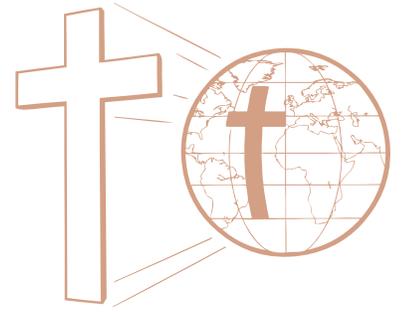


Foundation of Faith



Take Time to be Still

July 2014

Content



QUIET TIME

- 4 Take a Break, But Not from God!
Lord, Make us Still
At the Feet of Jesus**
- 5 A True Vacation**
- 6 Seeking Quietness
Are You Running a Spiritual Deficit?**
- 7 We Need Rest**
- 8 My Soul Thirsts for God**

Radio Broadcast

- 12 Pathways to Joy**
- 22 Coping with Stress**
*Many people feel overwhelmed and burdened by stress.
What coping methods do Christians use to overcome
anxiety and stress?*
- 24 Blessed by Fellow Laborers**

Heart Talks

- 10 Message in a Dream**
*Our stores of strength and joy deplete
when we become preoccupied by
discontent.*
- Biblical Doctrines Easily Understood
- 14 Divine Healing**
How can God heal people?
- 15 Threatened by Solitude**
- 18 The Power of Love**



Youth Pages

16 God is Love

17 About Baptism

Children's Corner

19 True Friends

For the Family

20 Mid-day Refreshment

26 Experiences with God

**27 Announcements
Impressum**

28 Stillness

Editorial

The increasingly hectic lifestyle of our Western culture has us reaching for moments of stress relief and decompression. We look for a temporary change, for a time of rest.

Nestled in the book of Acts is a seemingly insignificant event in the life of the apostle Paul. Luke tells of how the evangelistic team left Philippi after the Easter celebration and took the five-day sea voyage to Troas. They spent seven days here, days that surely exhausted the physical and emotional reserves of these ardent laborers in God's vineyard. On the final day, before an audience that was eager to eke out every morsel of spiritual food from the apostles, Paul preached until midnight, and then encouraged the faithful until dawn. The next day, the team boarded a ship headed to Assos. But Paul did not join them for the sea journey. Why not?

Paul needed some down time. Instead of sailing with the rest to Assos, he decided to walk there, a journey of 25 kilometers. Was it just a jaunt through nature that he desired, or did he have another purpose?

I believe Paul wanted to be alone. After many days surrounded by people, and having spent countless hours preaching, counseling, and comforting, Paul needed time alone with the Lord. He needed to pray, to plead, to express his gratitude. He wanted a season of solitude in which he could look up to Christ, gather new strength, and renew his passion for the work. And when he arrived in Assos, the rejuvenated apostle rejoined the team to travel to a region close to Ephesus.

The Lord Jesus modeled this behavior for His disciples. In need of some quiet moments away from the multitudes, he said to the disciples, "Come aside by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while" (Mark 6:31). In a separate place, away from the bustle, they were to relax and unwind.

We all need these moments of quiet relaxation in which we find rest for our body and our soul. God tells us through Isaiah, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).

H. D. Nimz

Take a Break, But Not from God!

The vacation season has begun. While for some it may be over, most of us are busy planning and preparing for it.

It will be a wonderful time! - A break from the usual! - A few bright rays of light breaking through the regular rhythm of the long year! - We can enjoy a little freedom! For a moment we can leave behind all our domestic and work-related responsibilities.

Yet, it is important for us remember that there is something from which we cannot take a break. It is the continual, fresh encounter with God and His Word. True, there are people who are on a life-long "vacation" from God and His church. They have long ago decided to withdraw and are on holiday from anything "Christian."

Perhaps we may discover new possibilities for God during our holidays. Even a great change can occur when we, in a relaxed frame of mind, seek a new encounter with God in

His Word. Opportunities to seize such encounters present themselves no matter where our vacation destination may be.

Vacation from the usual "me"? Vacation from everyday life? Yes, but please don't think that you can take a vacation from God and from His message. Instead, we should say: Let us take a vacation from all the worries, burdens, and everyday living of a year, and let us make free time for God. If holidays and vacation represent the longing of man for freedom and liberation, then we cannot take any vacation from communion with God, not even fifteen days, let alone a lifetime!

And why would we even want to take a break from God? We would make ourselves poorer. But God especially wants to meet us in the stillness and make us richer in Him.

Lord, Make Us Still

Lord Jesus, out of the work, the noise, and the busyness, we enter into Your stillness. You know our disquietness, all the reasons it is difficult for us to become still before You. So accomplish this in us:

*Gather our thoughts on Your Word!
Let Your forgiveness wash over us!*

Let us become quiet and humble ourselves!

We really have nothing to offer You, except for our absolute neediness.

You have chosen the foolish and weak, so let us not, in wrongful way, desire to be strong and clever!

Amen!

At the Feet of Jesus

I know of a place where joy lives, overflowing, jubilant joy; a place to where the saddest people can flee and where they can find the truest comfort!

I know of a place where there is deep, unending stillness. Not the stillness of death or of forgotten-by-the-world loneliness. No, a stillness that a child experiences in the security of his mother's arms – deep, holy peace!

I know of a place where there is life, warm, pulsing life! Not the scurrying and chasing after the golden calf, but

life that surges forward so that we, with strength developing and flowing from this central place of life, can go on accomplishing and succeeding! Here is where true life crowds around so that, armed with new strength, we can face the constant changes again. Here is where the powerful "heartbeat of life" throbs that connects heaven and earth!

Where is this place where happiness and love, stillness, and yet powerful Life lives?

At the feet of the Prince of Life – by Jesus!

A True Vacation

Our lives today run at such a frenzied pace that we desperately need to take the time to rest. If everyone had quiet evenings and uninterrupted Sundays, and if our business life and side jobs did not interfere so strongly with these natural breaks, special vacations would generally not be necessary. However, the individual is able to change very little in the way things are run today. We are usually assigned a job and cannot do anything about it. Often the task is larger than what we feel we can handle. As a result, we feel, from time to time, that a vacation is needed.

Certainly, the most important source of respite for the Christian is peace in God. It makes a big difference even in our work if we have calmed our hearts before the Lord or not. In the stress of our day-to-day duties we need to stop for a moment of prayer and bring our cares to our heavenly Father. This alone will help us through frenzied times, replenishing us spiritually and emotionally. With a calm disposition of mind and a heart strengthened in God, we can perform our jobs more easily. We will experience, even under the burden of our work, that God keeps His word: "My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

We are all responsible for caring for our physical body to ensure it gets the rest it needs. How we do this will vary from person to person. For example, someone who works hard mentally is able to relax by working physically. Someone who works hard physically can unwind by reading a book.

Still, if the vacation industry is any indication, these efforts to bring about a short break in our work are generally deemed insufficient for relaxation. A stream of people go on vacation at the beginning of the holidays! But do they come back from their time off rested and rejuvenated?

As Christians who travel, let us take care that our trips are truly beneficial. Let's seek also to be a blessing in whatever new environment our vacation might take us.

Someone has said that if you really want to know a person, watch what they do on vacation. How true! Away from home, people often shed their inhibitions. They think, "No one knows me here. I can finally do what I want!" Sadly, this is often when the true character of professing Christians comes to the surface. Man is by nature an egoist, hungry for self-satisfaction. Whoever has not surrendered his self to God's sanctifying love often produces fruit that tastes nasty and bitter.

We meet a variety of people on our holiday travels. Let us be mindful that they may be as exhausted as we are. Let us show them Christ's kindness and gentleness!

Our primary objective while on vacation should be to replenish our strength so that we can return to our daily occupations refreshed and revitalized. For the Christian, traveling is not an end in itself, but a means to an end. Our entire lives, our entire strength belongs to God. Our desire should always be to use our strength in the service where God has placed us. Therefore we should refrain from those things that only amuse but do not refresh; we should avoid anything that destroys instead of rebuilds and strengthens. When this is left out of consideration, we may often be disappointed that the "vacation" did not have the effect we were hoping for.

Seeking Quietness

The greatest problem for people today is that in the clamor of the world they can no longer hear the voice of God. They cannot even hear the longing cries of their own hearts for the eternal. The Bible shows us repeatedly that only in quietness can we hear God calling us to acknowledge and worship Him. Far from being void or empty, this quietness is fulfilling and fruitful. The absence of external noise does not necessarily constitute quietness. There is often so much noise even within us! One way to the path of quietness is prioritization: we choose what is significant over what is not.

In Psalm 46 we read: “Be still, and know that I am God.” Recognizing God for who He is requires that any objection and rebellion against Him is quieted. Only such a quieting will permit a person to humbly bow before His maker. It is from such a “quiet place” that we first see the awesome, fulfilling salvation in Jesus Christ.

As the delicate flowers willingly unfold themselves and hold still in the sun, so should we, in stillness and joy, reach for God’s rays and let Him work on us. This should

be our constant prayer. For us to find this stillness before and in God, we need to set aside dedicated periods of time to seek God. Such a deliberate devotion to God helps to subdue the many voices seeking our attention.

The battle for quiet time is difficult and real. After all, the devil is an enemy of stillness and wants to ruin it for us. If you are a seeker of divine solitude, you will know this is true. Stillness in prayer often demands a quiet and still location. Many people today simply do not have a quiet place anymore where they can be alone with God.

We also have to deal with various external disruptions to quietness. More frustrating yet are internal disruptions. A songwriter states, “...that the soul may not dissolve in the idols of this world.” How hard it is today for some people to concentrate on prayer even for ten minutes! Don’t we all suffer from fleeting and wandering thoughts in our moments of stillness? Seeking quietness is a lifelong task!

All great things have their source in quietness. This stillness is where the secret sources of inner spiritual strength lie for us as well.

Are You Running a Spiritual Deficit?

Pastor Harms from Hermannsburg was telling a visitor how much work he had. The visitor then asked him: “But when do you have time for quiet? A soldier cannot continuously fire, he must reload his weapon. We cannot always give, we must also receive.”

It’s true, quiet time is essential. Satan is especially pleased that many Christians, including those who preach the gospel, take too little time for the required stillness. Nothing is more devastating for our spiritual life and effectiveness than the neglect of quiet times to be in communion with God and be immersed in His word.

How much complaining do we hear about unsuccessful battles with sin? Where do these complaints come from? Alas, people take no time for the quiet that is essential

for the inner being.

People today seem to have time for everything else, just not for quiet time. Oh, for more more quiet, more stillness! Oh, for more persistent prayer and more of God’s strength!

Let us take care that our spiritual bank stays balanced; that our deposits are equal to our debits. Let us become still before God and take time to read His word! Let us speak with and about people less, and more with God! Then He will speak to and through us. What strength and what blessing could flow from God’s people if each individual spent more quiet time before God in prayer and immersed in His word! “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength” (Isaiah 30:15).

We Need Rest

“Rest a while.” (Mark 6:31)

Summertime is for holidays and vacation. Our children are not the only ones who count down the months and weeks until the summer break. Most people today are overworked and plagued by anxiety and haste. They look forward to a time of rest, and we should be happy for anyone who receives this opportunity.

Whether or not such an opportunity is always used wisely is another question. Getting rid of anxiety is not as easy as taking off an article of clothing. Tense nerves take time to relax, and in general, people today have lost the ability to use time to just be still.

It should be obvious to us that our holidays should not be filled with new experiences and activities that will only exhaust us more. The distance we travel by car, bus, or plane does not determine the success of our vacations. The words of Jesus also apply to this situation: “Man shall not live by bread alone” (Matthew 4:4). We need not to deny ourselves a comfortable bed, a beautiful view, or a delicious meal. However, if during our holiday we do not nourish our inner selves, then we will still be at the same place spiritually as we were at the beginning of our vacation. We need to think about how much time we take each day to be still as we study the Bible and come to God in prayer. Because most of us are stressed by our professional lives, we need to remedy this problem during our days off. This takes deliberate planning; it will not just happen during vacation.

When we embark on quiet moments, let us consider the works of God in nature. A quiet walk or an afternoon rest gives us an opportunity to pour out our hearts to God and free ourselves of accumulated debris. If people find new strength in body, soul, and spirit, then a vacation has been successful.

However, a few weeks of vacation are not enough to last throughout the year. God already set aside

a day of rest during creation. It does not matter if this day of rest falls on a Sunday, Saturday, or Wednesday, but you must not deprive yourself of a Sabbath for your soul. We can only blame ourselves if we are enslaved by our electronics. Radio, television, social media, and other amusements cannot bring rest to our souls. Even our hymnal was not designed simply to be sung from. It contains songs that are to lead us into worship. There are still families today who spend time reading a chapter in the Bible each day after dinner. We would all do well to set aside ten minutes each day to do this.

Living right requires a proper rhythm. I recall reading the words: “To sharpen the scythe is not to waste time.” In the old days, only a foolish fellow would have thought that he could save time and work faster by not stopping to sharpen his tools. In reality, he would only lose time by not sharpening his tools. Is this wisdom really too complicated for us today? Our nerves will relax, our power of thought will be stronger, our ideas will be more focused, and our connection to other people will improve when we take time to become still before God.

Jesus said to His disciples, “Rest a while” (Mark 6:31). He wanted to teach them that being overly busy is not a sign of true discipleship. In his gospel, Luke records about half a dozen times that Jesus withdrew to spend time in quiet prayer. Do we need this time less than the very Son of God?

Kate Walter prays:

*Silence is power,
So make me silent,
Envelop me in Your will!
Worries and restlessness bring to rest.
Make me quiet to hear You speak.*

My Soul Thirsts for God

“As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?”

Psalm 42:1-2

Who among us would sit down and begin writing words like these? We ask ourselves what must have motivated the writer of these words to pour out the thoughts of his heart so graphically. What situation prompted such a hungering for God? Was this man in desperate straits? Verse 3 gives us some insight: “My tears have been my food day and night ...” He was in the throes of some great trial. He was fasting and praying. Obviously he was waiting for God’s help in a certain situation, and it seemed that God wasn’t answering. He must have testified that he was trusting in God for help, because people around him were taunting him scornfully: “Where is your God?” Again and again he responded by pouring out his pain and heartache to God, taking hold of his heavenly Helper by faith.

We can understand a person in a difficult situation reaching out and longing for an experience with God. We may have experienced something very similar in our own life. We cried out to God in despair. We repeatedly sought His face and His presence until, to our great relief, He answered and saved us. How we rejoiced in our God and Savior! But what has happened since then? Has our desire for God increased or has it returned to a “normal” state? Are we still thirsting for God?

What Causes Thirsting for God?

When we read these words of the Psalmist, we, as honest and sincere Christians, ask ourselves, “Does my hunger for God measure up to that standard? Do I thirst for God the way this man did, or the way I once did?” And then we acknowledge: “I really should apply myself more. I really should make some changes in my life so that I will thirst for God more.”

But hungering and thirsting is not something we work at to achieve. It is rather the response to a need. It is the

“effect” of a “cause and effect” relationship. We become hungry when our body needs the energy it derives from food. We become thirsty when our body needs to replenish its fluids. In like manner, thirsting for God is the result of a relationship with God, a love relationship with Jesus Christ.

In Psalm 34:8 David wrote: “Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good; Blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” He had obviously experienced a wonderful relationship with God, and now he was encouraging others to experience it also. His heart was full of his God and Savior, and he wanted nothing more than to serve Him and remain in His house for the rest of his life. He couldn’t help but love the Lord who had done so much for him and who was so wonderful in his eyes. Again and again he proclaims: “Oh, magnify the LORD with me, And let us exalt His name together” (Psalm 34:3). David’s soul couldn’t get enough of God; he longed for ever more of Him. Yes, his soul thirsted for God. In Psalm 63 he writes: “O God, You are my God; Early will I seek You; My soul thirsts for You; My flesh longs for You in a dry and thirsty land where there is no water.” The longing of David’s soul for God was greater than his desire for water in the middle of the desert!

Thirsting for God comes from the realization that nothing else but God can satisfy the craving of the human heart. People look for all sorts of things to distract, energize, and fulfill them. Mostly they follow the crowd around them who are looking for the same things in the world. But what about Christians? What do they look for when they are soul-weary, discouraged, and in need of rejuvenation? For example, when we take our vacation this summer, what will our goal and desire be? Will it be to get away from all our cares and responsibilities and experience the pleasures the world has to offer an affluent society? Will it be to lay down our duties in the kingdom of God for a



while in hope of being refreshed by a change of scenery? Or will there be a hunger and a thirst in our hearts to use this time to get closer to God, to submerge ourselves in His Word and to bask in His presence? A rest from our activities and a change of scenery can be very beneficial in this respect, but what will the focus of our time away be? Will our thirsting for God drive us closer to Him?

Once we realize that everything else in the world but God will leave our soul dissatisfied and once we have experienced the real fulfillment He gives, we will be spoiled for everything else. We will long for more and more of Him. We will get to the point where we cannot bear being without a constant renewing of His presence in our life. We will truly hunger and thirst for God!

What Hinders Thirsting for God?

Of course, Satan will try everything he can to prevent us from desiring God, and he will offer a plethora of counterfeit and diversionary measures to prevent us from doing so. He may encourage us to become embroiled in many good works and projects. He may show us what we're missing out on in life, the things that others are enjoying and that we just have to have also! He may use misunderstandings and hurts to disillusion us in our service of God. Then there are trials, troubles, disappointments, financial worries, sickness, and many other things that dishearten us to the point that we can't even seem to communicate with God anymore, let alone thirst for Him.

But lack of thirsting for God can come from another source also. When things have been going smoothly for a long time we can easily become complacent. God is blessing us and we don't have a particularly urgent reason to draw close to Him. It is a sad irony that the more God blesses His people with material things, the less they

hunger for Him! We just get used to His blessings and feel entitled to them. Our burning love for Him begins to diffuse into a broader, less intense, more comfortable and conforming everyday relationship. We still serve God and have no intention of ever stopping. We fit very well into the everyday ebb and flow of Christianity. But we have lost something precious! Our soul is no longer panting and thirsting for the living God. We are no longer desperate to "appear before God", to prevail until we "pray through" into His very presence!

When a Soul Thirsts for God

But what a difference when we do prevail, when our thirst for God becomes so great that we cannot stand to live without experiencing Him in a wonderful way. When we become filled with His presence and are overwhelmed by His glory! When we become "addicted" to experiencing God! When our soul's longing and desire for God doesn't wane and fade, but becomes greater and greater as the years go by!

This is the relationship God desires with you. Just as a young man and a young woman who have fallen in love only want to be with one another and share their thoughts and dreams every moment of their lives, so God desires to share your life. He loves you and wants you to desire Him above everything else. Ask Him to fill you with that longing for Him, so that you, too, can say: "My souls thirsts for God, for the living God." What blessings will flow! Rivers of living water will flow from your life and bear fruit for eternity. The result will be truly beautiful to behold, and you will count yourself among the richest people on earth!

Ron Taron

Message in a Dream

Although most dreams ultimately have no real meaning, we do have dreams from time to time that can provide us with valuable motivation.

Solomon says that dreams come “through much activity” (Ecclesiastes 5:3). Our night thoughts are like our day thoughts, except that our faculties being partly asleep, our dreams usually lack the coherence and the reasonableness of our waking thoughts. God does occasionally, at rare intervals, operate upon men’s minds to cause them to dream something, but even the prophets with whom He communicated like this more than with ordinary men received such messages only now and then, and their other dreams had no significance.

Many people are always trying to find some hidden meaning in their dreams. If they have some peculiar dream, they try to interpret it or to get somebody else to do so. Let’s remember that God is reasonable. He knows that we can better comprehend when we are awake than when we are asleep; so He usually communicates with us during our waking hours. We sometimes have very striking dreams, but this does not signify that the Lord originated them. I have known people to act very unwisely as the result of following dreams. One night a preacher, who was holding a series of meetings, dreamed of having a terrible fight with a great snake. When he awoke, he felt that surely the Lord was trying to show him something. He interpreted the dream to mean that somebody in the congregation was represented by that snake. The next day he told his dream in the meeting and said that he thought he knew who the snake was. He began acting upon his supposition. The result was that at least two people in the congregation fell away from their relationship with God, and the whole church was thrown into confusion.

A dream is a dream, and possibly not more than one in ten thousand come from God. There are times, however, when we may learn good lessons from our dream thoughts as well as from our waking thoughts. I once

had such a dream, and the lesson I derived from it has been good for my soul. I dreamed that I stood beside a gigantic wild rosebush. In my hand I held one of the fragrant flowers. I looked at it and drank in its rich perfume. But I saw a great number of flowers, and I desired more than the one. So I held it in my left hand and began to reach up for others. They were very high, so I pressed against the outer limbs and stretched to my utmost. But they were too high; I could not get them. I stepped back from the bush. As I did so, my gaze fell upon the rose in my hand just in time to see its petals fall to the ground. In stretching for those beyond my reach I had ruined the one that was already mine. I gazed upon the empty stem in my hand and at the bruised petals upon the ground with a feeling of regret.

The scene changed. I sat at a desk with pencil and paper, and in my dream wrote these words: “If you have but one rose, enjoy it to the full. Do not let its perfume be wasted upon the empty air, and its beauty go unnoticed, while you spend your time in vain longing for the unattainable.” When I awoke I wrote down the words that I had written in my dream, and through the years they have preached to me many a sermon. How natural it is for us to forget what we have while we look at others whom we think to be more fortunate! We look at the blessings that others enjoy and forget to be thankful for our own. We look at others’ possessions, and because they are greater than ours, we fail to appreciate what we have. Our position in life may be very humble, but however humble, our life is full of blessings if we but have eyes to see them.

When I had this dream, my health was gone, and I lay alone in my bed throughout the long hours of the day while my wife was away working for our support. My eyes were weak, so I could read only very little. We had two rooms in a house with another family. All around us were



*Be
thankful
in all
things*

1 THESSALONIANS 5:18

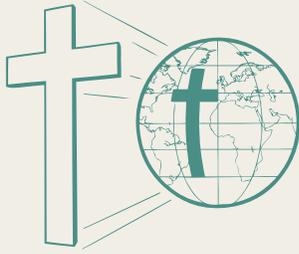
people with health and plenty. I could easily realize the difference between my situation and theirs. Sometimes I would look out of the window and see people passing, strong and vigorous and carefree. I would hear the happy laughter and the sound of carefree voices, while I—well, there I lay suffering and alone. How easy it was to see their blessings! And in seeing theirs, how easy it was to forget my own!

But this dream came upon the morning of my birthday; and as I lay there thinking it over, I determined that in the coming year I would not let my one rose be spoiled because I was reaching for that which was beyond my reach. I decided to enjoy my own blessings. If others were more blessed than I, should I not rejoice in the fact? Longing to be like them would not make me so. If I had only little to enjoy, I would enjoy that little. So I began to look at my blessings, and as I looked them over I found them greater than I had supposed. I had many things to give comfort. I had food to satisfy my hunger. I had a home and clothing. I had the loving care of a faithful wife. I had kind friends who gave to me freely of their sympathy and who were ready to grant my every wish so far as it lay in their power. Better than all else, I had the peace of God in my heart. I began to realize that my state might be far worse.

The more I thought, the more I saw for which to be thankful. The more I considered my blessings, the more I appreciated them. And many a time since then have I looked out upon the passers-by or listened to their merriment, and have said to myself, “I would not exchange places with you; for I am saved; I have the treasure of God’s love; I have the presence of the Holy Spirit; I have the joys of salvation; I have a mansion in heaven.” I knew that most of the passers-by did not have these things, and so I was blessed more than they. What were health and

strength when put to a wrong use? What were temporal blessings that ministered only to selfishness? What were the joy and laughter that ignored God? What were the pleasures of sin, when they only laid up a harvest of sorrow? Ah no, I had no reason to envy them, for my blessings were greater and would not fade away like mist before the sin.

My brother, my sister, you may be happy in your own little corner if you will learn the lesson of enjoying what you have. Learn to be content with common things. Learn that the truest joy does not come from external things. It springs spontaneously from a contented heart. If God wills that you be situated as you are, will He not make you happy where you are? The Bible says, “Godliness with contentment is great gain...Having food and clothing let us be content” (1 Timothy 6:6-8). You may not have much of this world’s goods; you may not have many talents; your blessings may seem few; but remember my dream message: “If you have but one rose, enjoy it to the full.” If another has both hands filled, he may enjoy them less than you enjoy your one, unless you look with envious eyes. Sometimes a little perfume is sweeter than an abundance. Do not spend your days in vain longing. Do not despise what you have because it is not greater. Cultivate the habit of thankfulness and appreciation. Be glad for what you have. Be contented. Better your condition if you can, but do not spoil what you have in reaching for more. If you have but one talent, use it for the Lord and be thankful for it. Do not depreciate it because others have several talents. Use it and be content. Happiness consists not in the things we have, but in our appreciation and use of them. So enjoy your one rose. Drink in its sweet perfume; gaze upon its beautiful colors. Enjoy it to the full.



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Pathways to Joy

In every human heart lies a secret longing for a life filled with joy. From the beginning, our God created an amazing world in order for us to find enjoyment, delight, and pleasure in nature. Our hearts are filled with joy when we see the beauty of spring after a long winter. It is unfortunate that many people do not even notice the beauty around them. People place great value on having joy in their lives. It is something they truly want and desire. It can be compared to the attributes of the sun. The sun gives light and with this light we have growth, fruitfulness, and life. We would all rather enjoy the sunshine than continually live in the shade. So it is with joy. We are encouraged and heartened when joy fills our hearts. We would much rather have joy in our lives than be depressed and discouraged all the time. Let us continually thank our Creator for this beautiful world that He made for our enjoyment.

Aside from all the joy we receive from the beauty of nature, there are also many worldly pleasures that beckon us. There are so many varied interests, especially in worldly pleasures. People are constantly seeking joy in the things of this world. They spend great sums of money and undertake extensive trips in order to somehow fill that void in their hearts. Like an eagle who plummets to earth in order to catch his prey, the human heart seeks that elusive “something” that will bring them joy and happiness. People try every possible thing, seeking and hoping to find happiness, but true joy cannot be found in the world.

Most people have no idea how to find the way to true joy. There is a verse in a song that expresses this poignantly:

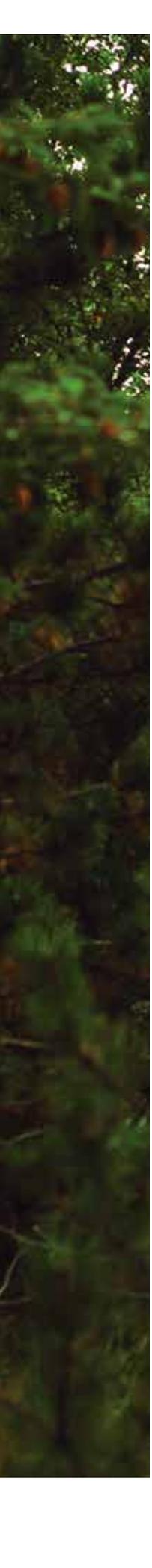
*They seek the things they cannot find,
In love, fortune, and fame,
But they return with heavy hearts,
Burdened deeply with sin.*

Another poet underlines this fact when he writes:

*The pleasures here on earth,
I saw vanish like foam,
They could do nothing for me,
Only your cross remained.*

There is a way that leads to true, everlasting joy. Jesus speaks of this joy in John 15:9-11: “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.” This speaks of a deep and very meaningful joy. It is a real and lasting joy of the heart! It has nothing to do with earthly wealth, but instead offers spiritual and heavenly riches. It is the joy of the pure and innocent heart. We can only attain this joy through Jesus Christ.

There are four things that lead us onto the path of true joy: love, obedience to God’s Word, righteousness, and peace. Those who do not comply with these conditions and ignore the Savior will never have a joy-filled heart. We will now look at these four ways in closer detail.



Jesus first reminded His disciples about the importance of love. He made it clear that real joy is intimately connected to love. It is the basic requirement, and at the same time the very foundation of joy. It is about real love and real joy from the heart. If there is a lack of understanding and love in a marriage, family, or community, there can be no real joy. It is the same in our relationship with God. Jesus therefore clearly said, “Abide in My love... that My joy may remain in you!” In our dealings with people we will experience this as well. Whenever we help our neighbor and show him love, joy will fill our hearts. The joy that we give to others usually comes back to us. On the other hand, if we treat others coldly, hurt them, even hate them, or have animosity toward them, joy will remain elusive.

Next, Jesus says, “Keep my commandments”. This is being obedient to God’s Word, and is the way to true joy! How wonderful when a child can freely, and without a guilty conscience, look into the face of his parents knowing that he has been obedient to their requests. Obedience can protect us from failure and emotional breakdown. Jesus reminded the disciples of His own personal obedience to His Father. His exact words in John 15:10 are: “If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” Obedience is being willing to submit to authority. If we willingly submit with a humble and loving heart, joy will follow. If we obey grudgingly and with indignation, we will find no joy. Obedience that flows out of a loving heart will bring true joy and blessings. A child will experience this with his parents, as will every true Christian working in God’s service.

Another way to joy is through righteousness or justice. We live in a world full of unrighteousness and injustice. Wherever we look we see deception, fraud, lies, vulgarity, people trying to outsmart each other, etc. Injustice of any kind only leads to scandal, discord, and strife. Injustices will never come out of a heart of love, and they make joy an impossibility. Sadly the time in which we live is largely joyless! However, righteousness results in affection, respect, trust, joy, and connection with one another. The Bible states, “Righteousness exalts a nation” (Proverbs 14:34). It also exalts us. Being righteous makes a person well-liked and respected, gives them a good reputation, and allows them to live a peaceful life. The path of righteousness is so rewarding because it makes us happy and gives us true joy.

The way of peace is very valuable and worthwhile. In Proverbs 12:20b we read, “But the counselors of peace have joy.” It is so wonderful when there is peace among people. However, having peace with God is even more valuable and rewarding. In Romans 5:1 it says, “Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is how we achieve peace and deep, lasting joy in our hearts. We find it at the foot of the cross. Through faith we experience forgiveness and reconciliation.

Dear soul, have you chosen and tried this path yet? Only in this manner will you find the true joy that lasts during this lifetime and for all eternity. Choose this path for yourself today. You will not regret it!



Divine Healing

How can God heal people?

In Jesus Christ we do not just have the promise of salvation of our souls, we also have the assurance of divine healing for the body! We read: “Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:4-5).

Jesus fulfilled this promise when He lived on earth. He healed people with fever (Matthew 8:14-17), paralysis (Mark 2:1-12), and leprosy (Luke 5:12-14). He healed the lame (John 5:5-9) and the blind (Mark 10:46-52). He even cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). This is a very small selection of Scripture passages where we can see the healing power of God. During His years of ministry, Jesus healed so many people that the Scripture cannot contain their names: “Wherever He entered, into villages, cities, or the country, they laid the sick in the marketplaces, and begged Him that they might just touch the hem of His garment. And as many as touched Him were made well” (Mark 6:56).

But Jesus was not the only one that healed. He also gave this power to His disciples. “Then He called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. He sent them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick” (Luke 9:1-2). The disciples retained this power even after Jesus ascended to heaven. We read in the Acts of the Apostles: “And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, so that they brought the sick out into the streets and laid them on beds and couches, that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might fall on some of them. Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed” (Acts 5:14-16).

We read in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10 that this power did not stop with the end of the apostolic era. The gifts of the Spirit are listed here, and among those we find the gift of healing.

We also know about divine healing from the testimonies of the saints in history and in our time today.

But what exactly is Divine Healing? In order to answer this

question, we need to take a step back and look at diseases and their sources. We will find that they have three root causes. Whatever the cause, we may say without hesitation that Almighty God can cure any disease!

1. Natural Causes: These include illnesses that come with age, injuries, or viral diseases. These diseases can usually be easily diagnosed by modern medicine. They may be treated and sometimes cured by the body’s defense mechanisms or the use of natural or chemical agents.

2. Demonic Causes: Please read Luke 13:10-17 and pay particular attention to the 11th and 16th verses. Dark powers can afflict people with illnesses. Conventional medicine is helpless in such cases. Doctors are at a loss when they diagnose these, and treatment usually has no effect. By using occultic methods, such diseases may sometimes be cured. These evil forces even have the ability to cure some diseases with a natural origin. However, the healing of the body by the forces of evil has a high price: the soul.

3. Divine Causes: God too can lay us up with illnesses and disabilities. Please read John 9:1-4. No people or dark forces can accomplish anything against these diseases. Only God can cure them. And He can also heal every disease with a demonic or natural cause.

Divine healing is a supernatural process. It is a miracle that has neither scientific nor psychological explanation. In contrast to most medicinal methods of treatment, God does not treat the symptoms, but miraculously cures the cause of the disease. For example, a person who is born blind cannot be cured by modern medicine. But just as God can supernaturally open our blind spiritual eyes, so He can by divine intervention cause the physically blind to see.

As children of God, we can be assured that even today the Lord wants to manifest Himself through divine healing: “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16:17-18).



Threatened by Solitude

*Why do some people find it difficult to be alone with themselves?
Why do they find solitude so threatening?*

Many people are seeking to escape from themselves. They simply cannot bear to be alone. They are bored to death on a Sunday when there is nothing to do. They cannot possibly sit on a porch bench in the twilight. They know nothing of listening to the voices of nature when the day is done, when the evening star appears, the birds sing their final songs, and the wind whispers through the woods and blows over the fields.

These people make themselves unnecessarily busy in the evening, pursuing different distractions. They cannot be alone, be silent, or look the deep questions of life soberly in the eye.

And yet, a sober time of reflection would be the best cure for their nervous over-stimulation. He who is never inwardly quiet impoverishes himself. He loses sight of life's true values and purpose. He is often gripped with fear of the future. He will then try to forget them by engaging in excessive pleasures. Thus, he squanders his energies and loses any remaining joy in life as well as the courage needed to fulfill his daily duties. Shunning quiet and self-reflection

makes the soul sick and full of unrest.

This reflex bolting from anything quiet is a modern epidemic. The constant preoccupation that many seek is symptomatic of the phobia against quietness. With no internal anchor, no spiritual port for docking, people run for shelter within the anonymous noise of the masses. And yet it is crucial for the health of our soul that we have the courage to come to terms with ourselves.

The greatest reason a person flees from himself is because he is afraid of God. Whoever is on the run from God cannot bear quietness. Aloneness terrifies him. He cannot bear to think honestly about himself, to have his inner self scrutinized. Everywhere he looks he sees only questions and darkness that fill him with fear. Thus, busyness and noise provide a way of escape. However, he who has found God and has been reconciled to Him carries His peace in his heart – he can experience priceless hours of blessings in the quiet. He does not need to flee from himself because he has found his home with God.

“Be still, and know that I am God” (Psalm 46: 10).

SERIES: CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

III OMNISCIENCE

IV HOLINESS

V LOVE

GOD IS LOVE

“And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.” (John 4:16)

What an incredible truth: God is Love! It is not just something He does, but actually describes who He is! If we grasp this truth, it will have a transforming effect on our life! Our belief and concept of who God is and what He is like directly determines what our spiritual walk is like – not just what we do, but especially how and why we do what we do – the motivation for our actions toward God. How important then that our concept of God is based not on our imagination, but entirely on the truth of God’s word! If someone believes that God is a distant Being that cares little about us on a personal level, that will surely be evident in the lack of a relationship with God. Likewise, if someone believes God is a harsh and critical Ruler, just waiting for us to make a mistake, that person’s response to God will be actions motivated only by fear, rather than love or gratitude. However, if through God’s Spirit we understand that God is love, and that all He does is done in love, our response will be to love Him in return – to draw nearer to Him, to obey Him, to honor and worship Him.

This concern to properly comprehend God’s love is precisely what Paul had on his heart when he prayed for the Ephesian church. He described this prayer in his letter to the Ephesians, saying that he bowed his knees to the Father, asking that by the power of His Spirit He would work in their hearts so “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height – to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God” (Ephesians 3:17-19). What did Paul believe would bring this fullness to their spiritual life? Grasping by faith the greatness of God’s love.

When we study the Bible, from beginning to end we see God’s immense love coming through again and again in all that He does. We see it in the actions of the Father, as well as in all that Jesus does, and all that the Holy Spirit does. God loves us, not because of anything outside of Himself – there is nothing we have done or ever could do to earn this great love. In fact, what we have earned with our rebellion against God is the opposite of love – and yet God loves us, because it’s His nature. He always desires what’s best for us.

It is important to know that God’s love works in perfect harmony with all of His other attributes – His mercy, His grace, His patience, His faithfulness – but also His justice, His truth, and His perfect holiness. His great love means that He never deceives us or compromises the truth, never bends justice, never does anything out of impure motives. We must be careful not to limit His love with a shallow understanding of what love really is. Sometimes people make statements like: “A loving God would never allow us to go through so much suffering and permit so much evil.” Or, “A loving God would never punish people eternally.” Yet, we do not see things the way God sees them with His unlimited knowledge and wisdom, or understand with His infinite understanding – He is the eternal God who is perfectly righteous and holy, and His perfect plan and all of His actions are in harmony with His love.

This great love God has for us is displayed in His desire for a relationship with us, and in His longing for us to love Him in return. It is precisely this desire that led to God’s greatest demonstration of love ever: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16). Because of our sin, a relationship with the holy God was impossible without Him providing a way for us to

be cleansed and reconciled to Himself. So in a love greater than we can grasp, the Father sent His Son Jesus to this earth to become a man, live a perfect holy life, and die on the cross, taking on Himself all the sins of the world. We know Jesus rose again victorious over death, showing that the Father accepted His sacrifice, and that all we need to be redeemed has been provided for by the blood of Jesus. In His supreme love God is now drawing all to Himself through His Spirit, desiring that all would receive the gift of forgiveness and everlasting life. “The Lord has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; Therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you”

(Jeremiah 31:3) .

How are we to respond to that kind of love? John writes in his letter “We love Him because He first loved us”. (John 4:19) We know the greatest commandment is: “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30). Let us pray, as Paul did, that God would help us comprehend how great the love of God is, so that our entire life would become an act of genuine worship motivated by love for God.

Ryan Henkelmann
Edmonton, AB

QUESTION ABOUT BAPTISM

“Hello Brother... how are you?”

When we had baptism last Sunday, I badly wanted to be one of those being baptized, but I had the feeling that I was not ready for this. I also had the feeling that I don't yet understand what baptism all encompasses. What do we need baptism for? Our soul is not saved through it. I know that Jesus wanted it. He has commanded us to be baptized, but why? We don't need to be baptized to get into Heaven, do we? We aren't lost if we aren't baptized. I mean, if we love Jesus, have accepted Him, and confessed our sins, then we aren't lost if we are just missing baptism, are we? I mean, I understand it, but I also don't understand it! Many thanks!”
(Email excerpt, used by permission)

Jesus is hanging on the cross. One of those being crucified with Him turns to Jesus and says: “Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Jesus promises him that he will be in with Him in Paradise. Not baptized, yet still saved, one could say. He didn't have the opportunity to be baptized. The saving element is always the redeeming faith in Jesus. Paul answered the prison officer's question of being saved as follows: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household” (Acts 16:31). Thus we can be saved through faith, even when we are all alone. We are not dependent on another person, which is the case with baptism.

Are we lost if we are not baptized? In cases like the thief on the cross one is not lost. However, we can't claim this all the time, because baptism still remains a commandment of God, and should be held by us. We should not risk obtaining salvation in the manner of the thief on the cross, putting the matter off until only moments before death. If we are true believers, the Lord expects us to be baptized.

At some point, if we don't care, or decline to be baptized, this conduct becomes disobedience to the commandment of God. Do disobedient people go to heaven? No. In plain English: We can get to heaven without being baptized, and we can also be excluded from heaven by not being baptized. The answer is dependent on our attitude. What reason could someone who is born-again give for not being willing to be baptized?

God has commanded baptism so that the radical inner transformation of man can be represented through a symbol. We read in the Bible that God gives man a new heart when he is born again (Ezekiel 36:26-27). Paul describes the experience like this: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2. Corinthians 5:17).

When the believer steps into the baptismal font and is baptized, we describe this as “being buried”. It is common knowledge that only the dead are buried. Paul writes, figuratively speaking, in Colossians 3:3: “For you died...” So it is. The believer has died to the old life, the world, and sin. As a result he needs to be buried, which occurs during baptism. However, the person being baptized does not remain under water, but comes out of the water, which represents the new, completely changed life. The entire process is described in Romans 6:1-4. Paul also touches on this in Colossians 3:1: “If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above...”

Baptism is an outward manifestation of an inward experience. Whoever has experienced this can proclaim it to all people with joy. And only such a person should be baptized.

Harry Semenjuk,
Edmonton, AB

The Power of Love

Love speaks more powerfully through actions than words.

D. L. Moody, the famous American evangelist (1837-1899), received a letter one day containing the following words: “Sir Moody, could you come to us in the prison at 10 tomorrow morning? A prisoner is being released who has no one to meet him. Maybe you can do something for him. But we will warn you now already that his appearance is intimidating. Even the other prisoners want nothing to do with him.”

Moody was immediately ready to accept this stranger and was at the prison the next morning. The prisoner was punctually released at 10 o'clock. Moody had an immediate compassion for the man. He went to him, slapped him on the shoulder and said kindly, “Dear friend, how is it going?” The man roughly replied, “Nonsense, I have no friends, and you are certainly not my friend!”

“And yet you are my friend,” assured Moody, “and I will prove it. Look, you have had breakfast, but where will you eat lunch? Here is a dollar for lunch and for dinner you are invited to my house. My wife will gladly welcome you. Here is my address.” The man took the dollar but did not promise to come in the evening. After Moody repeated his invitation one more time, the two men separated.

Evening came. The table was prepared with a spot for the stranger. It was prepared neatly and invitingly, as one would do for a beloved guest. In a small adjoining room there was water and a towel, a brush and a comb. When all the preparations were ready, the doorbell rang. The released convict had actually come!

Moody himself went to the door to accept his solitary guest. First he led him to the small bedroom. “You have no home. Here is everything that you need for now. Make yourself ready and then you can come and eat.” Moody prayed at the table as he always did and then proceeded to make the situation as easy and relaxed as possible for the man.

When the food was done, Moody’s little daughter asked, “Papa, may I sit on your lap now?”

“Absolutely,” said her father and took the child on his lap. He then whispered something into her ear. A quiet look of surprise filled her face, but then she slid down from her father’s lap and tentatively walked to the stranger. Somewhat fearfully she stretched out her hand to him, but then – suddenly – she threw her little arms around the stranger’s neck and gave him a kiss.

The man sat there for a moment in shock, and then he put his hands in front of his face, bent his head to the table and started to weep. Through the love that Moody had showed this man, and through the spontaneous trust of a child, the defiant wall of opposition crumbled in a hardened sinner’s heart. He experienced the power of Jesus’ salvation and became as the Bible says, “a new creation.” This man became one of Moody’s helpers who proclaimed the gospel on streets and corners in a very persuasive way.

This story shows us the power of love. It is not, however, human love that holds such power, but rather the love of Jesus, as the apostle Paul describes in the “Love Chapter” (1 Corinthians 13).

True Friends

After David's victory over Goliath, King Saul called David into his presence to talk with him. (You probably know this story, but if you don't you can read it in 1 Samuel 17.) Through this conversation, King Saul's son Jonathan found out that David was only a simple shepherd boy from Bethlehem, and not a trained soldier at all. Jonathan didn't look down on David because of this; instead, he chose to be David's friend. Why? They had a lot in common. They both loved God and the people of Israel, and they both had learned to listen to God and trust Him in tough situations. Jonathan had won a spiritual battle not too long before (1 Samuel 14:1-22). A friendship was forged between the two, and Jonathan gave David his own armor and coat as a symbol of this friendship (1 Samuel 18:1-4).

David and Jonathan's friendship was special. It was stronger than all the problems they had. When King Saul wanted to kill David so that he wouldn't lose the throne, Jonathan risked his life to help David flee from his father. Later, when David was hiding out in the desert, Jonathan searched for his friend to encourage him. He was not jealous of David's popularity, even though he knew that God would make David the next king. He knew that he, Jonathan, would take second place to his friend, and he was okay with that (1 Samuel 23:16-17).

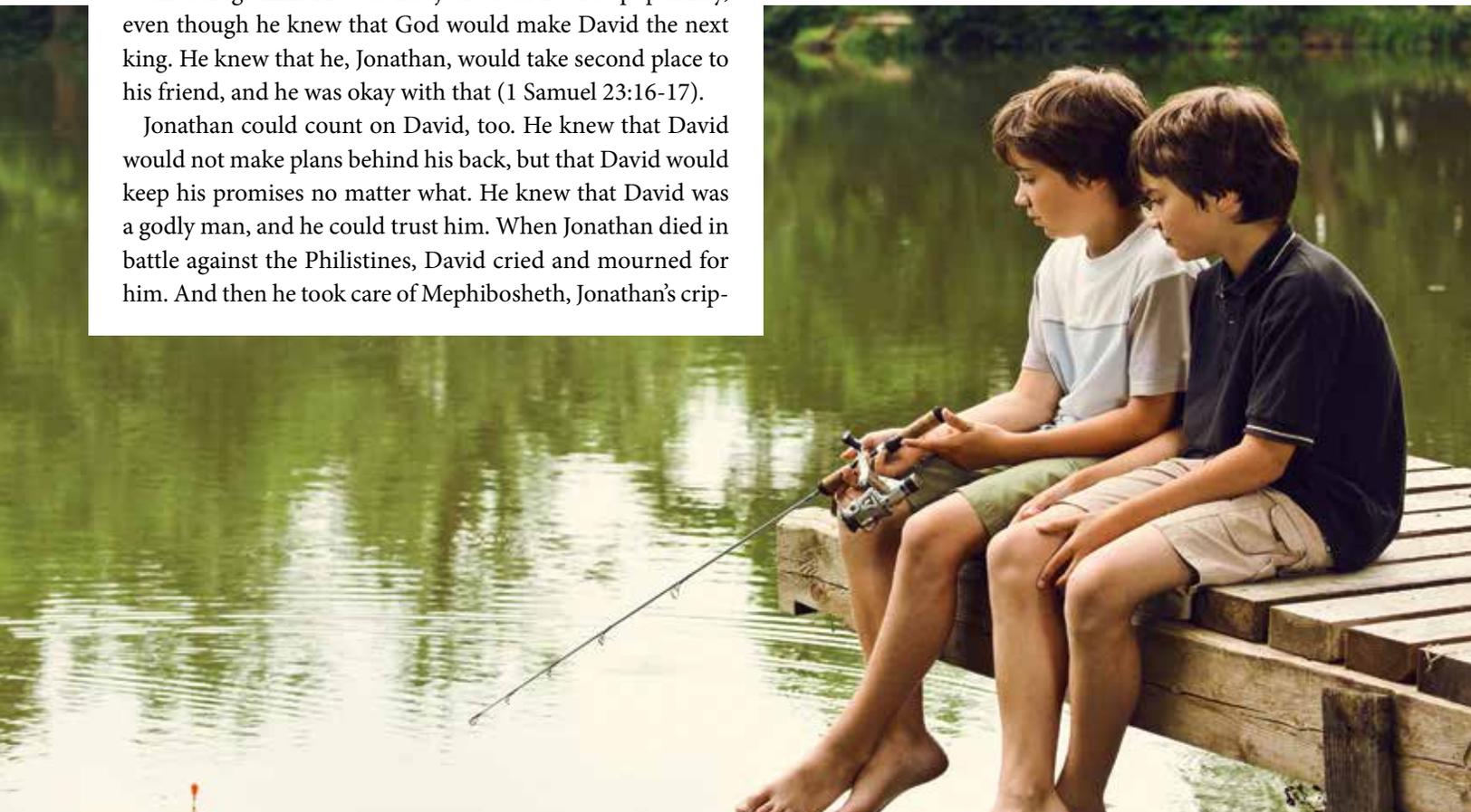
Jonathan could count on David, too. He knew that David would not make plans behind his back, but that David would keep his promises no matter what. He knew that David was a godly man, and he could trust him. When Jonathan died in battle against the Philistines, David cried and mourned for him. And then he took care of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's crippled

son, and invited him to eat at the table just as though he was family. This was pretty special in a time when most kings killed anyone who might be a threat to their throne.

Jonathan and David's friendship is what a true friendship looks like. Anyone who is blessed with a friendship like this can be sure that God has given him a special gift. But the best thing that God gave us is his own Son, Jesus, who wants to be our friend – and your friend. That's why He came to earth and died on the cross, and rose again. "Greater love has no one than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13).

Please take time to read the Scriptures listed above, and think about these questions:

- *Are you a good friend?*
- *Can you say that your friends are good friends?*
- *What kind of influence do you and your friends have on one another?*
- *How well do you know Jesus, the best friend of all?*



Mid-day Refreshment

“She...strengthens her arms” and “...her lamp does not go out by night.” (Proverbs 31:17-18)

Nowadays we find a surprising number of people affected by various physical and psychological burdens. Even many mothers are affected. There is the mother whose child does not sleep through the night, and she wakes up exhausted in the morning. Another seeks to meet the needs of ill or allergy-suffering family members both day and night. Or consider the plight of the mother whose difficult, head-strong teenager cannot be led in the right, pure way. Or the woman who works part, or even full-time, alongside the housework she does. Then there is the wife who seeks to satisfy the expectations of a demanding husband. Or assist her friend, who may be trying to sustain herself with limited financial resources. Although this unfinished list could go on, let us turn our attention to what the apostle said, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

In fact, prayer and the time-tested Book of books are the most effective and appropriate means to cope with the variety of stress in our modern time. Our text expresses it beautifully, “She...strengthens her arms...and...her lamp does not go out by night.” She strengthens her arms by prayer, and the Word of God is the light for her feet. These are two of the many characteristics that are given to us in Proverbs 31 regarding the virtuous woman. The modern technologies of today seem to offer unlimited possibilities. Yet we are in danger of being distracted from using these effective spiritual weapons, and thereby losing their protection and impact. The great flood of information focuses our attention on investigating, seeing, hearing, and learning - until our senses are completely overwhelmed. Where do we find the time to dwell in intimate communion with the Father in heaven? Where do we find time to pray about the joys, sorrows, and burdens that have been heaped together? How can we reach our Savior in prayer and see Him when so many layers have accumulated? Some dear mothers

and homemakers then experience what it says in the song: “Oh, what peace we often forfeit, oh, what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!” Granted, there are many valuable things you can see, hear, and learn from. But all these do not replace the living Word which nourishes your soul with a food that leaves you totally satisfied.

It was said that a lady who was suffering with mental health issues complained to a famous doctor about her plight. She could not work, she could not eat. Often she felt like she would lose her mind. The doctor asked a few questions and then gave her this advice, “You need to read your Bible more.” The woman was completely astonished - and at the same time deeply offended. However, the doctor was not deterred, and simply repeated, “You must read your Bible more - and in a few weeks, come back!” The woman left, but on the way home she admitted, “Yes, it's true - too many earthly troubles - too little prayer - too little Bible reading.” Once at home, she immediately began to follow his advice, and it did not take long for her to recognize the value of what she received from the Bible, from prayer, and from God her Savior. (All Bible readers will not find this surprising.) Four weeks later the woman returned to the doctor. He only had to look at her to notice the great change in her. - “I see that you are an obedient patient,” he said. “Should I still prescribe something else?” - “Oh no, I feel transformed. But how did you know just what was lacking in me?” The doctor gestured to the Bible open on his desk and solemnly replied, “If I did not read from this book every day, then I would soon have no skills or strength! ... As for you, I easily recognized what was missing to give you the inner peace and strength from above that you needed, hence my advice.” - “But I almost did not follow it,” replied the lady. The doctor smiled and said, “Yes, unfortunately most are not interested in this prescription, but I know

hundreds of cases in which it would work miracles!”

It is true and sometimes inevitable that we fall into times of stress where our responsibilities and duties threaten to crush us, despite a close relationship with the Lord. How beneficial it is if we then find guidance in the Word of God to help carry us through, and when we understand what it means to wear “strength and honor” (Proverbs 31:25). Strength to endure all things, to believe all things, to hope all things, to bear all things. This will bring a quiet inner beauty which pleases our neighbors.

Have you ever considered that it is not God's will to put more into our day than will fit?

It also helps if we put breaks in our routines for relaxation. What a blessing, if we pay attention to those things that make us “rejoice in time to come” (verse 25) and that allow us to “[gird ourselves] with strength” (verse 17). It really pays to fill the mind with grateful thoughts and prayers for our neighbor. How amazed we will be when circumstances or the other person suddenly change so that we feel joy instead of stress. In this way, joy in the Lord can be our strength. Among other things, we can do our husband “good” (verse 12), or think of others and “[extend our] hand to the poor” by “[reaching] out [our] hands to the needy” (verse 20). A husband appreciates the time his wife takes for him and her desire to do him good. Serving our neighbor selflessly always brings blessings and joy.

Let us not forget that God's Word is not out of date, even if educational methods and philosophies are subject to constant change. If intimate communion with our Lord Jesus always has the highest priority, the storms of life may shake us, but at the same time carry us forward with greater strength.

Susie Schulz,
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Coping with Stress

Why do people react so differently when life presents hassles or major events? The answer to this question is not found in a comparison of circumstances. Rather, we must look at a person's attitude towards God, himself, and his environment.

Many people I meet each week are truly stressed out. I am convinced that the time in which we live is more tumultuous than any generation before us. From the constant low voltage stress of everyday living, to the occasional unavoidable crisis, you and I live in a stressful culture. The constant crush of demands on every side has the potential of robbing us of our peace, joy, and energy. All of which leads to horrible consequences – emotional breakdowns, tension in our relationships, physical ailments, etc.

“Be anxious (stressed) for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”. (Philippians 4:6-7)

There is a critical truth in this passage. That truth is this: God has designed prayer as a stress reliever for your life. God wants us to understand that prayer is not just about asking Him for things, but to unburden our hearts before Him. In fact, you will notice in these verses that there is no promise to answer your requests (though it is certainly implied), but there is a promise to grant you peace - His all-powerful peace - if you will talk to Him about your problems.

Individuals in stressful positions often do not let people know what really goes on in their own hearts. They struggle and are reluctant to reveal their struggles. Some feel that if they are open and transparent, people will misunderstand or think that they are weak. In a perfect world, these individuals would handle the difficulties and peculiar pressures in the right way. In reality, though, not all do. Some fail to cope and eventually burn out.

Burnout reveals itself in several ways. In coping with the stress, some people have become reclusive and withdrawn. They stay to themselves rather than associate with people as they should. We are to trust His Word as

our ultimate guide to a stress-reduced life. David says, “I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4). David knew that by seeking the Lord and sharing his troubles with Him that perhaps he would find favor with Him. The Lord in turn answered him and calmed him down.

Six Behaviors to Cope with Stress:

How does a person in a stressful position deal with the stress without giving up or burning out? While there is nothing that can remove all the stress from your life, there are some ways you can lessen the wear and tear and better cope with the calling.

1. Guard, cherish, and cultivate your personal relationship with God.

Because of the solitary nature of many stressful positions, God must be our refuge. David, during a time of great stress, encouraged himself in the Lord his God. Private prayer and devotional reading provide a cooling rain in the heat of the battle.

2. Keep short accounts with God and with men.

Unsettled conflicts and undone jobs add immeasurable weight to an already heavy burden. Most people detest confrontation. They prefer to ignore problems and hope that they will go away. Solving your own problems biblically should be a primary focus. Part of the moral authority to be a leader comes from modeling biblical problem-solving before a sometimes skeptical audience. The alternative is stress, guilt, and the realization that there are conflicts left unsettled between you and the God you want to serve.

3. Organize your time.

Learn to delegate responsibilities to others. A leader cannot do everything himself. Delegation frees the

leader from unnecessary tasks while involving the membership in meaningful service. Work hard at accomplishing the tasks that you alone can do, and delegate the rest. Learn to say no to activities that are not high priority.

4. Discipline your thought life.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You” (Isaiah 26:3). The mind is a battleground for every Christian. The mind’s dwelling on the wrong things will be a person’s downfall if he doesn’t deal with it. God provided us the ability to control our minds. Lustful thoughts, worry, anger, and doubts can eat away our stability and strength.

5. Nourish your marriage relationship and cherish your wife.

In Genesis 2:18, God said, “It is not good that man should be alone.” While in many ways Adam was perfect, God had left incompleteness in his life. That large hole was to be filled by a woman, also of God’s design. This companion and helper completed Adam for the job God had for him to do.

6. Take time away from your work.

There will always be something else that needs to be done. Even our Lord saw the need to go away to a quiet place to renew Himself. A day off each week pays great dividends. Spend time with your family. Go fishing. Play golf. A change of routine can reduce stress and clear the mind for more creative thinking.

Let’s talk about our expectations and how they affect our stress levels. Unrealistic expectations cause incredible stress. Adjusting expectations from unrealistic to realistic can produce a sense of contentment and peace. Here are some realistic expectations:

1. Expect Differences

People are different. They have different likes and

dislikes. They will see the world in different ways. They will problem-solve differently. This is reality. Differences will exist, and sometimes they will cause conflict.

2. Expect Conflict

Conflict is normal. It does happen. It’s a natural part of people’s lives. The important thing to do is learn to handle conflict well. When you handle it well, it can actually deepen friendships.

3. Expect Others to Fail

He/she is human. Humans make mistakes. They aren’t perfect. When you expect others to fail and make mistakes, you are better prepared to respond to their failures with grace and forgiveness.

4. Expect to Share Your Expectations

Others are not mind readers. They may not feel the same way you do. They may not think the same way you do. They might not make decisions or process hardship the same way you do. If you desire something from others, ask. With words. That conversation will either help you get your needs met or help you see that your expectations are out of line.

Unrealistic expectations are preconceived resentments. They begin a downward spiral that is unhealthy for relationships. Unmet expectations turn into resentments, which turn into bitterness that turns into anger, and ultimately becomes conflict that could have actually been avoided if you had internally moved from unrealistic expectations to realistic ones.

Let me offer a final encouraging invitation our Lord Jesus makes: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). We need this encouragement! Let’s start and finish each day by meeting with our Savior, telling Him all of our problems, and trusting that He will help us in every time of need.

George Sippert
Swartz Creek, MI

Blessed by Fellow Laborers

God did not send the apostle Paul into the mission field to labor by himself. He placed invaluable helpers with him as co-laborers for the gospel.

On his second missionary journey, Paul traveled from Athens to Corinth. He was in this great port city for the first time. But very quickly the apostle found a point of reference. He met a certain Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla.

Who were these two? Aquila was a Jew born in Pontus, in the northern part of Asia Minor. He went to Rome, the capital of Italy, where he met Priscilla and married her. Some Bible scholars believe that Priscilla was born in Rome and came from a rich family. Both were likely well-educated.

Then, as it often seems to happen, life took a tragic turn. They had to leave their house, home, friends, and perhaps even opportunities for financial success. The emperor Claudius had expelled all Jews from Rome. However, sometimes a loss for God's children is actually a gain. How was it with Joseph when he was sold by his brothers and had to leave his father and home? We often do not see the purpose of God's leading while we are in the situation, but later we can say, "He has done all things well!"

So it was with Aquila and Priscilla. Their move was clearly God's leading! Paul found a friendly reception in their home. In addition, the apostle and Aquila had the same trade: both were tent-makers, and Paul could immediately work with him.

What a blessing this servant of God brought into the home of Priscilla and Aquila. The Savior had promised His disciples, "and when you go into a household, greet it. If the household is worthy, let your peace come upon it" (Matthew 10:12-13). We can easily assume that Paul was a great blessing and shared God's peace with this hospitable couple during times of devotion and prayers. Aquila and Priscilla must have listened closely to his messages, for we read that Paul "reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks [...] that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:4-5).

Dear reader, can you imagine the home of Aquila and Priscilla? Paul was later still joined by his coworkers, Silas and Timothy. How much extra work and effort was required of this hospitable family, and especially of Priscilla. It was not just for a day or two, no, we read, "he (Paul) continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God

among them" (Acts 18:11). What a loyal and self-sacrificing service this couple provided!

From Corinth to Ephesus

On his second missionary journey Paul took his leave from the believers in Corinth and traveled by ship with the brethren to Ephesus. Surprisingly, Priscilla and Aquila left their home and place of residence and joined him in Ephesus.

After a short time, the apostle Paul left for the festival in Jerusalem, while Aquila and Priscilla remained in Ephesus. A special task awaited them there. Both were now firmly established in Scripture and doctrine. When, after some time, a Jew named Apollos showed up in Ephesus and began to preach in the school, God had an important work for the couple.

Apollos was a brilliant, capable preacher and an expert in Old Testament writings. Yet he only knew the baptism of John the Baptist who had prophesied and announced the coming of the Messiah, the Savior of all people. A short verse in the Word of God tells us that, "when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately" (Acts 18:26). Again we see the wonderful fact that hearts and doors were open! The couple invited Apollos. We do not read how often they did that. Undoubtedly, they will have clearly explained the Word of God, with caution and wisdom, to this eloquent preacher. We can imagine how Aquila and Priscilla pleaded to God for the Holy Spirit to bless their efforts! We know Apollos accepted this additional instruction and from then on preached the Gospel even more decisively and clearly, "for he vigorously refuted the Jews publicly, showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ" (Acts 18:28).

What valuable workers Aquila and Priscilla were in the kingdom of God! I have often wished and prayed that the Savior would provide such couples in every place and in every congregation!

Aquila and Priscilla in Rome

They had left Rome in the early 50s during the time of

the emperor Claudius, who reigned from 41-54 AD. Aquila and Priscilla returned to Rome while emperor Nero reigned in the capital (54-68 AD).

In his letter to the Romans, Paul revealed his desire to come to Rome to proclaim the Gospel and from there travel on to Spain, according to the Lord's grace. At the end of this letter we read, "Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles" (Romans 16:3-4).

Here we see that Priscilla and Aquila were given the same testimony as were Barnabas and Paul in the letter from the Apostolic Council in Jerusalem, "[...] our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Acts 15:25-26). Unfortunately, nothing else is reported about how this couple risked their lives. But eternity will reveal what they accomplished.

Back again in Ephesus

Philippians and the second letter to Timothy share the final news of the apostle Paul. At this point he had been in Rome for several years. The wicked emperor Nero ruled in Italy and hated Christians. Once again, Aquila and Priscilla left their home. Paul writes, most likely in the years 65/66

AD, "for I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6). And again in verse 16, "at my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them." Yet at the end of his life he once more mentions the couple saying, "greet Prisca and Aquila, and the household of Onesiphorus" (2 Timothy 4:19).

Finally, I would like to point out that the husband is mentioned first in three of the six reports regarding Aquila and Priscilla and the wife is also mentioned first three times. At that time, a woman's position was not as respected and valued as a man's. Priscilla must have been particularly useful in the work for the Savior, the things of the Lord, and the church of our God. Thus the apostle addresses her first in his last greeting with the special name "Prisca" which means "venerable".

Once again I want to repeat my desire and my prayer: Oh, that we would have such workers in all places! I am certain that if the Lord is gracious to you and me, and helps us to be faithful and worthy to enter into glory, we will meet Priscilla and Aquila there!

H. D. Nimz



Experiences with God

O, great God, who am I that you would remember me? These words are spoken to the glory of God from a heart that is filled with reverence, humility, and gratitude.

The Lord spoke to me when I was a youth, and I became a Christian. I promised Him many things, and was baptized according to His word. After an initial period of joy, I noticed that I wasn't making any progress, and soon lukewarmness had cooled my passion. I had not paid close enough attention to Jesus words, "Watch and pray!" Indeed, the enemy of the soul spares no effort to turn people back from Jesus. Sadly, he got me too. Not only had I paused in following the Lord, I had backslidden. The joy of my salvation vanished.

"Whoever is born of God does not sin," we read in 1 John 5:18. I could not claim this for myself. I remained in my backslidden state for 18 years. Yet, God graciously revived me from this state. His living Word touched me and brought me back onto the path toward heaven.

"Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow" (Isaiah 1:18). After I was born again, I felt a deep desire for God's will. And it is the will of God that we are sanctified. We are to present ourselves as a living sacrifice to Him. Indeed, it is the Spirit of God that gives witness to our spirit that we are children of God. And for this grace I want to praise God! He performed the miracle of redemption through Jesus upon me too! I desire to never disappoint Him again. Instead, I want to be a blessing to others for His glory.

Dear brothers and sisters, please pray for me that I would always obey God's will and remain faithful to Him.

Waldemar Reiman
Ludwigsburgh, Germany

David, king of Israel, sings wholeheartedly in Psalm 103:1-2, "Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

Who of us has not been spoken to or admonished by these words? The apostle John adds, "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). Often we have just eagerly and thoughtlessly received, without thanking the Giver of all good things.

I once saw a person who had no hands or feet, yet was thanking his Creator over and over for his many blessings and privileges. Those standing around him were wiping the tears from their faces. Why? They had surely received many more gifts of grace from the Lord than this handicapped man – and they had simply forgotten to thank the Lord for them.

Of all creation, humankind is most indebted towards our Lord and Savior. In John 1:29 we read, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" Indeed, He carried the whole world's debt of sin to the cross and atoned for it through His bitter death. Whoever does not value and accept this great cost incurs an unspeakable debt of gratitude upon himself. Therefore, bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not!

Added to this are all the many and great benefits with which the Lord blesses especially us in the Western world. A brother once testified that in ten years he had never been able to eat to satisfaction. Can we grasp that? To hunger for ten years?! Therefore, the next time we sit before a richly prepared

FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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www.christianunitypress.com

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH (USPS 9008) is published monthly by Christian Unity Press, 2211 N Lincoln Ave., PO Box 527, York, NE 68467-0527 USA. Periodicals postage paid at York, NE. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Unity Press, P O Box 527, York, NE 68467-0527, USA. Volume 12 Issue 7

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Printed in USA.

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is published free of charge. All expenses are covered by freewill donations.

table, let us not forget to give thanks! The Lord expects it of us. And if we have peace and rest in our country and remain protected from various catastrophes, then “Bless the Lord, O my soul!”

I would like to mention our health as a final undeserved benefit. I suffered with migraine headaches for about 25 years. I continually prayed for help and healing, and when the time of suffering was complete, the Lord healed me. As often as I think of this, my heart overflows with praise and thanks to God. God still hears prayers today! Therefore, no matter what situation we find ourselves in, let us thank and trust God, as it is written, “Now when they began to sing and to praise [...]” – the Lord intervened (2 Chronicles 20: 22).

*Let us thank more and not complain,
Praise when our courage fails;
Then we will experience again
God’s amazing miracles.*

J. Jakobsh
Vernon, BC

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Conventions 2014 Germany

Bible Study Conference for Youth: August 3-8

Canada

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

Fest Services in Edmonton: October 11-13

USA

Dedication services in Seminole, TX: August 30-31

Stillness

Child of God, be of good courage!
Claim God's peace, that is His will.
Boastful earthly pride must perish,
Let your heart be calm and still.

God's own Son through His atonement,
Gives that peace for which you sought.
Let your soul be still this moment,
Stillness leads you home to God.

Child of God, are you forsaken?
No one cares when you are stressed?
Jesus reaches down from heaven,
He will keep your heart at rest!

Max Meier