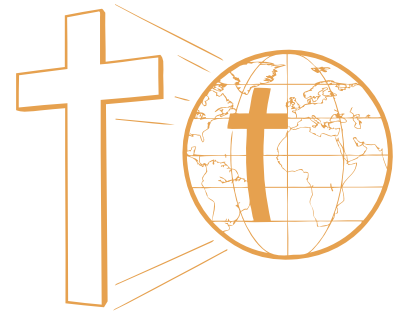


Foundation of Faith



**YOU WILL BE MY
WITNESSES**



April 2014

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Editorial

Great, epic world events have marked the course of human history. One hundred years ago the first shots of World War I rang out. Even today, our planet seems always to be on the brink of witnessing another moment of shocking news. Who knows what world-altering events still lie ahead of us!

Turbulence and crises in the world call the Christian to seek the calming presence of God: "Be still and know that I am God" (Psalm 46:11). Indeed, what are great world events in God's eyes? What significance do they have in view of eternity? Are they perhaps nothing more than the brief flare produced by a matchstick, or the momentary streak of a meteor blazing through the night sky?

What is the greatest event of all time in human history? It is the coming of the Son of God to this world, and His suffering and death on the cross of Calvary. This was truly earth-shattering. We read that the sun stopped shining, and that the world was engulfed in a great darkness.

When the Son of God called out, "It is finished!" the atonement for the sins of humanity occurred. The earth quaked at that very moment, rocks split in two, and the Roman guard at the cross called out, "Truly, this was the Son of God!" No world event before or after would produce atonement for the sin of humankind. No other happening would open heaven's glory to man and give him eternal life. Only Jesus' suffering, death, and glorious resurrection on Easter morning could accomplish this!

Still, there is another world event approaching that will overshadow every other moment in human history. It is the return of the Lord Jesus at the sounding of the Last Trumpet. Jesus will appear in all His glory. All people will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them: at His right will be those going to eternal salvation; at His left will be those going to eternal damnation.

Dear reader, do you believe in the Son of God, and are you ready for this greatest of all happenings?

H. D. Nimz
Kitchener, Ontario

Faithful until Death

The city of Smyrna was in great uproar before Easter of 155 A.D. The great bishop Polycarp was being led to his execution. The Roman Caesar had been persecuting the Christians again, for the number of Nazarenes kept growing, despite all oppression. Hearts were filled with the living power of the resurrected One.

The elderly, highly-honored bishop Polycarp stood before the Roman ruler. The ruler tried to save him, even while the crowds raged and yelled. The Roman proconsul said to Polycarp, “Swear by Caesar and deny Christ, and I will release thee!”

But Polycarp had not sat at the feet of the apostle John in vain. He answered, “Eighty and six years have I served

Him and He never did me any harm; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Savior, Who hath saved me!” So he was condemned to be burnt at the stake.

“Like a mighty ram,” an ancient report says, “chosen out for sacrifice.” He prayed amongst the deadly flames, “Lord, almighty God, Father of your beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ [...] I bless you for judging me worthy of this day, this hour, so that in the company of the martyrs I may share the cup of Christ, your anointed One, and so rise again to eternal life in soul and body.”

This death was a true Easter victory. The grain of wheat may have died, but it produced abundant fruit.

The Cross by the Way

On a road somewhere in Germany stood a cross with the following inscription in the German language. The words are worth thinking about.

*Why is the cross standing by the way?
For those passing by, it has something to say:
A word of comfort lies therein.
The Lord has carried your guilt and sin!*

*Why is the cross standing by the way?
For those passing by, it has something to say:
A word of hope is found therein.
For through the cross there's heaven to win.*

*Why is the cross standing by the way?
For those going by, it has something to say:
A word of wisdom lies therein:
Take up your cross and follow Him.*

*And since my Lord has suffered there,
All my pain is lighter to bear.
My cross I bear without complaining,
For it is heaven that I'm gaining!*



Did Jesus Truly Rise from the Dead?

According to the Bible, our redemption, forgiveness of sin, and salvation hinge on the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If Jesus had died on the cross but remained in the grave, His death would have no redeeming power. The apostle Paul clearly states in 1 Corinthians 15:17: "And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins!"

I do not wish to focus on and speak of the evidence for the resurrection of Christ in the history of Christianity, but rather, I want to speak about the present day witnesses of His life, His working, and His power. We do not need to rely on the memorials of history. Anyone who comes to Him will experience Him. In Him I have found the foundation for my life and peace in my heart.

Professor Karl Heim stated it well: "Christendom would have died a long time ago if the repeated miracle of people receiving forgiveness and peace through the sacrifice and resurrection of Jesus would not continually reoccur."

Some of our loved ones who have gone on into eternity before us have already caught a glimpse of Him as they stood on the threshold of eternity. They were still with us, but the door into eternity was slightly opened to their eyes. The last words of my father were: "Come, Lord, take me to be with You in Your heavenly Kingdom."

No, by believing in the risen Christ, we are not following "cunningly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16). It is reality!

The Empty Tomb

A missionary once spoke in a village marketplace in northern India. When he was done, a Muslim came to him and said, "One thing you have to admit: we have something that you do not, and are therefore richer in our religion."

The missionary answered, "Whatever it is, I would really like to know."

The man replied, "When we make a pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca, we find the casket containing Mohammed. But when you Christians go to Jerusalem, all you find is an empty tomb."

The missionary smiled. "That is exactly the difference between you and us. Mohammed is dead! He lies in a casket and can do nothing anymore. Jesus, however, is not here. He is risen! To Him is given all power in heaven and on earth. In Him is our hope!"

Yes, the risen Savior is our hope as well! That is the joyful news of Easter, the glorious Easter fact: Jesus, my Savior, He lives! I will also see life!

This resurrected One walked with the grieving disciples and opened their eyes and hearts, so that they re-

joiced (Luke 24:13-35). The Good Friday report is followed by the Easter news: an empty tomb! Jesus lives!

Jesus is the bearer and deliverer of eternal life. Through faith in the risen Savior, we receive the power to conquer spiritual death, fear, and agony (1 Corinthians 15:21-26). Jesus was neither born for Himself, nor did He live for Himself. Even less did He die and was He resurrected for Himself. All He did was for us.

The empty tomb shows us that Christ is truly the resurrected One, the Prince of our salvation. We must believe this and live with Him. This resurrected One wants to walk with us in our lives. If we live and walk together with Him, we will experience this:

Jesus lives! He is the only Savior for all who are lost. Jesus lives! He is the strong Liberator of all who are captive. Jesus lives! He is the true Helper of all who are suffering. Jesus lives! He is the true Comforter of all who are grieving. Jesus lives! He is the living Hope of all who are without hope. Jesus lives! He is the glorious Power for all who believe. Jesus lives! He is the only Way to the Father for all who are dying.

What Shall I Do with Jesus?

“The governor answered and said to them, ‘Which of the two do you want me to release to you?’ They said, ‘Barabbas!’ Pilate said to them, ‘What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?’ They all said to him, ‘Let Him be crucified!’ Then the governor said, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, saying, ‘Let Him be crucified!’” (Matthew 27:21-23)

This is the question the Jews were confronted with when they captured Jesus and presented Him to Pilate. As governor, he was authorized to condemn Jesus to death. Pilate very clearly recognized that jealousy was the Jews’ motive for wanting Jesus’ death. It was his intention to let Jesus go free, but faced with the difficult situation the Jews had placed him in, Pilate feebly asked, “What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?” With a loud cry, they answered, “Crucify Him!”

The Jews had decided they did not want Jesus to live, and now Pilate was also placed before the decision of what to do with Him. He had the choice to let Him go or to crucify Him. He chose to side with the Jews. He chose to place the Son of God into the hands of sinners and thereby also became guilty of spilling innocent blood. Washing his hands in front of the Jews did nothing to absolve his guilt.

We, too, are confronted with the question, “What shall I do with Jesus?” How we respond will clearly reveal our relationship to Him. Those who are for Jesus think of Him very differently than those who are against Him. The fact remains that we all have to take a position regarding this question. None of us can evade it or have someone else answer for us. We must all personally decide what we will do with Jesus.

First of all, we need to ask ourselves what it means to make a commitment to Jesus. When that question was presented to the Jews, their response was to call for His crucifixion. Yet there were many in the crowd who did not take up this cry because they stood on the side of their Lord. Without a doubt, the cry to crucify Him pierced their souls. However, they were powerless to help Him and could do nothing to save their Savior. They

had accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior long before this day. They had experienced the power of forgiveness and had their sins washed away as we read in John 8:36, “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.” They had experienced this new life and served Him with their whole hearts.

Being committed to Jesus also means to acknowledge Him as Lord and to confess Him before friends and enemies. Even if it means that we will be mocked, ridiculed, and persecuted, we will remain true to our Lord. Jesus is the fulfillment of all God’s promises and allows us to have a relationship with the Father again. The deepest longings of our souls were stilled when we found what we were looking for in Christ. He became everything to us and we now have a personal relationship with Him. We do not simply say “Lord, Lord”, but we earnestly seek His will. This is the primary motive in all our words and actions as disciples of Jesus. We willingly take the cross upon us because we belong to Him. He has become our purpose for living and there is nothing else we could want.

Being committed to Jesus also means to be a witness for Him. The enemies of Jesus wanted to completely destroy His followers. Yet the early Christians fearlessly proclaimed, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19-20). They were true ambassadors of the kingdom of God and did whatever they could to further the gospel. They were certain that their testimony would bring victory over the powers of darkness and lead people into His marvelous light. Their testimony also brought honor and glory to their wonderful Savior.

How do we reject Jesus? This happens when we do not correctly answer the question, "What shall I do with Jesus?" Therefore take note:

All who reject Christ throw away their only chance for salvation. This rejection can be explained with the following illustration: A few shipwrecked people were hanging onto a plank of wood in the hope that they would be rescued. A lifeboat came along and offered to save them. Instead of accepting the rescue, they chose to hang onto their plank of wood. There was no way the lifeboat could help them if they were not willing to be helped. They chose to drown instead. Too often this happens spiritu-

ally. People choose death rather than life through Jesus Christ.

Rejecting Christ also means continuing to accept the leadership of the enemies of Jesus. This means working together with Satan. Unfortunately, the end result is a complete separation from God. All who reject Jesus must suffer this judgment and there will be nothing they can do to change it.

Knowing this, we should all seriously consider accepting Jesus now while there is still time. What will you do with Jesus?

Gustav Sonnenberg (1898-1980)



From Doubting to Believing

True Christianity is a religion of faith, not of doubt. This faith was especially tested in the followers of Jesus at the time of His crucifixion and burial. Now the news had come that He was alive. Would the disciples believe? The struggle between doubt and faith is most vividly displayed in Thomas.

None of us were present at the resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the witnesses of Easter have long since passed on. We only have the testimony of the apostles in the form of the New Testament. Our faith in Easter is based on this testimony.

We believe in the risen Christ, without having seen Him. Jesus says, “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). Many people cannot comprehend the blessing such a faith brings, and consider it to be unreasonable. This brings us to the account of the “doubting Thomas”, whose experience is recorded by the apostle John.

One Disciple Doubts the Resurrection of his Lord

Thomas doubted the resurrection of Jesus. He could have spared himself this doubt if he had remained with the other disciples. For on Easter evening, Jesus presented Himself to His disciples alive and well. Unfortunately, Thomas was absent. He missed the opportunity to see the risen Christ and hear His greeting of peace.

It may have been typical for this particular disciple to be missing when Jesus appeared to the others. Perhaps he tended to withdraw himself from them. Maybe he saw no point in meeting with the other disciples because the Lord was now dead. Thomas appears to have been a skeptical person and has been referred to as a “gloomy pessimist”. We find other indications of this in Scripture. For example, when Jesus wanted to go to Judea, Thomas immediately perceived the danger ahead and could only offer the bleak advice, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). Later, when Jesus spoke of His return to His Father, it was Thomas who said, “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know

the way?” (John 14:5). If Thomas was by nature a person who found everything more difficult to believe, it is more understandable that he would have withdrawn himself from the others and struggled with strong doubts.

However, even for the other disciples this doubt at Easter was not completely absent. In Luke 24:11 we read that the disciples did not believe the women who had come from the empty tomb. In Mark 16:14 Jesus also rebukes the unbelief of His disciples. When Jesus appeared to His followers in Galilee we read, “...but some doubted” (Matthew 28:17).

In reality, Thomas was simply the voice of unbelief for all the disciples. It was not as if Thomas did not want to believe. He wanted to believe, he dearly wished that his Lord was alive.

The disciples were unable to convince him with their reports. He wanted to be certain. He wanted to be personally convinced. His challenge sounded like an ultimatum, “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” (John 20:25).

The Risen Christ Convinces the Skeptic

The disciples could not prove to Thomas that their Lord had risen, nor could they talk him out of his doubts. They could only tell him about their own experience. Yet, skeptical Thomas did not have to keep silent regarding his doubts in the circle of the disciples. He could talk of them openly.

Only the risen Christ Himself could remove those doubts. He did so. One week after Easter Jesus returned to His disciples and greeted them. Then He spoke to Thomas directly and made Himself available to him. This meet-

ing took place in the midst of all the disciples.

Jesus immediately showed the doubter His scarred hands and His side. How did He know the thoughts and ultimatum of His disciple? We read in Psalm 139:4, “For there is not a word on my tongue, but behold, O Lord, You know it altogether.”

We do not know if Thomas actually touched the risen Christ. But he did testify of his faith when he proclaimed, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). He confessed Jesus Christ as God. With this confession, Thomas became a vocal believer in the miracle of Easter. Jesus responds to Thomas’ proclamation and says to him, “Thomas, because you have seen Me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

Perhaps some people today are envious of Thomas and wish that the Lord would meet them personally in order for them to overcome any doubts. Yet Jesus does not consider Thomas blessed. We can almost hear a friendly rebuke in Christ’s words. Surely all the disciples came to believing by seeing. However this way to faith has reached its goal and has come to an end. For the future, for all generations after Easter, and for us today, we are “those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

This new way of faith is not entirely new. Abraham had faith like this (Hebrews 11:8-12). In regard to faith, he was far ahead of the nation of Israel who came after him. Jesus rebuked them saying, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe” (John 4:48). Yes, he who believes the Word of God is truly blessed!

We Can Trust the Risen Christ

Not everyone doubts like Thomas. Some live and believe with ease, while others find both more complicated. Neither is better than the other and both belong in the church. The church especially pursues those in doubt and brings them the gospel without pressuring them. The skeptic must be able to talk about his doubts. He needs others to take him seriously.

The skeptic must also allow himself to be asked: why are you doubting? Are you playing an intellectual game? Are you ignoring guilt and excusing unbelief? Perhaps some doubt God and their faith because their soul is sad and sick. We should listen to them. There is such a thing as healthy doubt, just as there exists dangerous gullibility.

A person who wants to know exactly what faith is can

ask critical questions. Someone once said, “He who never doubts, never comes to the full understanding of things.” When Thomas overcame his doubt, he gave the most apt confession of Jesus Christ of all the disciples.

Whoever doubts should remain close to the church, since Thomas did not meet Christ in private, but rather in the circle of disciples. Christ is living in His church.

Whoever doubts can ask God for signs and wonders, but he cannot command them. They remain special gifts. Jesus Christ appeared to Paul in his trouble, in order to strengthen him (Acts 18:9; 23:11). Yet the same Paul said, “for we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7).

“Signs are crutches for the weak.” Yes, and sometimes our faith is dependent on these crutches. Asking for miracles is nothing foreign for the church. The early church also prayed, “...[stretch] out your hand to heal...that signs and wonders may be done” (Acts 4:30).

These signs and wonders serve the mission of the church. They empower the preaching and make the preachers bold. We experience miracles of healing and wonderful answers to prayer in the church. Miracles are signs of the risen Christ and foreshadow His return. We may ask for them. However, our faith does not rely on them, but rather on the Word of God.

Paul writes that “we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2 Corinthians 4:18). Hebrews 11:1 describes faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” This is why faith-strengthening experiences can be different and even contradictory. James entered eternity in faith as a martyr, while Peter was freed from prison in faith. Both experiences are recorded in the same chapter (Acts 12).

Someday, faith will lead to sight. In Revelation the following phrase is used repeatedly: “And I saw [...]” (Revelation 5:1; 6:1; etc.). That is the certain future of faith. For the present, for the time that remains until the return of Jesus Christ, we testify, “I believe!” This faith is no vague expectation, but trust in the risen Christ.

This faith does not require constant evidence or need revival with all kinds of signs and wonders. Faith in Jesus Christ offers peace and strength because further proof is not necessary. With this faith one can hear and believe – and live. Christ Jesus lives – for us and with us. This is the truth.

Jesus Christ says: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.”

Blow the Clouds Away

Sometimes when a thick dark cloud abruptly moves in front of the sun, it seems as though someone has turned off the light. The change is so sudden that everything appears momentarily dark. Sometimes in life, even though nothing has changed in the situation that we are in, we feel a sudden heaviness and dread. What are we to do?

I had been passing through a period of sore conflict. For several days I had had gloomy and distressing feelings. I had struggled with all my might against them. I had tried to draw near to the Lord and to get special help from Him. It was hard to pray, and it seemed that when I prayed no answer came. Discouragement pressed in upon me. I had no intention of giving up the fight, but I did not know what to do next. It seemed that my strength was exhausted by the conflict. As I lay there meditating, it seemed that all at once a quiet voice said to me: "Do not try to blow away the clouds with your feeble breath. If you will be content to wait, the same wind that brought them will carry them away again."

As the voice spoke I seemed to see myself in a little ravine where I had often been, with a great mass of thick clouds overhead moving slowly along. The lesson that God would get to me illuminated my mind. I saw how foolish it would be to try to blow away those great clouds. All my blowing could not move them an inch. I might strain and struggle, and try until my strength was all gone, but the clouds would not pass away, nor would the sunshine come a moment sooner for all my efforts.

So, those spiritual clouds that were hanging so low above me and wrapping me in their somber shadows could not be blown away by my feeble breath. I had nearly worn myself out by my efforts, but had gained nothing at all. I had worried myself, and it was all to no purpose. As I looked back at the beginning of that season of heaviness and darkness, I could not see anything that I had done to bring it; it had just settled


down upon me without any apparent reason, just as the clouds in the heavens come over the face of the sky without relation to any act of yours or mine.

Brother, sister, have you not had such experiences in your Christian life? Have not darkness and gloom, heaviness and depression, come over your soul and you could not tell why? You began to question yourself, thinking that surely there must be something wrong. You doubted and wondered; you could not tell why you felt so. Perhaps for several days these feelings persisted. You resisted them. You prayed, struggled. You searched yourself, but to no avail. The darkness still covered you; the heaviness still pressed you down. Possibly Satan also came with powers of accusation against your soul. You blew with all your might at the clouds, but still they lingered, and your heart was sorely troubled. By and by the clouds passed away, the sunshine came, and your heart sang again. You knew not what carried the clouds away nor what brought the sunshine; nevertheless there it was illuminating, warming, and refreshing you again.

There are many times in our lives when the clouds come through no fault of ours. Nothing that we can do will keep them from coming. No matter how close we live to God, they will sometimes come. We cannot hope that our sky will always be clear, but I hope you will get the lesson that God gave me that day, years ago. *The same wind that brought that cloud over you will carry it away again.*

Do not waste your strength struggling against your feelings; be patient and wait. Do not accuse yourself of having done wrong or of being wrong. Do not take





*The same wind that brought that cloud over you
will carry it away again.*

these gloomy feelings as evidence against yourself, any more than you would take the literal shadows of a cloudy day to prove you were not right.

If you have done wrong, God will show you just what the wrong has been, and He will also show you the way out. When the clouds come, then is the time to trust. If in your heart you mean to serve God, you know it, and He knows it. No matter how dark it may become, look up into His face and tell Him that you mean to serve Him no matter how things look, no matter how you feel. Our emotions are not governed by our will. We cannot feel as we please to feel, but we can be true when we will to be true, and we can wait and trust. We cannot control circumstances; we cannot help being affected by surrounding influences. These in a great measure rule our feelings. We can keep the citadel of our soul and not allow sin to enter.

Remember this one thing: all your struggling is only blowing at the clouds. It is easier to struggle than to be quiet and trust, but it profits nothing. In a few days your gloomy feeling and heaviness and darkness will pass away without any effort on your part. It may be longer in passing if you struggle against it. Just trust and wait; don't try to take the wind's task; let it do its own work. Then, when the sunshine comes again, you will not be worn out, but will be fresh and vigorous for the tasks that lie before you.

Trusting in Jesus

Jesus says: "Believe in God, believe also in Me." (John 14:1)

*I trust in Jesus, my Savior and Friend,
O, I will trust Him, He's true to the end,
Trusting in Jesus, He fills ev'ry need;
Free is my spirit, I'll praise Him indeed!*

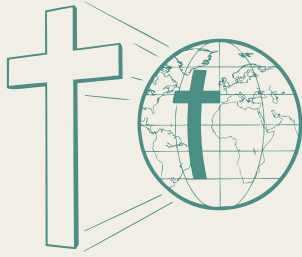
*I trust in Jesus, the Almighty Lord;
He saved my soul and I'm kept by His Word.
Though fiery darts of the devil I face,
All of them shatter on the shield of faith!*

*I trust in Jesus, despite how I feel;
Though heaven seems to be made of cold steel.
When I feel somehow my pray'rs don't get through,
I just keep trusting, His promise is true!*

*I trust in Jesus anew day by day,
I know He's faithful and shows me the way.
I trust in Jesus since nothing else will,
Lead me to heaven and make my soul still.*

*Trusting in Jesus brings freedom and peace.
Faithfully trusting my joy will not cease.
He leads to heaven, the home of the bless'd,
He fills my soul with true joy, peace, and rest.*

D. S. Warner



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Witnesses of the Resurrection

This momentous event, that has meaning for all of humanity, lies 2000 years behind us. We can thank God wholeheartedly that contemporary witnesses reported what they personally saw and experienced.

"Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know—Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it... This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:22-24, 32).

Peter was among the witnesses to the resurrection of Jesus. We have every reason to be thankful to God for these witnesses and for their valuable service. If these witnesses had not testified of the resurrection of Jesus, belief in this great event would have vanished long ago. The importance of their testimony is underscored by the immediate opposition they faced. These witnesses were commanded to be silent, were threatened, and had to endure much persecution because of their testimony.

Witnesses speak of events that they have personally experienced. False witnesses, on the other hand, testify of things that have not occurred. Paul was likely thinking of such witnesses as he was writing the first letter to the church in Corinth. In chapter 15, he states that the risen Savior had been seen by His disciples and by more than five hundred believers on one occasion. Paul continues by emphasizing: "If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God ... but now Christ is risen from the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:14-15, 20). Our text reads: "This

Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses." These witnesses stand before us. These were witnesses that were able to steadfastly present and maintain the resurrection of Jesus as an indisputable truth. They were even willing to lay down their lives for this truth. Doesn't that deep conviction serve to emphasize the validity of their testimony?

Jesus' burial was the last thing that several of the disciples observed on the day of His death. As the sun set on Good Friday, they left the silent and sealed grave in which their Master lay. Their hearts were filled with deep sorrow. How were they to overcome their intense grief when it appeared that death had won the victory?

Peter refers to this oppressing thought in his sermon, recorded in our opening passage: "Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst ... you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death" (Acts 2:22-23). The account would have ended there, if there had been no almighty God to intervene.

Yet in the midst of this violence, God intervened. As a result, Peter could confidently testify of the resurrection of Jesus as a mighty act of God. With certainty, he declared: "Jesus ... [whom] you have put to death ... God raised up, having loosed the pains of death ... of which we were all witnesses" (Acts 2:22-24, 32).

On Easter morning, life triumphed over death! This was the key message of Peter's sermon, and remains the



cornerstone of the gospel. Paul freely professes: "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes" (Romans 1:16). He similarly admonished Timothy: "Do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord ... [which has] now been revealed by the appearing [resurrection] of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel" (2 Timothy 1:8-10). John wrote: "The life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us" (1 John 1:2). The witnesses mentioned in the Bible defended this undeniable truth, and through their powerful testimony they helped to establish faith in a risen Christ throughout the world.

Aside from the witnesses that spoke out, there were also silent witnesses. Among these silent witnesses stands the empty grave. The disciples who visited the grave on Easter morning found Jesus' grave empty. A heavenly witness declared a comforting message to them: "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" (Luke 24:5-6) Matthew reports that the women who heard this message were overcome both with fear and with great joy.

It is difficult for us to imagine joy at a gravesite. We know that there are many tears and much pain and grief at a grave. Commiseration, sympathy, and comfort are suitable for such a place. The joy that sprang up so unexpectedly at Jesus' grave can only be reconciled with a belief in the resurrection and the fact that Jesus was no longer dead, but alive. This joy was itself a witness and a strong argument for the truth of the resurrection.

The most significant witness attesting the truth of the resurrection was Jesus Himself. His deepest humiliation was transformed into His greatest glory. By His death on the cross He obtained life for the world. He personally greeted the downcast mourners on Easter morning with a greeting of peace. Thereafter He appeared in visible form to the rest of the disciples and continued His pastoral work among them. These encounters removed any remaining doubts! The disciples saw Him, they recognized Him, spoke with Him and encouraged one another with the words: "The Lord is truly risen!" From that moment on they stood up as courageous witnesses and blessed others with their testimony. Luke recounts: "And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33).

The resurrected Savior also seeks an encounter with us. Those who seek Him with their whole heart will find and experience Him. We wish our readers a blessed Easter.



The Doctrine of Sanctification

How does God sanctify us?

When John the Baptist spoke about Jesus, he said: "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire" (Matthew 3:11). Here we see the promise of a baptism of Spirit and fire. Jesus also preached repentance (please read Matthew 4:17) and baptized with water (John 3:22, 26; 4:1-2). Just before He ascended into heaven, He said to His disciples: "for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (Acts 1:5).

In Acts we read of the fulfillment of this promise. With the apostles: "When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance" (Acts 2:1-4). We read about a similar experience with Saul (Acts 9:17), with Cornelius (Acts 10:44-46), and with the disciples in Ephesus (Acts 19:2-6).

In 1 Peter 1:2, Romans 1:4, and Romans 15:16 the Holy Spirit is associated with sanctification. Also, in 1 Thessalonians 5:23 we see that God produces sanctification. We can conclude that baptism of the Holy Spirit was already referred to as sanctification at that time. But what does this sanctification mean?

Brother Byrum writes in the book *Holy Spirit Baptism and the Second Cleansing*: "The best Greek authorities hold that the Greek *hagios* and its derivatives are properly translated by the following English words in their various forms – sanctify, holy, pure, chaste, clear... However, the more common use of the Greek *hagios* is, to cleanse. Likewise the

primary meaning of sanctify is 'to cleanse.'" He continues: "We define 'entire sanctification' at this point as a definite cleansing, subsequent to conversion, from the depravity of the nature, which condition remains in the regenerated until the time of this entire sanctification."

At the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, Peter arose and spoke about his experience in the house of Cornelius: "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith" (Acts 15:8-9). Again we see a connection between sanctification and purification. Specifically, he speaks of the purification of the heart. Of what has the heart been cleansed if Cornelius, by the account described in Acts 10, was already saved?

We need to understand that sin exists in two forms: the sin of commission and original sin. One refers to the sins that we have committed ourselves, the other is our corrupt nature - the sin in the heart, which is the main cause of sin in our life.

Brother Byrum wrote: "Since it is a fact that native depravity does remain in the heart of the converted, a subsequent cleansing is necessary. There is no Scriptural proof of any time or place where depravity is removed except at the time of the baptism of the Holy Spirit."

It must be clarified that sanctification does not make us infallible. It does not make us absolutely perfect in every way. It does not save us from the possibility of sinning.

Through sanctification we are purified. That which sin has spoiled in our human nature is straightened out again. For example, through sanctification the sin of pride becomes ordinary self-respect. It may not always be possible to draw a specific line between the natural and the corrupted, either in our own experience or in someone else's,

however, of utmost importance is that we have experienced sanctification. But how can we attain it?

A prerequisite for sanctification is our consecration. It is described in the Old Testament as a consecration to the service of God. And in Acts chapters 2, 8, and 15 we see again and again that sanctification was obtained through prayer. More specifically, it is received by faith in response

to our prayers. And Jesus Himself gives us a promise that we can rely on when we pray: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13)

Robert Witt
Gifhorn, Germany

The Message of the Cross: Is it Still Relevant?

I once gave a gospel lecture in Zurich. Every time I went to the lecture hall in the convention center, I was overwhelmed by the beauty of this cosmopolitan city. It is as if all the splendor of the world is spread out between the great sea and the green mountains. And the magnificent great hall in the beautiful convention center harmonizes with this great city.

But apparently all the beauty and all the riches of such a city cannot satiate the heart of man. That is why many people came streaming in to hear the gospel.

There I stood again at the podium one evening. I spoke about the cross of Jesus Christ at Calvary. I described how a large crowd had gathered there too; how all is quiet for a moment as the terrible hammer blows ring out; how suddenly a terrible roar erupts, as the cross rises over their heads. There He now hangs, the Son of God, covered in blood! The hands that blessed the children; that handed out bread for thousands; that touched blind eyes so that they would be opened! These hands are now gruesomely nailed to the cross. And all this for us!

At that moment I saw a couple of gentlemen smirking. They stood at the edge of the hall. Their faces twisted into a sneer, as if to say: "You must not come to the cosmopolitan city of Zurich with such a stale message!"

I looked into their smiles and their ridicule and knew I had to answer them now. So I stopped and asked, "Is there anyone in this room who would have the courage to say, 'I want and need no forgiveness of sins!?' I will pause for a quarter of a minute so you can answer the following question with a yes or a no: Do I want to live and die in the knowledge that I have no forgiveness of sins?"

All at once it became so deathly quiet in the hall that you could have heard the proverbial pin drop. The grins on the faces of these men had disappeared. Thoughtfully they looked down.

I continued: "A sea of sin stretches out before the eyes of God. We are all tangibly involved. And now God responds to this. How does He respond? Not, as one might expect, with wrath and judgment. No, in such a way that He gives His Son and erects a cross so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life!"

An American once wrote a book entitled: *The Miracle of Unbelief*. How right he was! How unbelievably hard and calloused the heart of man must be to not fall on his knees before the cross of Jesus and seize the grace that is offered!

Wilhelm Busch

SERIES: THE ATTRIBUTES OF GOD

I JUSTICE

II TRUTH

III OMNISCIENCE

GOD IS TRUTH

Truth. What is it? Humanity has grappled with this question for centuries, and continues to do so even in our day of 'enlightenment'. This quest for truth has produced the secular conclusion that there is no absolute truth, that it is relative: truth is whatever you define it to be. This mode of thinking has millions of people today asking the same question Pontius Pilate asked Jesus nearly 2000 years ago: "What is truth?" However, Pilate did not wait for an answer from Jesus. Why not? Jesus, after all, was the incarnation of truth. Pilate, like many people today, was not actually concerned about finding out what truth really was.

God is Truth. It is this attribute that every other attribute of God depends upon, for if God were not Truth, then His words to us would not be trustworthy. How could we know that God is love if we did not know that He is Truth? Coming to recognize God as Truth is therefore the most important building block of our faith. It is upon this foundational stone that we can build with full assurance and be guaranteed that we will never be put to shame.

How can we know that God is Truth?

God Cannot Lie

Paul writes in Titus 2:1 that God never lies; everything He says will happen. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that it is impossible for God to lie. For someone to make a statement like this means one of two things: either they are a liar all the time and can never speak the truth, or they are truthful all the time. We must study God's Word to see which is the case.

The Bible Proves God is True

God is Truth and says of Himself that He cannot lie. We can therefore expect His revelation to be perfect; we can expect that the prophecies He made (what He predicted would happen) will happen. As we study the Old Testament we see hundreds of God's prophecies fulfilled: the rise and fall of kingdoms; the exile of the people of Judah and their return; the devastation of the temple, etc. Most spectacular are the prophecies of the coming Messiah. How detailed God's prophecy is concerning the coming Messiah's birth, life, and death! Psalm 22 is an awesome example of David predicting, a thousand years earlier, the crucifixion of Jesus.

Truth Can be Experienced

We can personally experience the truth, and it is this encounter with the truth that sets a person free from their bondage. Jesus says in John 14:6, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." In John 8:32 He says, "And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." Millions of people have allowed the Truth (Jesus) to work in their lives, and have become free from their bondage.

Many people today search for truth believing that it is a substance or a thought that can be captured by their finite minds. Consequently, they pursue it, but every time they feel that they have captured it, truth slips from their grasp and leaves them with more unknowns. They attempt to define truth according to their understanding, not realizing truth is found within a relationship with Jesus Christ. This relationship with the Truth will transform your life as you submit to it, as you grow in it, and as you abide in it (John 8:31 & 32).

One day we will stand before the Truth, Jesus Christ, but on that day we will not be able to turn and walk away as Pilate did. Instead, we will have to answer for how we responded to Truth: did we accept it and allow it to free us, or did we reject it, scoff at it, and turn from it? May God grant all of us the grace to accept Jesus as our personal, eternal Truth!

Ruben Reisdorf
Kelowna, BC

To be searching for answers to questions is something very natural in the lives of young people. Often, there are concepts or passages in the Bible that are difficult to grasp. Questions also come up about very practical matters as we seek to follow Jesus. Some of the things young people grapple with today may not have even existed in previous generations. But there are also questions that are cross-generational, questions that people of all times have struggled to find answers to.

With God's help, we would like to provide some answers to these questions in this forum. We have a list of questions and answers that we are drawing from that have come up in various youth meetings, conferences, and special Bible Courses. We would also be delighted if you would send any questions you currently have now to: contact@foundationoffaith.cc

QUESTION

Who created the universe?

ANSWER

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:1-2).

"For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist" (Colossians 1:16-17).

This question leads us to the topic of the Trinity: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Because these Three are One we can rightly attribute creation to God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit. For our limited minds it is impossible to fully comprehend the concept of the Trinity. How can Three be so united that they can be labeled as "One"? But in faith, based on repeated examples in the Bible, we can grasp that the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are One, and therefore everything that we see is made through and by them.

To illustrate this further let us briefly look at another example where we clearly see the Trinity at work. Who raised Jesus from the dead?

God the Father: "and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses" (Acts 3:15).

God the Son: "Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body" (John 2:19-21).

God the Holy Spirit: "But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you" (Romans 8:11).

There is no question that the three preceding verses describe one resurrection, however in them, Three are given credit for raising Jesus from the dead. This is only possible because the Three are One.

The same is true for creation. The Bible verses describing creation do not contradict each other but point to the triune God who created everything. Let us honor Him as such!

John Reimer
Barrhead, AB



Experiences with God

"What Would I Do Without Jesus?" This song has often been an encouragement to me. I was encouraged to submit my testimony after I read the article "God is Faithful" in the December 2013 issue of the Foundation of Faith. I had started to write one on several occasions already, but was somehow held up. But this time it was to be different.

When I think of the faithfulness of God, I am reminded of the beginning of my spiritual journey. Over twenty years have passed since that time, and I have found Him to be faithful at all times. He has never left me, and in times of darkness He was always there. He always has a way, even in times when it seems that there is none.

Recently I had many worries. I wondered if I would stay faithful. It seemed difficult to go on trusting the Lord. I suffer from severe, non-stop headaches. When they get so bad that I cannot be up for several days, I often ask: How can this continue? When this happened again recently and I started to worry again, I listened to a new CD we had purchased. A song was playing that really caught my attention and gave me renewed strength. The title of the song was "Try Jesus". God led me to listen to this song at just the right time, and I was greatly encouraged. Even though I can often only sigh and say, "Lord I can't go on," I know that His grace is sufficient for me. This always encourages me. God's river never runs dry. With Him we lack nothing; we will always find help in Him.

I have often thought how my life would be without Jesus. I cannot even imagine it. Is it not Jesus who has helped me thus far? Although various people have been a great help to me, I cannot ultimately rely on people. But I can always rely on Jesus, because He is faithful.

My wife and I are able to serve the Lord together. That is so wonderful! We can put everything at His feet. Whether we are praying for ourselves, for our children, or for others, God hears us and for that we are thankful. To serve the Lord together with my spouse was always my prayer before I was married, and God has blessed me with a wonderful wife who serves the Lord. We have been married over 17 years, and life together gets sweeter all the time. It is true: when we ask Jesus to guide us, He will lead us as He sees fit. How wonderful it is to know you are under the leading hand of God. And because He is faithful, I want to faithfully follow Him where He leads me.

In closing I will mention a word of Scripture: "For the joy in the Lord is our strength" (Nehemiah 8:10). I am so thankful that we can have this joy in the Lord in all of life's situations. Nothing can rob us of this joy; whether it be sorrow, pain or sickness. That is reason to be thankful. And with this joy I will continue my journey heavenward.

Your Brother in Christ,
Jake Knelsen
Aylmer, ON

Dare to be Different

Imagine how you would feel if your country was taken over by an enemy country. Imagine being snatched from your home and taken to that enemy country as a prisoner. It would be very frightening. Would you be mistreated? Would your captors feed you and give you warm clothing, or would you be thrown in a prison with only bread and water to eat? Would you ever see your family again?

Surely Daniel and his friends were afraid when they were shipped off to Babylon to serve King Nebuchadnezzar. Imagine their relief and wonder when, instead of being thrown into a prison cell, they were offered an education and delicious meals from the king's own table! Instead of dry bread, they ate delicious food – the most wonderful choices of all the best treats they had only dreamt about before. It was the king's table, after all, and only the best will do for a king. The captured young men could probably not believe their good fortune!

Except one of these captives is missing. Daniel. Why? He was selected along with many other boys to receive this good education and treatment, but he chose not to eat the good meals. Imagine your favorite meal in the world. If someone brought you that on a silver plate when you were expecting to be beaten and mistreated, would you politely say: "No, thank you – I think I would rather eat brussel sprouts, please"?

That's what Daniel did. We don't know exactly what the king was serving for dinner, but Daniel knew that eating

it would be disobedient to God's laws. He did not want to disobey God's laws, so he chose to be an outsider instead.

Do you think perhaps the other boys might have made fun of him? Or maybe the other boys were afraid to be friends with him after that. They did not know what the king would say, but it would be hard to risk the king's anger. I think they might have chosen to stay on the king's good side rather than stick up for their friend.

Daniel chose to honor God even though there were many reasons to go with the flow and do what the king said. I'm sure that was not an easy thing to do, but God honored Daniel for it. The chief steward was friendly toward Daniel and allowed him to eat vegetables and drink water for ten days. At the end of those ten days, Daniel was healthier and stronger than all the other boys. God also gave Daniel three friends who chose to honor God. And in the end, God made Daniel and his friends ten times smarter than all the others in the kingdom! Daniel became the highest minister in the land!

God will never miss noticing it when you choose to obey and honor Him. Don't be afraid to be different. Sometimes it's important to swim against the current, to stand out in a crowd. Instead of wondering whether people will like you, have the courage to ask: Will God be pleased by my actions? I promise you that God will honor your desire to do what is right.

Irina Ritthammer



Why Some Marriages Fail

Part I

When believers enter into marriage in the love and fear of the Lord, the joy and gratitude filling their hearts leaves very little room for anxious thoughts about the future. Yet experience teaches us that dangerous developments can cast themselves over family life like a deadly fog. For this reason we aim to reveal some potential dangers to marriage, so that with God's help our marriages can be vibrant, strong, and lasting.

"Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, long-suffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful" (Colossians 3:12-15).

A marriage is tenderly and sensitively held together by the inner qualities of the heart. An attitude of humility, which is almost more important than physical love, requires constant careful maintenance.

There can exist no stronger bond between a man and a woman than the mutual love of Christ. In the list of home destroyers, the neglect of Christ comes first. Choosing a marriage partner who is following Christ is the first step on the path to a Christian marriage. But even Christian newlyweds are in danger of losing some of their fire and zeal for God because of their enchantment with each other.

The most intimate human relationship is perfected in the union of man and woman and Christ. Christian couples who want to seek God first in their lives would do well to discuss early on in their marriage what this will mean for them. When children enter the family, life becomes much busier and parents stand in danger of neglecting their spiritual priorities. But a couple cannot push aside the spiritual – not even temporarily – without suffering loss. They must always remember that, whatever may happen, God is with them and can help. He must not be excluded from the family circle. The home is the practical field of action for what one has learned in studying the Bible, and simultaneously, a laboratory in which the New Testament accounts are manifested.

By wholeheartedly participating in the church commu-

nity, family ties are simultaneously strengthened. Regular devotions, more than any other efforts of the family, tie the loose ends of a disappointing day together. Through these devotions, family members are strengthened in their faith, knowing that they are held together by the grace of God. When we grow spiritually, we also become more mentally and emotionally mature. Spiritual growth is personal endeavor, resulting from a close connection between ourselves and God. However, in a marriage, spouses can encourage each other to nurture their devotion to God. They can praise and glorify God together, pray together about problems, and share with each other what God is teaching them individually. There are at times unspeakable joys and sorrows which can only be shared with God. But neither partner should ever let the feeling arise that he would not be capable of sharing in the emotions and wishes of the other.

The Bible warns us to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). But how? By turning to God, and this so seriously and so often that the practice of prayer becomes a habit and the presence of God a constant reality. By constantly turning toward God, you place the burdens in God's hands before they can overwhelm you. You pray, ask, and receive counsel from God for all decisions, whether great or small. You gain strength to do your work, inspiration to live wisely and to serve God and people every day. Because so many churchgoing couples neglect Christ, they undermine the foundation for a happy marriage.

We have referred to the neglect of Christ as a primary home and family destroyer. A second great danger is the emphasis on wrong values. Years ago my husband and I enjoyed a good relationship with another young married couple. They were pleasant and kind, and were considered to be the most promising couple in the congregation. When they moved to another city, we lost contact



with them over the years. When we finally set out to visit them, they proudly showed us their beautiful new home. As we strolled through the garden, we admired the plants and trees that had been tended with love and care. Then we made the rounds of their elegantly appointed home. As we rejoiced with them over their property, we sought to restore the old ties of friendship. Here we immediately found something lacking. A certain uneasiness on their part revealed a discordant note. We asked questions about the church they attended, but they dodged our questions. We learned later from others that they only occasionally attended church events. As they climbed the social ladder, they no longer attended church services at all. Later we heard of serious troubles in the family. Jesus, the Son of Peace, had been barred from house and home and family. How gladly He would have pronounced His "Peace be with you" here as well, if He had been offered the opportunity to do so!

It is good for a couple if they decide early in their marriage – or better yet before marriage – how they intend to structure their life together. Will they work towards an elegant show of possessions – cars, homes, businesses, and social position? Or will satisfaction with God be their primary concern, with the family's material welfare taking a secondary status? – Extraordinary acquisitions often bring disagreements into the home, which can become chronic and damaging. The only rescue out of such situations is to first surrender oneself to the Lord, to put God in the first place. The effort to create a lovely home or to accumulate wealth for one's children may be an honest endeavor, when it is placed correctly on the value scale.

Whoever truly wants to establish a Christian home would do well to seek and accept God's ownership in every area of life: time, money, skills – everything should be at God's disposal to be used wisely. Such people will soon find out that their resources are sufficient for the cause of God and for their own personal needs. If the support of God's cause comes first, then what is left over will still be abundantly sufficient.

Neglect of fellowship with believers is a third home destroyer. God said at the beginning of creation: "It is not good that man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). That is

still true today. But this problem is not solved by marriage alone. One can feel lonely even in a marriage or in a crowd. It is not unusual for a married couple to lack true fellowship and companionship. They often soon discover that physical attraction and appeal alone are not enough to build a good, happy home. Too often, couples have very little actual fellowship. They have not learned to read an inspirational book together, to jointly attend services and then talk about them together, or to share pleasant events of the day with each other.

Two of the most sociable people I have ever known lived in a simple but cozy farm house. This pair raised a large family with strict discipline, coupled with a good, healthy sense of humor, which had an especially beneficial impact at the table. Bible reading and prayer was a regular custom – not a lengthy one, but enjoyable for the whole family. It was amazing how well they all knew and understood the Bible. They competed in looking up relevant Bible passages. Increasing responsibility and work with eight children did not weaken the relationship of the couple. First, they were husband and wife, secondarily they were parents. On Sunday afternoons you could inevitably find them sitting in their living room, side by side, the Bible in their lap or open in front of them on a small round table. They loved to read to each other and discuss what they had read.

They never tired of each other's company. The husband worked at a pumping station a good kilometer away from the house. Whenever it was possible, in the afternoon after completing her housework, his wife wandered down the dusty road to see her husband, and to rejoice with him. Hand in hand they merrily and cheerfully strolled homeward.

This exemplary fellowship and companionship attracted many, including myself and my brother, especially after we lost our mother. How we always rejoiced in their warm hospitality. How delicious the wonderful biscuits always tasted. But above all, the love and understanding they showed to two abandoned children drew us.

(To be continued)

Verna Joiner

Jesus Teaches Footwashing

During their last evening together, Jesus revealed deep truths to His disciples. They would understand and experience the importance and far-reaching impact of these teachings only much later. One of these priceless truths was the ordinance of footwashing.

Once again, the Jews gathered to celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread, called the Passover, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. Jesus and His disciples met in a large upstairs room to eat the Passover meal. Just as He had done so often in the past few days, Jesus spoke of His suffering and death. It was, after all, the last Passover Jesus would spend with His disciples. Jesus shared many warnings and much good advice with His disciples on this occasion. He particularly emphasized the relative positions of the disciples.

Jesus got up from the meal, wrapped a towel around His waist, and poured water into a basin. Bewildered, the disciples watched Jesus and wondered why He needed the water. Jesus saw their questioning looks and knew what troubled their hearts. He then knelt humbly before the first disciple and began to wash his feet. In this way, He went from one disciple to the next until He came to Peter.

Peter looked at Jesus with such a questioning expression that Jesus felt compelled to say to him, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this." But Peter stopped Him, saying, "You shall never wash my feet!" He could not accept that his beloved Lord and Savior would so debase Himself as to wash his feet. However, Jesus simply looked lovingly into Peter's eyes and said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:7-8).

These words struck Peter. Should he have no part of his Master, whom he loved so dearly and for whom he would sacrifice his life? Impulsively, as always, he said to Jesus, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:9) A brief smile may have flitted across Jesus' face because He knew Simon Peter like no one else knew him, and He loved Peter because of his individuality. Jesus knew that Peter had a true heart, but He also knew his weaknesses. He therefore replied, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you" (John 13:10). Yes, Jesus knew His disciples, and He knew that there was a traitor in their midst. How much it must have hurt Jesus to know

that Judas had turned away from Him and that he carried betrayal in his heart.

After this exchange, Jesus turned questioningly to His disciples and said, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:12-17).

The Gospel of John retells this incident in such a way that Christ's followers can learn a wonderful lesson from it! Christians have many different opinions as to whether footwashing is simply a symbol of humility or whether it should be faithfully observed.

There is no need for debate if we can confidently assert that both interpretations are important. We need to understand the spiritual meaning of footwashing – otherwise it is an empty ritual. On the other hand, we cannot leave out the practical exercise of washing each other's feet.

Consider again these words of Jesus our Lord, "You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:13-17).

We know that Jesus spoke deliberately to His disciples. For example, after He spoke to the people in parables, He explained them to His disciples. Even though footwashing has a spiritual meaning and illustrates the relationship between believers, when Jesus spoke about footwashing, He was giving the disciples an actual commandment and not just a parable. Similarly, communion and baptism are

both commandments and symbols: baptism illustrates the believers' relationship with the world, and communion illustrates the believers' relationship with the Lord.

Does it not stand to reason then that the Lord created footwashing as an illustration and reminder to all believers about how they should relate to their brothers and sisters in Christ? Yes, on that solemn night, Jesus established this illustration so that His disciples would remember after He left them that they should serve their fellow believers in humility and selflessness. Moreover, the disciples were to listen to others and let others serve them so that they remembered that they needed their brothers and sisters in Christ.

However, we have not yet exhausted the full significance of footwashing. Those who are disciples of Jesus and have received the Holy Spirit will recognize the deep meaning of footwashing and receive great blessings when they observe footwashing in combination with communion. Through the Spirit, they will experience the seriousness of that hour, and they will not only see the brother or sister who is kneeling at their feet, but they will also

see the Lamb, who for our sake humbled Himself to the point of death so that we could find rest and peace for our souls. They will then be overcome by love for the King of all Kings, and an increased desire to glorify God through acts of love will arise in their souls.

By sitting at the feet of your brothers or sisters, you will determine to not only wash their feet now, but to also be ready to serve them and be a blessing to them whenever the need arises. If you think such thoughts as you observe communion and footwashing, then you have celebrated them fully. However, if you are reluctant to let your brother or sister wash your feet, think about the words of the Savior, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8).

We see how important it is to follow our Savior in true humility and to keep His commandments. Sadly, for many people, including some who call themselves Christians, it is easier to think about these ceremonies symbolically and to neglect to carry them out. But if we follow Christ's example of footwashing, we will receive heavenly blessings.



The Lord's Supper

And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many." (Mark 14:22-24)

Matthew writes about the Lord's Supper in chapter 26:19-30; Luke in chapter 22:14-20. Paul discusses this ordinance twice with the Corinthians: in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, and 1 Corinthians 11:23-34.

Breaking of Bread

While the Passover supper was being eaten, Jesus instituted the ordinance of the Lord's Supper, or the "breaking of bread". He did not tell them just how often they should observe it, but said: "For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

"So the disciples did as Jesus had directed them; and they prepared the Passover.... And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Matthew 26:19, 26).

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, "Take, eat; this is My body" (Mark 14:22).

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19).

Many years after this time Paul said to the Corinthian brothers: "Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you" (1 Corinthians 11:2).

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:16-17).

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."

In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

The gospel was preached on the day of Pentecost. "Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:41-42).

"Now on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them and continued his message until midnight" (Acts 20:7).

The Cup and What It Represents

When Jesus ate the Passover supper with His disciples and instituted the ordinance of the bread and wine, He explained to them what it represented. After returning thanks and breaking the bread Luke writes of Jesus, "Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Luke 22:20).

"Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it" (Mark 14:23).

"Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matthew 26:27-28).

"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" (1 Corinthians 10:16).

"In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes" (1 Corinthians 11:25–26).

"And He said to them, "This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God" (Mark 14:24–25). Here we understand it was the juice of the grape that was used, "fruit of the vine," and it represented His blood, which was "shed for many."

Who Can Participate

The disciples participated in the Lord's Supper with Jesus before His death, and He told them to teach all nations to observe all things that He had commanded them (Matthew 28:20). When He gave them this commission He also said to them, "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15–16). It was only believers who were to observe this ordinance: those who discerned, or honored, the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:29). This signifies the sacrificial body of Christ in the forgiveness of sins. Those who discern the body of Christ, the church, can participate in communion with a better comprehension. "For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:12–13).

His body is the church (Colossians 1:24), and Christ is the head of the church. "And He is the head of the body, the church" (Colossians 1:18).

The body, the church, consists of His people. "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

It is "the church of God which He purchased with His own blood" (Acts 20:28).

They must be all one, as Jesus prayed: "that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one" (John 17:21–22).

In Corinth at this time there was not a perfect oneness. There were some who were claiming to be right, however their actions were not in line with the Word of God. These people were causing division, which resulted in disorder. This is why Paul said, "Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you" (1 Corinthians 11:20–22).

Then after instructing them as to how he had received instructions from the Word, Paul said, "Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come" (1 Corinthians 11:33–34). That is, go ahead and observe, but wait until all had assembled that they might all participate together. And when they came together for the purpose of observing these ordinances, the first ones there were not to begin with the Lord's Supper. For the Lord's Supper was not for the purpose of eating a full meal, so if any were hungry they should eat at home.

As communion was for the purpose of showing forth the Lord's death and in remembrance of Him, Paul admonished that all should examine themselves to see that they were in line with God and in unity of the Spirit. "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body" (1 Corinthians 11:27–29).

These teachings represent the biblical instructions to the church of God, and do not represent the beliefs of a particular creed or sect. Any one whose sins are forgiven and who is walking in the light of the Word of God and discerning the Lord's body, can participate in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper.

Excerpt from: Byrum, E. E. (1904; 2005). *The Ordinances of the Bible* (pp. 93–98). James L. Fleming. Used by permission.

You Call Me “Lord”

“For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread” (1 Corinthians 11:23).

The apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthians, telling them it was the Lord Jesus Himself who gave him clarity regarding the Lord’s Supper (communion). He also confirms for them that communion was instituted during the celebration of the Passover, on the night Jesus was betrayed.

On that same night, Jesus instituted another ordinance. We read in John 13:2-5: “And supper being ended...Jesus...rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples’ feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.” When Jesus stooped before Peter to wash his feet, Peter initially protested. But Jesus explained to Peter that if he refused to take part in the footwashing, he would have no part in Him. Hearing this, Peter immediately changed his mind and asked Jesus to wash his hands and head as well. Unable to fully understand what was happening and why, Peter heard Jesus assure him, “You will know after this” (John 13:7).

Peter was well aware of Jewish customs and knew full well that Jesus had not washed his feet because they were dirty. No Jew was ever permitted to take part in the Passover without having bathed. Jesus said, “He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you. For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, ‘You are not all clean’” (John 13:10-11). Obviously, Jesus knew that one of the twelve disciples would betray Him and that this individual was not clean, even though Jesus had washed his feet.

We ask ourselves: If the consequence for refusing footwashing was separation from the Lord back then, should we not expect the same consequence today?

Just as the disciples had difficulty understanding the significance and meaning of footwashing, so do many people misunderstand it today. They fail to see what our Lord and Master was instituting.

After Jesus had washed His disciples’ feet, He said to them, “Do you know what I have done to you?” (John 13:12). They knew, of course, that their feet had been physically washed and dried by Jesus. But the Lord continued, “I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you” (John 13:14-15). Notice the word “example”. Paul, writing to the Corinthians, showed what the elements of communion exemplify: “In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me’” (1 Corinthians 11:25).

Many people call Jesus their Lord and Master. But when they are asked to wash the feet of their Christian brothers and sisters, they balk. It’s not necessary, they claim, because Jesus never commanded it. It’s not an ordinance, they say. This begs the question: What is an ordinance? An ordinance is a rule, or command, that is instituted by divine authority. Both footwashing and communion are commands that Jesus both gave and demonstrated for His disciples.

We notice also that Jesus attaches a special blessing to the observance of this ordinance: “Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them” (John 13:16-17).

When should footwashing be celebrated by the church? Jesus washed His disciples feet on the same night He celebrated communion with them. Thus, these two ordinances belong together and should be celebrated that way today. In His Great Commission, Jesus told His disciples to “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name

Editor

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

Editorial Team

Dieter Jeske

Sieghard Schulz

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

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

Please address all other correspondence and subscription requests to:
Christian Unity Press
Post Office Box 527
York, NE 68467-0527
Tel.: (402) 362-5133 Fax: (402) 362-5178
or email us at
cupress@thechurchofgod.cc
www.christianunitypress.com

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of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20). Elsewhere, He says, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word" (John 14:23).

Certainly, the act of physically washing someone's feet requires humility. But whoever does so obediently has the promise of a blessing.

Dear reader, perhaps it's been a long time since you participated in footwashing. Maybe you've never obeyed this command! You and I are not greater than our Lord and Savior. He was not so great in His own eyes that He would not humbly wash His disciples' feet. We call Him our Lord and Master. Calling Him that also requires that we do as He did, including washing one another's feet.

Let us examine ourselves before the Lord to see if love for God truly resides in our hearts, enabling us to have the spirit and mind of Christ in this matter. Remember: "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:17).

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Conventions 2014

Germany

Youth Retreat in Kirchberg: March 7-9

Easter Conference in Hamm: April 18-21

Pentecost Conference in Herford: June 7-9

Bible Study Conference for Youth: August 3-8

Canada

Fest Services in Winnipeg: May 17-19

Fest Services in Aylmer: June 28-29

60th Anniversary and Fest in Chilliwack: August 2-4

The Joy of Easter

*Day of Light and wond'rous story,
Day of joy to sing aloud;
Day on which the sun with glory,
Bursts in splendor through the clouds.
Day on which the old creation,
Is renewed upon the earth,
And all things in exclamation
Should rejoice in the new birth!*

*Those in chains of death imprisoned,
Could not turn their fate away.
Jesus Christ, our Lord, is risen,
From the tomb in which He lay.
He has conquered death and dying,
Bound with chains the ancient foe,
Who deceived the many sighing,
Since they had no ray of hope.*

*Jesus is the mighty Savior!
Jesus triumphed over hell;
Jesus Christ has shown us favor!
This redemption story tell,
Unto all who sit in sadness,
Who in constant sorrow dwell.
He can turn your woe to gladness,
His victory is ours as well!*