherd.

"The Lord is my shepherd." Yes, He is. There was no questioning with the Psalmist; it was to him a positive reality. He did not doubt it in the least. He was as sure of it as he was of his own existence. But he was not any more sure than we can be. Repeat the text over a few times with strong emphasis on the "is." This will help you get the kernel out of it. If you are a little doubtful, keep going over it until the "is" really means "is" to you.





"The Lord is *my* shepherd." Yes, He is my shepherd. It is I for whom He is caring. It is I over whom He is watching. It is I who can safely trust Him. I may see Him looking with favor on others, helping, blessing, and strengthening them, but He is my shepherd, so I may with confidence look for Him to give me the same kind of treatment that He gives the other sheep. The shepherd has made promises. He is my shepherd; therefore I belong to Him and have all claims upon Him that any sheep has.

"The Lord is my *shepherd*." To others He may be a judge, austere and stern. Some see Him as a tyrant, some see Him as one to be feared, but He is my shepherd. Being my shepherd and the "good shepherd," He will care for me. He will care for my safety. He will keep me in His fold from the ravenous beasts; He will protect me. Into pastures green He will lead me. By the still water I shall rest secure. He is my "shepherd."

This brings out only to a small degree the richness of the text, but it illustrates the manner in which we should study the Scriptures if we are to get the "kernel." We should however carefully avoid every tendency to read into any text what it does not teach. It is all right to read a chapter or a number of chapters; but you will get more 'soul food' by taking a little and studying it well. Study each word carefully by itself and in relation to the other words of the sentence. Follow this method of study until it becomes a habit, and it will unlock to you rich storehouses of heavenly truth. Your soul will find a feast wherever you go in the Sacred Book. There is in every scripture a "kernel." Do not be content until you get it out.

## An Alarming Book

I was traveling from Bremen to Berlin in Germany a few years ago. My travel plans required that I get up early and leave my home while it was still dark. As soon as it was light enough outside, I reached for my Bible so that I could begin the day as I would any other. Then something remarkable happened. The person sitting across from me became restless and visibly alarmed. "You're...you're reading from the Bible?!" The man could not have appeared more alarmed if he had been told he was under arrest. A conversation ensued, and the man was finally able to accept that, yes, there are still people today who read the Bible.

What an extraordinary book the Bible must be if the fact alone that people read it early in the morning causes such astonishment! Had I buried myself in a novel or magazine, no one would have paid any attention to me. But the Bible? The Bible is the book that demands a life decision; it is the book from which Jesus calls to you even today. To hear about the Bible is one thing; to hear God's personal message for us from its pages is another. When you read the Bible as it is intended to be read, you will be consumed by its power; it will radically change how you live. Only then does living become beautiful, powerful, and truly worthwhile.

# The Doctrine of Sanctification

## *What is sanctification?*

In Scripture, the term “sanctify” initially has a purely ceremonial, liturgical meaning. We read in the books of Moses about objects and people that were sanctified to God. This means that they were dedicated to the service of God. The holy God let them share in His holiness; therefore these things and people were also holy, “holy unto the Lord”.

In the New Testament, the term “sanctification” receives a deeper meaning. Through Christ’s death, the veil was torn in two in the temple. The veil was the curtain that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies. This opened the way into the Holy of Holies so that now we can be truly sanctified. Thus, we find in Christ not only salvation, but also sanctification.

“But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:30-31).

The terms “sanctification,” “sanctify,” “sanctified,” etc. have a twofold meaning in the New Testament.

1. Sanctification as the work of God
2. Sanctification as the responsibility of man

We can always understand the sense of these terms by their context.

### **1. Sanctification as the Work of God**

Sanctification is an instantaneous experience which can be experienced by a person who is saved. We read in Ephesians 5:25-27: “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” – And in 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus

Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” In these two passages we see very clearly that God causes sanctification. We also see that this deals with a distinct work, an experience.

We can also describe this experience as the “baptism of the Holy Spirit”. We see this work in the disciples on the day of Pentecost in Jerusalem (Acts 2:1-4). We see this in Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46) and also in some other Bible passages.

This is the experience that John the Baptist alluded to when he said: “He who is coming after me is mightier than I ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11).

### **2. Sanctification as the Responsibility of Man**

We also find passages that speak of sanctification or purification of life. Paul writes to the Thessalonians: “For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness” (1 Thessalonians 4:7), and in the 10th verse continues: “We urge you, brethren, that you increase more and more; that you also aspire to lead a quiet life ...” In 2 Corinthians 7:1 we read: “Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” Here, sanctification is presented as a progressive process. There is growth in grace, with the goal of becoming more like Christ; a life’s goal for the child of God.

In the next lessons we want delve deeper into the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the cleansing of life. We want to present the conditions for sanctification and the effect of sanctification on the life of believers.

A result of sanctification is more fruit in the lives of the saints. And that is why we want to encourage you, dear reader, to seek this experience and to take on the task – that much fruit to the glory of God can also be found in your life.

Robert Witt  
Gifhorn, Germany

# Hearing—Believing—Knowing

Grete had become a true believer in the Lord Jesus, coming to Him in repentance and faith. This caused quite a stir, not only among her family members, but also in her circle of friends and acquaintances. How could someone change so radically? Until recently, Grete, like all her girlfriends, was consumed with her looks, beautiful clothes, and having a great time. Yet none of these things held any appeal for her now. She had found something far better. Now, she let no opportunity pass by to share with others what the Lord had done for her soul. Many shook their heads in bewilderment. Yet, over time they had to admit that something had caused Grete to change—for the better!

First, it was Grete's mom who could no longer mask her incredulity. Without question, Grete had something she didn't have, something she now desperately wanted too. Mother and daughter sat close together, often, to discuss this most important of all matters. Finally, the day came when Grete's mom was able to say she had found eternal peace for her soul. Not many weeks later, Grete's dad followed suit, and over time, all of her siblings and many of her friends did the same. They had heard Grete's personal testimony, tested her faith, and ultimately accepted the knowledge of salvation for themselves.

## A Test

A handful of Sumatran natives had entered the hut of the German missionary Ludwig Ingwer Nommensen (1834-1918). They had come to wear out his patience and send him packing. They demanded that he, greatly occupied with work as he was, give them his undivided and uninterrupted attention for the entire day. He was to talk with them, play music, show them pictures, answer all their foolish questions, and even feed them. After an afternoon nap on the floor, they continued their incessant banter until it was midnight. Nommensen finally explained that he had to get some sleep. Undeterred, the men simply made themselves as comfortable as possible in the narrow hut and spent the night beside the missionary.

Waking up at dawn, they discovered to their astonishment that they had been covered by a woolen blanket to guard them against the morning chill. The only person who could have done this was the missionary they so despised.

This act of kindness disarmed the young malefactors. Ashamed, they quietly left their unflappable benefactor's humble abode. The experience had such a profound effect on them that one of them still recounted the story as an old man.

Do you and I exhibit the nature of Christ in our time and place, winning souls to the Lord by patient, humble service?



Ludwig Nommensen came from a poor family. When he was 12 years old, he suffered a terrible accident from which God miraculously healed him. When he was fully recovered, he decided to become a missionary. He was commissioned to go to Sumatra on Christmas Eve, 1861. His life in danger, he travelled to the interior of this country where 30 years earlier his predecessor had been murdered. But Nommensen won the trust of the Batak people, and only three years after his arrival the first family was baptized. It took many years and great labor for the work to gain momentum, but when Nommensen died in 1918, there were 300,000 Batak who mourned over their beloved "Tuan". An entire nation had been won for Christ!

## JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED!

It is estimated that 2%-5% of prisoners in the United States are innocently incarcerated. That number may sound very insignificant, but if even just 1% of prisoners are actually innocent, that means that more than 200,000 people are sitting in jail for a crime they did not commit. These may be people who happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time, who didn't have sufficient alibis, or were convicted because a witness lied on the witness stand. Thankfully, with the use of DNA testing, many cases are being reopened, and the innocent are being released. Justice will finally be served.

If we obey the law there is a good chance that we will never have to appear before a judge to be tried here on earth. The court and the judge are there to declare individuals innocent or guilty to the best of their ability. But all of us will one day appear before the Judge of judges, Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul writes: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5:10). As sure as death our judgment day is coming, and then Jesus Christ will be the Judge. He will decide where we will spend eternity: either heaven or hell. Because it will be Jesus sitting on the throne, justice will be served every time! There will be no need for a retrial or an appeals court. Christ's sentence will be just. There will not be a single soul in hell that rightfully should be in heaven nor a single soul in heaven that rightfully should be in hell. How can we be so sure that justice will be served?

### Jesus is the Chief Witness

Jesus says in Matthew 10:26, "For there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known." Why can He say that with such certainty? He goes on to explain in verse 30: "But the very hairs of your head are all numbered." Jesus is omnipresent. That means that He is present everywhere, and witnesses everything that we do, and everything that is done to us. No detail escapes His all-seeing eyes.

### Jesus is the Just Judge

There are prisoners innocently incarcerated because the Judge was crooked or the guilty party bribed him. Because Jesus will be sitting on the Judgment Seat we know that this won't happen at the final judgment. Jesus by His very nature is just and cannot change! The Apostle Paul was about to die and enter into the presence of the Lord, and he writes these assuring words to young Timothy: "Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). Because the apostle Paul had accepted the forgiveness that is offered to us all through Jesus, he took comfort in the fact that the judgment would be just and righteous. He did not need to take revenge for all the mistreatment he suffered here on earth, as he knew that God would judge every evil deed justly. That is also what the apostle Peter encourages us to do, to be like Christ "who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). Leave the wrongs that others do to you up to the righteous Judge!

### Prepare to meet the Judge

On the other hand, knowing that judgment is coming also serves as a constant reminder to all of us to be careful of our actions towards others and God. The wise king Solomon once directed a young person: "Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgment" (Ecclesiastes 11:9). We are inclined to think about the love, mercy, and patience of Jesus, and we do well to do so, but we cannot neglect the justice of God. He cannot overlook any sin or unrighteousness! All sin will either be pardoned in Christ or punished in hell, but it will never be overlooked. Justice will always be served in the end by the righteous Judge.

John Reimer  
Barrhead, Alberta

## QUESTION

How can we reconcile the Bible passages which promise persecution, difficult labor, and sacrifice as part of the Christian life, with those passages that seem to promise a peaceful life if we will only pray for those in authority over us? (2 Timothy 3:12; Matthew 24:10; Mark 16:15; 1 Timothy 2:2)

## ANSWER

Let's begin with an important point: It is not the will of God that we are persecuted. But the Bible shows us the reality of evil in the world because of sin, and Christians will invariably be confronted by it. We have been ordered to battle and victory is promised.

Because a persecuting power exists, our sovereign God makes use of it. Jesus was crucified in accordance with the purpose and counsel of God: "Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2:23). Acts 4:25-28 also speaks of this: "Why did the nations rage ... to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done."

God also allows persecution for the testing of our faith: "... yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles" (Matthew 13:21, cf. Matthew 5:24). Through persecution it becomes clear how deep our roots are and how firm our foundation is. Those who go along with the world will not be persecuted, but they will lose God's testimony.

Service and persecution often go in hand in hand. "At that time a great persecution arose against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles" (Acts 8:1).

"Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only" (Acts 11:19). The early Jerusalem church was "glued" to the temple – the old laws and

the fear of the Gentiles crippled their service. The Great Commission was not carried out to its intended extent until after the persecution.

There is historical evidence that the gospel spreads faster in times of persecution because the hypocrites are weeded out and the church is purified.

The main purpose for praying for those in authority and its related quiet life is not the quiet life itself, but that those in authority will be helped and that they will come to the knowledge of the truth. This passage shows God's wisdom and balance. As sunshine and rain alternate, so must man alternately rest and work if he is not to become overworked. Even in the spiritual life man cannot always read, pray and work for God. He also has natural duties and needs to rest. Jesus once said this to His disciples: "'Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while.' For there were many coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat" (Mark 6:31).

Similarly, God has given His people times of peace and rest after persecution: "Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied" (Acts 9:31). It was a "respite" or refueling for later tasks. Perhaps our current quiet time is just such a respite. Let us use it properly.

Real peace is a source of spiritual strength, quiet time with God. Just like Christ made use of this quiet time again and again, so we need it too.

Helmut Brose  
*Herford, Germany*

# Experiences with God

## Healed from a Malignant Tumor

The evangelist Matthew wrote the following of Jesus: “Great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all” (Matthew 12: 15). There will certainly have been many illnesses among these multitudes.

During the time of my illness, this verse repeatedly strengthened my faith and encouraged me. Today I can join in and say, “He healed them all”, and He healed me too! – “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13: 8). Glory to His wonderful name!

I have already shared the story of how I became suddenly ill. It was on June 30, 2008 that I had to be hospitalized because of weakness and general discomfort. After three days of tests it was confirmed that I had a malignant, bleeding tumor, and the necessary surgery followed on July 17. The surgeon told me afterwards that it had been an intense operation, and my recuperation was indeed very slow. However, I could have never imagined what would happen next. There is no medicinal therapy for my type of illness. The specialists urgently advised radiation and chemotherapy, and I found myself having to make some difficult decisions. I turned earnestly to God.

After persistent prayer, I felt compelled to forego the recommended treatments. I also sensed a desire to be anointed according to James 5. This happened on September 13, 2008 during a visit with Brother Edmund Krebs. Now my confidence in the Lord was tested through the various faith tests that I was to endure.

The surgeon made it clear to me that in order to properly monitor my condition he would have to test me on a regular basis over the next 5 years. This would include an annual CT scan as well as other tests.

After approximately 2½ years, this specialist called me suddenly and told me that I would have to have a second operation. A dark spot had been found and they supposed it to be a new cancerous growth. This news shocked me deeply, and once

more I stood before a difficult decision. My wife and I called out earnestly to God for help and guidance. I shared the news with our children and asked them to help us pray.

Early one morning, I received the clear conviction that I should not submit to this second operation. I said to my wife, “The day may be near where death separates us, as we said in our vows. I submit myself, however, to whatever God’s will might be.” I informed the specialist and kept myself under “the good hand of my God upon me” (Nehemiah 2:8).

After the next routine CT scan, I was told that everything was good and that the suggested second surgery had been incorrect. On September 12, 2013, I had my final CT scan, followed ten days later by an appointment with my specialist. He congratulated me on the latest test results and apologized for advising a second operation. He then hugged me and said, “You made the right decision and you don’t need to come back, unless of course new pain appears.” I left the hospital with great thankfulness and with tears of joy. Truly, I have a God of salvation, and a Lord that saves from death! (Psalm 68:20)

At this time, I would like to thank all children of God who especially prayed for me during my time of suffering. During this time “praying for one another” became very significant for me (James 5:16). I wish to faithfully uphold my side in this as well. I want to especially thank the wonderful Savior of all people for His healing grace and for His goodness that I experienced. “He healed them all” and He healed me too! We value our health far too little. We know however that the salvation of our soul has exceedingly more worth. I would therefore like to thank our beloved Lord for both and to keep the words of David in mind: “Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:2).

It is my deep desire that this testimony will glorify God and serve as an encouragement to all readers.

Friedrich Krebs  
Kitchener, Ontario

# Who is Stronger?

BY BENITA TOVSTIGA

Frankie and Benji are not children like you. You might remember meeting them before. Frankie is a squirrel and Benji is a chipmunk. They are best friends, and they play together almost every day. Sometimes Sammy Skunk plays with them, too. For some reason, the three of them can't think of anything to do today, and because they are bored, well – you know what happens sometimes when children get bored, and animal children are no different.

On this day, it was cold and rainy outside. Because of the cold, the rain was freezing, and many trees were bent over heavily because their branches were so icy. All the mothers agreed that it was not safe for the children to play outside, so they were staring glumly out at the trees, wondering which ones would break and how much farther the branches could bend before they snapped. They were also hoping that the tree their tree house was in would be strong enough to survive this ice storm.

After a while they got bored of watching tree branches and they stopped talking about how strong branches are and began to debate about which one of them is the strongest. They decided to have a contest. Truthfully, none of them are very strong, but they don't like to admit it.

"I can lift a whole bag of acorns over my head," said Frankie. "Acorns are really heavy." To prove his point, Frankie ran to the pantry, brought a full bag of acorns and lifted it high above his head. His arms wobbled a little, but he managed.

"That's nothing," said Sammy. "I bet I can pull that bag of acorns all the way to the creek and back. That's way harder." Secretly, Frankie thought it might be harder, but he didn't want Sammy to win this contest. In fact, he was just a bit irritated because Sammy was showing off. "Well, Sammy," he scoffed, "that's easy for you to say when you know we aren't allowed to go outside so you can show us. Anybody can talk. I want to see you do something."

Sammy and Frankie were about to begin an argument, when they suddenly noticed Benji pulling not one, but two bags of acorns around the room. They had forgotten about Benji for a minute, because Benji is so little. They hadn't even thought that he might be stronger than either one of them. They could hardly believe their eyes!

Just then, the three friends heard a loud crack! They ran to the window and stared in horror at the huge tree just in front

of their door that had broken from the ice and crashed down in the front yard. They couldn't believe their eyes. How was it possible that the biggest, strongest tree in the entire yard broke first? And their tree house was broken, too!

Sammy, Benji, and Frankie returned sadly to the kitchen, where Frankie's mother was making hot chocolate.

"Mom," asked Frankie, "how does that happen? We thought that tree was strong. Actually, I thought Sammy was strong, too—but it turns out that Benji is even stronger than Sammy—and he's littler. Just like the little trees that are strong enough not to break from the ice. It doesn't make sense!"

Frankie's mother settled the boys at the table with their hot chocolate, and then pulled out her Bible. "Well, boys," she said, "there are many different kinds of strength. That big tree was very hard and sturdy, but over the years, the inside of it has gotten dry and brittle, and the weight of the ice made it break. The younger trees are more flexible, so they can bend much farther before they snap. Their flexibility makes them stronger against the ice. Benji is stronger at pulling things than you two are, because he practices every day. I see him in the mornings pulling his wagon with firewood for his grandmother, and as he practices each day, his muscles get stronger. But you know, there's another kind of strength that you can all have equally with a little practice, and it's the most important strength of all."

Frankie's mother opened her Bible and began to read: "The Lord searches all the earth for people who have given themselves completely to Him. He wants to make them strong" (2 Chronicles 16:9 NCV).

Benji shook his head. "What does that mean? Why does God care if I'm strong or not? Why does it matter to Him whether I can pull more acorns than Sammy?"

Frankie's mother smiled. "That's a good question, and actually, I think God does want us to be strong and healthy, because He has things He wants us to do for Him. But that's not the kind of strong this verse is talking about. God wants to make us strong in our faith."

"How does He do that?" asked Sammy. "By making us practice?"

"That's a good way to describe it," replied Frankie's Mom. "God gives you little things when you are young, because He wants you to become strong. Every time you obey God,

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# But Grandma Said!

Well, what did she say? Tonight it was, “Oh, let the child stay up a little longer!” It’s already 10 o’clock and pale little Claudia would be better off in her bed. That’s what the sensible mother is thinking, but experience with her mother-in-law’s sensitive nature cautions her to keep silent. Claudia is obviously delighted and sits comfortably on her grandma’s lap. She loves her grandma for being her advocate. Claudia, clever child that she is, has long realized grandma’s word means the most—and she takes advantage of this. “Grandma said”—these words are her weapons against any undesirable task given to her by her mother or father. Her parents, desiring to keep the peace, do not argue. Is this right?

Should an older, experienced woman take such an open stance against the parents? Should parents, who bear the chief responsibility in raising their child, allow these uncalled-for and often damaging remarks? Especially since it risks the loss of respect from their child? Even if a grandmother steps in for her grandchild out of love, it does not excuse her behavior, although it does explain it. Real love comes with the insight that should allow grandma to understand that nothing is more damaging in parenting than disunity between those raising the child. Children need support, respect and trust. What happens to their trust in their mother when grandma shows through her indulgence that her love for her grandchild is greater than the love of the mother? Will the child not eventually believe this? Perhaps the child wants a candy or a special drink that mother always forbids, but grandma is kind and allows it. Eventually only grandma will hear the children’s petitions and concerns. The mother will begin to play a secondary and interfering role in the continued spoiling of the child.

Should a mother allow matters to get to this point? No, it is her child, and nothing should be allowed to weaken this relationship. She is responsible for providing a good upbringing, based on love and insight. Eventually grandma will no longer be here, and what will the child do then? How will this spoiled child learn to cope for

herself and make sacrifices? The words “Grandma said” will no longer have any effect in her new environment. Unfortunately, this young person has also learned to ignore what mother says.

Grandmas, take some time to think about this! Did you spoil your own children like this in the past? Most likely not, since they have become very capable people. Is this not your wish for your grandchildren as well? Then work together with your daughters and daughters-in-law to achieve this common goal!

Mothers, try your best to be patient with the grandmothers of your children and bring them to insight. It is understandable that different generations will have different ideas about child-rearing. If both sides cannot unite, then leave the issue. Remember one thing: these differences of opinion should never be discussed in the presence of curious children. Ultimately, the parents’ choice should prevail. The grandmother can be consoled that her opinion is also valued.

What if it is impossible to reach an understanding? There remains one option, but only as a last resort after many efforts. The father should say, “Dear mother, please do not place yourself between us and our child. We have talked about this often enough, albeit without success. We want you to know that your great love for our child is misleading you, and you are spoiling her, and hindering our relationship with her. Please trust us that we also love our child and desire her best. We are concerned about her upbringing. She is our responsibility. From now on, we will not relent and let our parenting be trifled with, even if it endangers our peaceful relationship with you. This is not about you, or about us—it is the child that matters!”

How will grandmothers respond? If they are wise, they will never let it get this far. Of course, there are exceptions: grandmothers who raise their grandchildren as lovingly and prudently as they raised their own children. The wise will be these exceptions and agree with the conclusions drawn above.

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you become a little stronger against temptation. Every time you trust Him to answer your prayers, you become a little stronger in your faith. God gives you opportunities to obey, or to trust, so that you can exercise your faith, and the more you exercise it, the stronger you will be.”

“And one day we’ll be strong like that big oak, and we’ll break?” Benji looked a little puzzled. What was the point of getting strong if it only meant that you would break one day?

## An Anonymous Prayer

“Lord, you know that I’m getting older and will soon be old. Please protect me from becoming a gossip and especially from the fatal habit of needing to speak at every opportunity and on every topic. Free me from the notion that I need to bring other people’s issues in order. It is a pity that I cannot share my wealth of wisdom and experience with others. But You know, Lord, that I need some friends when I get to the end. I will not dare to ask You for the ability to listen to the complaints of my peers about their problems without declining in sympathy. Please just help me to bear them patiently, and close my mouth when it concerns my own problems and infirmities. These increase with time, and my desire to count them up increases also. I do not want to ask You for a better memory, but I ask for more humility and less self-assurance when my memory clashes with another’s. Give me the important insight to recognize that I may err sometimes. Help me to stay somewhat mellow.

I do not have the ambition to become an actual saint (it is so difficult to get along with some of them), but a harsh old woman is one of the devil’s masterpieces. Help me to be sympathetic, but not sentimental; helpful, but not forceful. Allow me to find good where I did not anticipate it, and talents in people, who I did not expect possessed them, and Lord, give me the love to tell them so...”

“No,” said Frankie’s mother. “If we rely on our own strength, we will soon run out of strength, just like that big oak tree. But we can ask God to give us His strength. God’s strength never fails if we keep our trust. So...” Frankie’s mother closed her Bible and stood up from the table. “I think you boys might want to start strength training by carrying all these acorns back to where they belong, and start your faith training by obeying your mothers and going home the underground way today!”

## Inner Strength

The secret to the strength a child of God possesses lies in a right relationship to God. Your heart must be right with God. There must be an active, living relationship. If there is something hindering your joy in the Lord, true strength will also be lacking.

*The strength and power of our Savior,*

*That can do all and has all might,*

*Will go with us and grant us favor,*

*Will conquer sin, put wrong to flight.*

*Our help and refuge, strength to conquer,*

*Comes from the Lord, who gives us peace.*

*For every battle, fear no longer,*

*God gives you strength and it will cease.*



CHURCH PROFILE

# Eppingen

With joyful and thankful hearts the brothers and sisters of the Church of God in Eppingen reflect on the ways God has led them. In His wisdom and love, God led His people through some ways they did not understand. Yet, He always sees the big picture and knows exactly how and where He wants to lead.

As a church, we are privileged to continually enjoy the rich blessings God gives us. We gather regularly to hear God’s Word, have fellowship with one another, and join together in worship. It is this assembling together that furthers the spiritual life of God’s children. Hearing His Word, praying, singing, and having fellowship serve to strengthen our faith. In this way we can rejoice in our worship services and agree with the psalmist: “Lord, I have loved the habitation of Your house, and the place where Your glory dwells” (Psalm 26:8).

The great majority of the congregation in Eppingen came from Kamenka, Kazakhstan. The first house meetings began in the German village of Kamenka in the

post-war years. Several searching souls gathered regularly to study God’s Word. God recognized the spiritual hunger in these souls and gave them an even greater desire for His Word and fellowship with one another. Out of these humble beginnings, God allowed a church to be planted under the direction of brother Robert Doberstein. He, along with others, worked and served in the congregation for many years.

Brother Robert Doberstein (1909-2004) and his wife were familiar with the true Bible doctrine, the church of God, and the teachings of pioneer brothers like Brother Malzon and Brother Ebel. They knew them from the German region of Volhynia. They strengthened and established their spiritual life with supplementary literature from these pioneer brothers, such as the book *What the Bible Teaches* by F. G. Smith. The songbook *Wahrheitsklänge*, as well as early handwritten copies of it, was a great blessing for the congregation. This blessing stemmed from the depth of the texts and melodies.



YOUTH GROUP



CONGREGATION

Brother Johann Barabula, who lived in Kamenka's vicinity, also assisted the Dobersteins. The Holy Spirit provided light, established the congregation in truth, and was their Guide, so that more and more souls found salvation and a large congregation was formed.

In the years from 1990 until 1995, most of the brothers and sisters from Kamenka resettled in Germany. Many of these brethren met each other in southern Germany again, and in a few years they began to assemble in a rented facility in Massenbach. God blessed the efforts of Brother Andre Albrecht, who led the congregation and, with the help of others, preached the Word of God. Again and again souls were added to the Church and they were able to hold baptism services nearly every year. With time, the rented facility became too small for the growing congregation. This concern was brought before the all-knowing God, with the earnest prayer for guidance and the necessary spiritual maturity. The Lord led wonderfully and in November 2006 the ground-breaking ceremony took place: Work had begun on

the building of the congregation's own house of worship.

The construction was both a challenge and a blessing. Most of the building was done through personal contributions. God answered our prayers in many different ways. God offered His wonderful protection and blessed the work that was done. The fellowship during the construction was a special blessing to all of us, and we will never forget this time. With God's help we were able to celebrate a dedication service on June 27th, 2009. Many brothers and sisters, as well as guests, joined us. We dedicated the building to the Holy Spirit and His working.

Over the years, God has blessed the congregation and, by the Holy Spirit's working, we continually experience wonderful blessings. Souls are seeking the Lord and experiencing the miracle of salvation. Others are growing deeper in their spiritual walk and all of us can enjoy fellowship with one another.

We thank God for His Church, for harmony, for fellowship and for the working of the Holy Spirit in the proclamation of God's Word.

Looking to the future, we can be assured in our hope for the help, guidance and leading of the Holy Spirit. We know this word is true: "And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20). We want to ask the Lord for His guidance and pray with David: "Teach me Your way, O Lord; I will walk in Your truth; unite my heart to fear Your name" (Psalm 86:11).

Alexander Gross



CHILDREN

# Salvation

Salvation involves a complete turnaround. Saul was on his way to Damascus to persecute the people of “the Way” when he was suddenly surrounded by a light from heaven so intense that he fell to the ground and was unable to see for three days. What a change came over this man during that time! In Saul’s conversion we see very clearly that a fundamental and complete change took place in his life.

After Saul met the Lord on the way to Damascus and surrendered his life to Him, he gained a brand new outlook on life. His life had a new purpose, a new direction. He entered the city with a completely different intention than he had before. We see that salvation, when it is genuine, causes a fundamental renewal of the person; the entire life of the individual takes a new direction from the moment of salvation. This change is not caused by instruction and it is not the product of progressive moral training, as many teach. Genuine salvation brings instant spiritual life to a person through the spirit of God (Ephesians 2:1-6).

In Christianity today, many have lost sight of what conversion really constitutes and produces. The general view, promoted from many pulpits, is that if a person avoids the most grievous sins and lives as best as he can, he can be assured of eternal salvation. People naturally like to hear that they can be saved, develop morally, and become “Christians” by their own efforts. But the Bible teaches very clearly that a person can only be saved from sin and be qualified for heaven by the grace of God. Conversion to Christ is not something a person can effect on his own; it must be caused by God. Conversion is more than a change of mind; it is more than a fear of death and hell. Genuine conversion finds its basis in the Word of God. The Bible informs us that faith comes from the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ: “So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17). Further, the gospel of Jesus Christ is a “power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16). The gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only message of hope and redemption for someone who is lost in sin and enslaved by the wicked world. Anyone who preaches any other hope than this is a false prophet who deceives people and leads them astray. Salvation is

possible only by believing in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, for “without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sins]” (Hebrews 9:22). In Ephesians 2:8-9 Paul distinguishes between salvation by the grace of God and salvation by works: “For 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.”

When the apostles Peter and John were persecuted after the power of God was revealed in the healing of the lame man at the entrance to the temple, Peter told them, “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). Thus, a genuine biblical conversion cannot take place without genuine, biblical repentance. A person must be brought to realize that he is a lost sinner; he must see the awful wickedness of sin and its destructive end; he must take responsibility for his lost condition. He must experience a godly sorrow over the sins he has committed. When the Spirit of God begins to work in the heart of a sinner, He will show him his lost condition. And if such a person is truly sorry for his sins, if godly sorrow is manifest in him, then it will not be difficult for that person to break from his sins, to turn away from them. At that moment, his greatest concern is to be freed from the guilt and burden of his sin. All of this is part of that repentance that precedes salvation. The truly penitent sinner is deeply conscious of his sin debt. He knows that he is lost, and that because of his own transgression. He begins then in earnest to seek the Lord. When a person has finally been brought to see his own sin and his deplorable, helpless state, it will not be necessary to urge him to pray for forgiveness. He will seek God’s mercy because he realizes that his only hope and help is in God.

The apostle Peter told Simon, the sorcerer: “Your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you” (Acts 8:21-22). If a person is honest in confessing his lost condition, no one will be able to hold him back from praying for forgiveness. The overwhelming need in his heart will then cause him

## FOUNDATION OF FAITH

*Editor*

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

*Editorial Team*

Dieter Jeske

Sieghard Schulz

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

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to earnestly seek the Lord. There can be no true conversion without this earnest prayer. On the other hand, the earnest and faithful pleas of the truly penitent seeker can never be ignored by God, for it is for this very purpose—the forgiveness of sins and salvation from sin—that Jesus shed His blood!

When a person is genuinely convicted of his committed sins, he will naturally begin confessing them to those he has sinned against: God and his fellow man. God's Word tells us: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9); and "their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Hebrews 10:17). Paul gives us some insight about what constitutes genuine confession: "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). Evidence that a true conversion has taken place in the heart of a person, that he has been truly saved can be seen in the following:

1. The sense of guilt has vanished and been replaced with the peace of God. A saved person senses that there is no longer anything between him and God.

2. We have the witness from the Holy Spirit that we are children of God: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 10:9). When a person genuinely repents and places his faith in the Lord Jesus as his personal Savior and Redeemer from sins, then the Lord gives him the testimony by His Spirit that he now belongs to God.

3. The life that follows genuine conversion, or the "fruit" that is produced in the life of the converted shows very clearly that the heart and entire life have been radically regenerated: "Therefore by their fruits you will know them" (Matthew 7:20).

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Questions and suggestions can be sent to:  
[contact@foundationoffaith.cc](mailto: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](mailto:cupress@thechurchofgod.cc)

[www.christianunitypress.com](http://www.christianunitypress.com)

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

# Church Conventions 2014

## Germany

*Youth Retreat in Kirchberg: May 7—9*

*Easter Conference in Hamm: April 18—21*

*Pentecost Conference in Herford: June 7—9*

*Youth Bible Conference in Tuningen: August 3—8*

## Canada

*Fest Services in Aylmer: June 28—29*

*60th Anniversary and Fest Services in Chilliwack: August 2—4*