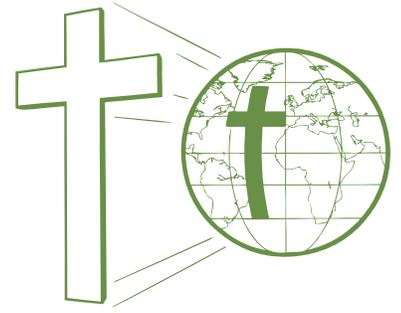


Foundation of Faith



The **Vine** and the
Branches

The Secret to
Fruitfulness

No More
Family Devotions?

A
Misunderstood
Letter

Conditions for
Divine Healing

"... I AM the
VINE ..."

September 2014

Content



CHRIST THE VINE

6 The Vine and the Branches

Jesus taught His disciples important lessons during their last hours together. Using this parable, He showed them how important it is for the branch to maintain a vital connection to the vine. What is the role of the branch? What can hurt it?

9 The Secret to Fruitfulness

Every person does something with their life. How can our life become rich through divine blessing?

10 The Song of God's Vineyard

The description of this vineyard is depressing. Yet the lament conveys the reality as God saw it. However, despite exercising judgment and punishment, God's mercy points to a way of grace and of salvation.

Radio Broadcast

12 Indicators of Life

4 A Soul for Every Drop of Blood

Indian missionary P. G. Vargis tells of a very unique assignment.

Heart Talks

14 In Ephesus and in Christ

Bible Doctrines - Easily Understood

16 Conditions for Divine Healing



Youth Pages

- 20** [God's Omniscience](#)
- 21** [A Misunderstood Letter](#)

Children's Corner

- 19** [God's X-Ray Machine](#)

For the Family

- 22** [Stress](#)
- 23** [No More Family Devotions?](#)

Missions Report

- 26** [Pallasovka 2014](#)
- 17, 18, 26** [Experiences with God](#)
- 27** [Announcements](#)
[Impressum](#)
- 28** [More Fruit](#)

Editorial

The Lord commanded His servant Moses to send twelve spies into the land of Canaan on a reconnaissance mission. When they returned, they brought with them a grape vine with a cluster so large that it took two men to carry it, suspended from a pole. What a glorious grapevine!

In the spiritual Canaan, the church of the Lord, there is also a glorious grapevine. Our Savior said, "I am the true vine, [...] you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing" (John 15:1, 5). What a beautiful picture! When we are converted we become not only children of God, but branches of the vine that is Jesus Christ. A poet put it this way:

*Oh, I am a disciple
Of Jesus Christ my Lord.
I'm born again. My life shall
Be built upon His Word.*

*A branch of the one true vine
Am I, and fruit I bear.
The Master comes in due time
And prunes the branches fair.*

Oh, to be a branch of the vine! To be so intimately attached that we need only to receive its abundant strength! Indeed, the vine provides us with everything we need on a daily basis. We need not worry or fear. The glorious Vine gives us freely from His inexhaustible store of goodness.

However, we also read: "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me" (John 15:4). A branch that is separated from the vine dries up and dies, and is thrown away. When we are separated from our spiritual source of strength, the same thing happens to us. This is why it is important to heed Jesus' command: "Abide in Me!"

We must abide in His love, His Word, and His fellowship through prayer. This not only glorifies the Father, the vinedresser, but by abiding in Jesus we find our true delight. Jesus says, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full" (John 15:11).

H.D. Nimz

A Soul for Every Drop of Blood

The bus would go no further. This was the end of the road. Mutabu got down. She would now have to climb three mountains before reaching her small, secluded village in the Himalayan Mountains. She was returning home from visiting relatives in the lower mountains. As she climbed, Mutabu thought about the tall preacher who talked about the Savior who forgives sins. She had heard the Gospel message while staying with her relatives in the lower mountains. She thought about her relatives who now worshiped this Jesus and how their lives had been transformed. Mutabu had never heard about Jesus before, and one night while with her relatives, she asked Jesus to forgive her sins and accept her. The tall preacher baptized her. Mutabu remembered saying, “I feel as clean as the fresh snow.” Mutabu wondered if the preacher would come to her mountain village. She had implored him to come and tell her sons about Jesus. No one in her part of the mountains had ever heard of Him before.

The tall preacher kissed his toddler son and bade his young wife Lilly good-bye. He hiked the mountain’s narrow trail, knowing that one fall would be the end of him. Urging his tired, hungry body on, he finally made it to the village. Mutabu’s sons were suspicious of a young man from South India traveling so far to meet their widowed mother, and they began to plot against him. “Tomorrow we shall kill him,” they whispered.

The next morning, as the preacher washed his face in a nearby pond, Mutabu rushed to him. “Run! Run as fast as you can. My sons have misunderstood you. They plan to kill you!”

The preacher crept back to retrieve his backpack and

saw the young men sharpening their knives behind the hut. How could he possibly climb down three mountains fast enough? The trails were narrow and the edges tricky. He walked as fast as he could. After some time, he glanced back and saw the young men with glistening knives in pursuit. He walked faster, but the boys, familiar with the mountain shortcuts, would soon catch him. He started to run as best he could, but the pursuers gained ground. Suffering from exhaustion and thirst, the preacher collapsed under a tree. With his death just minutes away, he wondered, “Will Lilly even know how I died?”

He pulled out the life story of O.J. Smith that he had been reading, and wrote on the last page, “Even if my wife becomes a widow in her twenties, and my son fatherless, I am willing to die if God will give me one soul for every drop of my blood.” Then a strange thing happened. The pursuers gave up.

He made it back down the mountain, and the next day Mutabu’s oldest son knocked on his door. The preacher panicked. Mutabu’s son said, “My mother has asked me to bring you to our village.” The preacher was suspicious and refused to go. The son refused to return to his village unless the preacher returned with him—and to prove it, he stayed with his relatives and attended the preacher’s Bible studies. He listened intently to the messages and wept every time. But the preacher remained unconvinced. Finally the preacher realized that he must return to the village. Hadn’t he decided to reach the unreached at any cost?

Once again the preacher hugged his baby son good-bye as Lilly stood with tears in her eyes. This could be the last

time he would see them. He then carefully instructed, “If I don’t return, do not go back to your land. Stay here. Preach the gospel and raise our son to continue the work.”

The preacher reached the village and found the villagers gathered under the stars, waiting to hear his preaching. He noticed a dramatic change in these people. Hardened men were weeping and praying with an intensity he did not understand. Mutabu then told the preacher what had happened. When her sons had returned from chasing him, they overheard her sobbing and crying out to God. “God, protect the young preacher! My sons misunderstood him. They don’t know that he is Your holy man.

Change my sons!” A great conviction fell upon the young men as they heard the prayer, and they began to weep.

Mutabu then told her sons about Jesus and asked them to repent. They cried out to the “God of their mother,” and wept as they begged for forgiveness. They experienced an immediate and powerful transformation. The preacher baptized the village families, and a church was born. One more village had been reached. One more mountain was singing. “The mountains and the hills shall break forth before you singing” (Isaiah 55:12).

P. G. Vargis



The Vine and the Branches

Jesus often spoke in parables. Using familiar objects and events, He illustrated the mysteries of the kingdom of God. Jesus may have shared the parable of the vine and the branches as He and His disciples were passing through a vineyard. It was a practical illustration that the disciples were able to understand and apply to their lives.

Jesus told His disciples the parable about the vine and the branches on the last evening He spent with them before He was hung on the cross. John 14 ends with His words, “but that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, Let us go from here.” He then stood up from the table where He had shared the last Passover meal with His disciples to make His way to Gethsemane. What grandeur is in His expression: “That the world may know that I love the Father”! How would the world know this love? Through His suffering and death on the cross!

Jesus’ disciples followed Him. They passed through the Kidron valley and across fields of vineyards. It was night; everything was quiet. Only the full moon illuminated the path through the vineyards. Suddenly, Jesus stood still. Thoughtfully, he examined a vine and its tender branches. The disciples gathered close around Him. Softly, Jesus began to speak: “I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in Me...” Gripped by His words, the disciples listened with rapt attention. They would miss none of His words. The disciple John preserved for us what Jesus said that night. The words of His Master had been indelibly etched on his heart and mind. Decades later, as an old man, he still knew exactly what His Master had said, “I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit” (John 15:4).

Jesus’ words on this memorable evening in the vineyard are part of His farewell discourse. Last words of a loved one are especially meaningful to the bereaved. May we, too, give our full attention to what God wants

to communicate to us through this parable!

Jesus the True Vine

“I am the true vine!” Jesus is saying, “I am the only, true, and real vine. The vines you see here in the vineyards are only a representation, an example. But you are looking at the true vine. Everything you know about a grapevine is also fully true and real in Me. Just as the vine is connected to its branches, so am I connected with you. Just as its sap flows through the branches, so My Spirit and My power flows through you. When you look at these vines and their branches, then you see an illustration of the intimate connection that exists between Me and you, my disciples.”

Jesus—the true vine. But then He adds another thought: “And My Father is the vinedresser.” Jesus is telling them that the view of the vine and its branches has a dimension that goes beyond a first glance: God, the Father, is the vinedresser.

This was not the first time that Jesus used a vineyard for an illustration. In Matthew 21:33-46, Jesus compares His father to a landowner who planted a vineyard. As per the custom of the day, he set a hedge around it (security against wild animals), dug a winepress (for processing the grapes), and even built a tower. It was a beautiful, well-planned vineyard. He gave the whole operation into the hands of vinedressers, who were to tend the vineyard and gather its fruit. But what happened? The vinedressers were wicked and destructive. They plotted to steal the vineyard, and killed not only the landowner’s servants but also his son. How fittingly they represent the nation of Israel! Even the Pharisees listening to the parable understood this.

God lamented about His unfaithful people in the Old Testament, comparing them to a vineyard (Isaiah 5:1-7). The house of Israel was the fruitless vineyard, and God permitted it to be destroyed.

However, in Jesus' farewell discourse, He unveils the new vineyard and the perfect, harmonious husbandry it enjoys. He says, "My Father (the vinedresser) entrusts His vineyard to no person; He tends to it Himself. He builds it, He prunes and tends to the branches, and He gathers the fruit. He is the perfect vinedresser! And, He plants the true vine in His vineyard." When God gave His Son for us to become our Savior, He planted the true vine in His vineyard.

Jesus is the true vine. He does not disappoint the vinedresser by producing wild, sour grapes. He always produces sweet fruit. He is not an inferior vine, selected from a second-rate kind; He is the choicest, most perfect specimen imaginable. He is God's Son, Jesus Christ. And the branches of this choice vine are Jesus' followers, His disciples. Jesus' true disciples are as connected, as related to Him as branches are to a vine. What a powerful picture!

The vine and the branches are a picture of perfect unity. Together they constitute a living organism. The branches that proceed from the vine are grown into the vine. What is a vine without branches? What, indeed, are branches without a vine? Both exist because of and for each other. They must belong together. They are a homogeneous one. And, what is a vineyard without a vinedresser? It soon becomes overgrown, desolate, and unproductive. What harmony, inter-dependency, and perfect unity exist in God's New Testament vineyard! It was made possible by God's design and the obedience of God's Son. You and I have the privilege to be the branches of this true vine. That's amazing! That inspires our deep humility and worship.

We are the Branches

"I am the vine, you are the branches" (John 15:4). Jesus' disciples are branches. What is a branch? It is an extension of the vine upon which the fruit blossoms and matures. A vine branch is not strong and sturdy like the branch of an oak tree, for example. In fact, it is sooner weak and fragile. It is easily broken off the vine. The vine branch is suitable for nothing more than bearing grapes. You cannot, for example, fashion a chair leg from it, or a walking stick. You cannot use it even to weave a basket. A withered vine branch is

useful for nothing other than fuel for a fire.

What appeal is there then in becoming a branch of the vine? The world sees no profit in becoming something that is weak, fragile, and useful only for the vine's purpose. However, when God opens our eyes, we begin to see how wonderful it is to be a branch of the true vine. After all, when we are branches, we have life! We are then connected to the source of life, the living God. We are then united with Christ; we have been called from death into life, and we have the privilege of bearing God's fruit! How glorious! What an unfathomable privilege!

Becoming a Branch on the Vine

We become a branch in the vine only when God, the vinedresser, grafts us into it. The Father draws us by the Holy Spirit to the Son: "All that the Father gives Me will come to Me" (John 6:37).

The Father grafts people into the true vine so that they will become branches of the vine, organically and vitally attached to Jesus, perfectly integrated with Him. The Bible calls this moment the new birth, or regeneration. It is also called conversion and the forgiveness of sins. This moment marks the beginning of true discipleship, vital Christianity. This is not about formal rituals, communion, or blind obedience—it is a love relationship with the vine, Jesus Christ.

The vinedresser prunes the branches. John 15:2 indicates this action, which we see applied to the disciples at Pentecost and thereafter. In Acts 15:8 Peter speaks about God-fearing Cornelius and his household, and we know that the disciples were saved prior to Pentecost (Luke 10:20). Why then did the Father call for every branch to be pruned? Jesus clearly ascribes this pruning responsibility to the Father, the heavenly vinedresser. If the branches of the vine are not pruned, they grow wild. They begin to grow sour grapes. Think of the heart of a person that is overgrown by various fleshly lusts. Also, a wild-growing, unpruned branch knows no restraint, no limit. It climbs the wall and grows into the neighbor's yard. Not only this, but the branch beside it does the same, and the two become entangled with one another. We know of people who have become "entangled" in personal conflicts. They are proud and impenitent, and begin to "grow wild." What a sad picture this is, especially when it comes from professing Christians.

This pruning, administered by the vinedresser, is a

reference to the experience the disciples had on the day of Pentecost. They were commanded not to begin witnessing for the Lord until they were filled with heavenly power in Jerusalem (Acts 1:4-5). Although they were saved (Luke 10:20), the disciples needed to be purified (Acts 15:8-9).

Branch Vitality

Crucial for the branches is that they do not lose their connection with the vine. The life-giving sap of the vine must flow unhindered into the branches. Only then can the branch remain healthy, vital, and capable of bearing fruit. What is this life-giving sap? It is the powerful action of the Word of God and the Holy Spirit in us. Only when we are living according to God's Word, and it is able to fill, transform, and empower our souls, do we maintain a connection with Jesus. The working of the Holy Spirit in the soul is that life-giving sap that flows steadily from the vine. If the connection between the vine and the branch is severed, the Holy Spirit is no longer able to convey His power, and that person's spiritual life withers like a branch broken from the vine.

How is this connection between vine and branch severed?

A branch may be cracked at its base, or broken. If it is cracked, the branch may still hang from the vine, but it hangs life-less because there is no vital connection. It will certainly wither. When sin enters your life, your connection to God is broken. Sin, whether great or small, separates you from God, and without a connection to your life source, your soul will wither. Sin is the conscious transgression of God's commands. Take great care that no sin enters your life! If you are a branch, then you can overcome sin through Christ. And should sin enter your life, then ask the vinedresser to heal the branch by setting it back in place and binding it tight to the vine. Jesus is our advocate with the Father. He prays on our behalf!

A branch can get choked off. Ernst Moderson tells about a yew growing in a garden that was fresh and flourishing on the bottom, but brown and dying at the top. Why? Many years earlier a wooden name

plate had been affixed to the trunk of the yew with a strand of steel wire. However, the wire had not been loosed as the tree grew in diameter. Over time, the wire began to choke off the upward flowing sap, and the tree above the wire withered as a result. The wire choked off the vital connection. If it had been removed in due time, the crown of the yew could have been saved. This same thing happens to a branch in Christ that becomes choked off. The life-giving sap from the tree becomes more and more restricted, until finally there is not even a trickle. The branch has effectively lost its connection to life.

These constricting elements can be seen as paths that lead to sin. It is a deceptively gradual process. Unlike blatant sin, paths to sin seem harmless as they veer off ever so slightly from what is true and right. But slowly, surely, Satan increases his stranglehold on the Christian until the connection with Christ is gone.

What kinds of strangling devices does Satan use? Just the thin wire of carelessness or lukewarmness is all that's needed—just a little letting up in zeal and fervency in serving the Lord; just a little covetousness and love of money; just a little desire for attention and recognition (remember Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5); just a little love for the world (remember Demas in 2 Timothy 4:10). It might include just a little love for the latest fashions so that get you noticed, or the misuse of media, such as the internet. It might include an unhealthy attachment to technology, like your smartphone or car. It can even include your home, your hobby, your garden, your leisure activity, or your shopping; all of these things have the potential of becoming life-strangling devices in Satan's hand. If we are not made aware of the danger soon enough, our connection with Jesus can be severed.

There are other things that can hinder the branch. Fruit can be poisoned when it is ruptured by the bite of certain insects. These insects penetrate the outer skin of a berry, for example, and by injecting their poison, the fruit becomes diseased, even though the outside of it looks healthy. Do you have the appearance of health, or are you healthy? These are two vastly different conditions. Be very sure that your connection with the vine remains intact. Otherwise,

you can bring no fruit, and you will be cut off. Maybe you realize that your connection is already severed—in that case, you can come to the vinedresser! He is concerned about the fate of your soul and always stands ready to heal you.

Are you not yet a branch in the true vine? Ask God,

and He will surely make you into a branch attached to the vine Jesus Christ. This is, after all, what God created you for in the first place—to be a branch in the true vine, in the beautiful garden of the Father.

Eduard Albrecht
Eppingen, Germany

The Secret to Fruitfulness

“I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.” (John 15:5)

The Lord Jesus is not a religious founder. His actions do not merely belong to the past, and His influence is not only passed on through oral and written tradition. He is present in His children and the driving force of their lives. Jesus does not simply provide inspiration to great men, rather: “He is the life of our life, and the power of our soul.”

We can and should come into personal contact with Him. Time and again we encounter the expression “in Christ”. The Savior presents the importance of this communion with Him in the parable of the vine and the branches.

The branches are connected to the vine. This is the kind of communion we must have with the Savior. In nature, the juice of the vine penetrates the branches. Likewise, Jesus’ Spirit permeates His children. Once we are “connected” to Jesus, His power flows through us.

It is the Lord Jesus who is making the connection. He seeks this communion with us. “You did not choose me, but I chose you” (John 15:6). His love pursues us. He brings us close by His Word. When we let Him speak to us through His Word, we receive Him. He will remain in us by His Word.

His love is a cleansing, holy love. He despises no one, not even the vilest sinner. However, there must

be a genuine desire to be pure. Only by the cleansing blood of Jesus can reconciliation occur.

Then, out of a dead heart springs life. It buds and blooms and produces fruit. Apart from Him it is impossible to bear fruit, because life is absent. Out of our own efforts we can produce all kinds of things that look like fruit. But it is as different from the real fruit as artificial fruit is from fresh. Where the Lord Jesus is working, everything comes naturally and is not a chore. The good that someone is doing with a sour expression can be compared with the acidic grapes that refresh no one (Isaiah 5:2).

Income is not fruit. Every life has income. Some leave behind a fortune that they acquired with effort, hard work and perhaps even honestly. That is something worthwhile. Yet it is not the fruit Jesus was referring to. Others achieve prestige and honor. That is also something. But it is not fruit with eternal value. Spiritual fruit is what counts before God, and refreshes both God and man.

Some people have a sad life story. They leave behind debt because of frivolous spending. Others have undermined their health through sinful living, and have wasted the precious powers of their body and soul. A life that brings true fruit for eternity can only develop in close connection with Jesus the Vine.

The Song of God's Vineyard

God speaks to us in His Word by using various pictures in order to relate spiritual truths. In Isaiah 5:1-4, God compares His people, His church, His bride to a vineyard: "Now let me sing to my Well-beloved a song of my Beloved regarding His vineyard: My Well-beloved has a vineyard on a very fruitful hill" (verse 1).

We can certainly interpret this verse in different ways, but we should all take from it that we should be joyful because God has accepted us as His vineyard. It is by the grace of God that the Lord has chosen us and is willing to work on us. His attention has turned to us, and now God compares His work and effort on us to garden work.

We know that garden work is hard work that typically brings with it a sore back and blisters on our hands. When God compares His work on us to garden work, then we understand how His hands became pierced. "But you have burdened Me with your sins" (Isaiah 43:24). He did not shy away from tackling this hard work. It is God's goal to make each of us a person who is useful in His plan.

"He dug it up and cleared out its stones" (Isaiah 5:2). The first job God has to undertake on His vineyard is the digging. Has God completed this most difficult of tasks on you? Digging symbolizes repentance, and this requires action on our part. We have to turn around one day and head in a new direction. Only after a piece of land is dug up does it start to become a garden. Before, it was fallow land, barren land. After the digging, God can begin something in your life. Then, the Bible says: "[He] planted it with the choicest vine" (verse 2). Through the Holy Spirit, we receive this godly life, the rebirth. Then God plants something into our hearts - the assurance of forgiven sins, and peace with God. Have you already

received the assurance of being His child? "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).

The next job in a garden is the hoeing and weeding. Because the Lord Jesus does not become tired from continually coming to me with the "hoe," I know that I will bring fruit and someday be with Jesus in glory. Since the hour that He planted this "choicest vine" in me, He has not neglected to pull up the weeds. Hasn't the great Gardener continually hoed and weeded in your garden? This precious plant must be cared for and nurtured, for nothing grows by itself except for weeds. It is the great grace of God when He works on us.

How often has God admonished us, prodded us, and made us aware of our mistakes in order to help us! He hoed His garden and then did something important. The Bible says: "He dug it up and cleared out its stones" (verse 2). God did everything He could do that the garden would become fruitful and one day fulfill its purpose. He protects us by His precious blood so that no one can trample on what He has planted.

However, God must lament that the vineyard has "brought forth wild grapes" (verse 2). There was no fruit that could be enjoyed. Is there something within us that is enjoyable, lovely, and beneficial that attracts others? Is there something visible in our lives that others would want to have as well?

What is hindering the work of the Lord from spreading? Could it be the "wild grapes" that are being produced instead of good grapes? When God speaks of His vineyard, then He means you and me, His people. The Bible reports: "He came seeking fruit!" This is not



just an expression from the Old Testament. The Lord Jesus uses this same picture of the vineyard in the New Testament (John 15).

When the time had come, the Lord of the vineyard sent His servants to look for fruit, but He found none. “What more could have been done to My vineyard that I have not done in it? Why then, when I expected it to bring forth good grapes, did it bring forth wild grapes?” (verse 4) This is the complaint of God, and it applies to us today as well. Is there anyone who could say: “God has neglected me. He has left this and the other thing undone in my life. The vine that He has planted in me was not strong enough. He did not hoe and weed enough. I didn’t receive enough sun and nutrition”? No, God has done everything He could do. And now He waits for fruit. Can we give Him an answer to His question?

There is a reason why this garden remained unfruitful. We read in Song of Solomon 4:12: “A garden enclosed (“locked up” - NIV) is my sister, my spouse, a spring shut up, a fountain sealed.” This “locking up” is what may be missing in our lives. Can we, as children of God, not quickly be overcome by the idea that we have to conform to this world, that we have to fit into it? By thinking this way, we open ourselves to the worldly things and become, so to say, a “through road.” Everything that we hear from God’s Word is like the seed that falls on the pathway and is eaten by the birds before it can grow. Have we remained a locked-up garden that no one has access to except for the Lord Jesus? Have we made Him Lord of our homes, King of our hearts, or are we these “seed-on-the-pathway” kind of Christians in which the godly seed is choked, and the delicate plant of the Holy

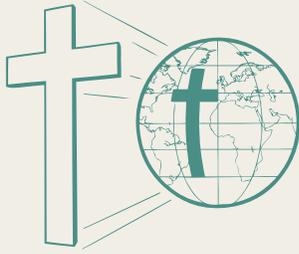
Spirit is trampled on?

The Lord Jesus wants his Bride to be a locked-up garden, a sealed spring of water. That is why He has fenced in His vineyard. An open garden, open land, will quickly become a garbage pit where everyone dumps their waste. Your heart should be a garden that is pleasing to God where He can reveal Himself, and the Holy Spirit wants to live in the watchtower (verse 2).

The great vinedresser invites guests to His vineyard, for He knows what is good and necessary for us. The bride in Song of Solomon asks for this visit. But it is the bridegroom himself who says, “Awake, o north wind, and come, o south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out” (Song of Solomon 4:16). The north wind is the storm that seizes and shakes us so that the things in our lives that are barren and dry, old and cold, break off and become broken. It is good when the north wind comes and blows through our hearts and congregations so that some things are swept away and removed. It is necessary so that we can become grounded and so that our roots can grow deeper in God.

But the great vinedresser also sends the south wind that allows the buds to blossom. After the north wind helps to cleanse, submit, and break off, the south wind comes and lets the pleasant aroma of worship and praise of God waft up. How wonderful when it begins to bloom in our lives, when the fruit grows and when we can invite the Bridegroom: “Let my beloved come to His garden and eat its pleasant fruits” (Song of Solomon 4:16). Then the fruit of the Holy Spirit will become evident in our lives, which will allow us to win souls for the Lord.

W. Sardac



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Indicators of Life

Life in every shape and form is a wondrous gift from our all-knowing and eternal God. Life has never come from any other source. Johann Tobler gave this sober thought when he wrote:

*All life poureth forth from Thee,
Many streamlets is it sharing,
All the worlds with joy declaring,
Lord, Thy handiwork all are we.*

*Oh, my true estate to know,
Oh, to know Thee God Almighty,
Oh, to gladly Father call Thee,
Humbly I before Thee bow.*

Life is visible and tangible. One sees it in each breath and feels it in every heartbeat. Every living thing is in motion. Each person and animal strives to keep their body alive through nourishing it and looking after it to the best of their ability. We are often faced with worries, struggles, and responsibilities. The struggle to survive is known everywhere. We are also familiar with the many dangers and threats that surround us. Life and death are mutually exclusive. Either life will dominate or death will, they cannot coexist.

One evening, I was called to the hospital to visit a critically ill patient. His wife and son were already at his bedside. Only one visitor was allowed in at a time. When my turn came, I immediately noticed that the end was near. Suddenly, the monitors went blank and his breathing

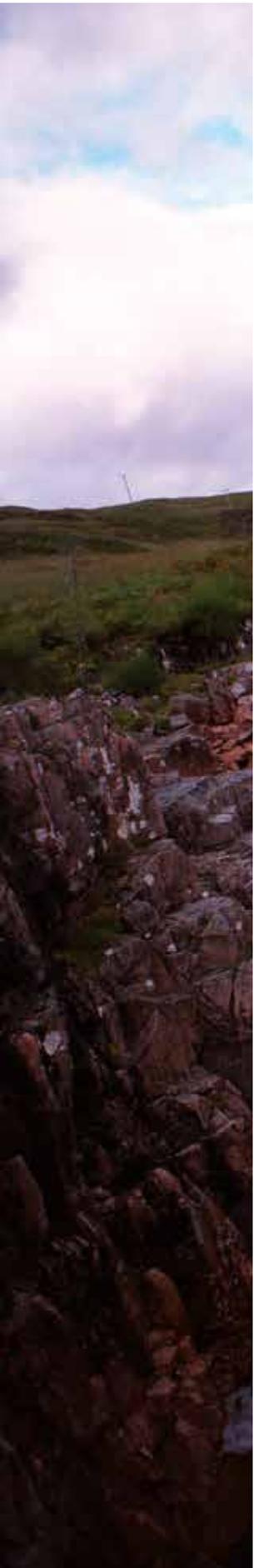
stopped. What a serious and thought-provoking moment!

Aside from our physical life there is spiritual life. Every true Christian possesses it. This spiritual life is a gift from God and has great value! The Holy Spirit works on our hearts and new life begins when we are born again and experience the gift of salvation. Every person can obtain this new life as Jesus explained in John 3:7, “You must be born again.” This is still true for all people today.

The life of the soul is the spiritual life. It is the internal, hidden life that harbors eternal characteristics. The foundation for this life is the reconciliation and communion with God which Jesus achieved for us by His death on the cross. It is for this reason that Jesus could say, “I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). John affirmed this when he said, “he who has the Son has life” (1 John 5:12). There are distinct indicators which show that this new life is present in a Christian.

1. Spiritual Fruit

The highest purpose for a Christian is to produce fruit. In John 12:24, Jesus compares Himself with a grain of wheat and points out the reason for His death on the cross. “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.” Fruit can only be produced if there is life. The fruit of a Spirit-filled life is: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22). Producing this fruit gives evidence of a new life. Christians



who live out this truth are a shining example and are able to edify others.

2. Yearning for Light, Air, Water, and Nourishment.

These life-giving elements are an absolute necessity for our physical, as well as our spiritual health. A person who has experienced this life strives to maintain spiritual light and seeks a godly environment. They hunger and thirst for the righteousness which is valued by God (2 Corinthians 5:21). They aspire to be found pleasing to God and confirm what Charles E. Orr wrote: “All this world, its wealth and honor, cannot sate the human breast...” Their desire is: “By thy shore, oh, let me be, soul refining river; ever let me drink of thee, thirst no more forever!” In regard to spiritual food, the apostle explained that, “solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:1).

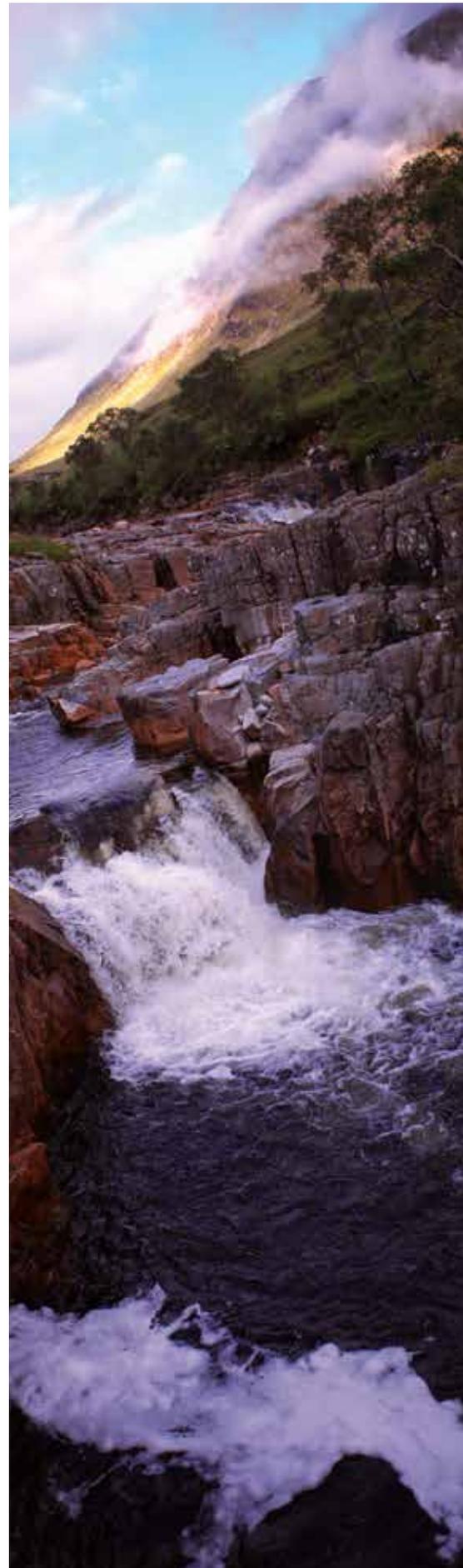
3. Spiritual Growth and Productive Activity

Both work together. Healthy spiritual growth develops strength for an active spiritual life. Jesus illustrated this concept in the parable of the young man who was told to go work in his father’s vineyard. He refused and later felt guilty about his attitude, went and worked in the vineyard after all. Isaiah heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?” Isaiah replies, “Here am I! Send me” (Isaiah 6:8). Paul met up with Timothy, a young man in Derbe, and took him along as his helper on a mission trip. Those who serve God are willing to be used by Him. Idleness does not become a Christian. In Titus 2:14 we read that He, “who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people zealous for good works.” In order to effectively work for the Lord, we need to pray. Praying and working for the Lord is a requirement for the Christian life.

4. Our Manner of Fellowship

A spiritual-minded person seeks spiritual fellowship. He loves light and truth. He strives to be spiritually edified and seeks to please God. Psalm 1:1 states: “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the law of the Lord.” David said: “Whoever secretly slanders his neighbor, him I will destroy; the one who has a haughty look and a proud heart, him I will not endure” (Psalm 101:5).

Whoever has obtained spiritual life and wants to maintain it has to continually look for strength and direction from above. Paul set for himself a beautiful standard: “For to me, to live is Christ” (Philippians 1:21). May this be our resolve as well!



In Ephesus and in Christ

Paul addressed his Ephesian epistle, "To the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus". The people addressed were in Ephesus, and they were likewise in Christ. What did it mean to be in Ephesus? Ephesus was one of the great centers of paganism. It was rich and voluptuous. Both private and public life were utterly corrupt. Even the religious practices of the Ephesians were unspeakably vile. This city was a moral bog, a sink of pollution, filled with all corruption, and reeking with vileness. It was a second Sodom. Vice stalked abroad everywhere and was honored and worshiped. We might therefore well say, "Can any good thing come out of Ephesus? Can Christianity flourish in such surroundings?" But there were saints in Ephesus, and faithful ones, too. They were such examples in their lives and characters as to win the commendation of that great apostle to the Gentiles. Out of that obnoxious mud of iniquity were growing the pure white lilies of Christian character. That is the glory of Christianity and of Christ. Those who were now Christians were not superior to the other Ephesians; they were not by nature different. In fact, Paul tells them that they had been the children of wrath, even as others, and they had been such by nature. What a triumph of divine grace that raised these people up out of such unspeakable filth and made them faithful saints! And yet that is the power of our great Christ.

Some people look around at the present condition of things in this world, at sin abounding on every hand, and say, "There is no use for me to try to be a Christian or to be different from the others." There are many who look at things in this way. They think it useless to try to be righteous under present conditions. Once, while

walking down the street of a certain city, I came upon a policeman standing on the street-corner. I engaged him in conversation, which I quickly turned into religious channels, and began inquiring about his own standing. He said to me in a hopeless voice, "Oh, there is no use talking; there is no chance for a policeman." I tried to tell him of the power of God and of what salvation would do for him. But it seemed as an idle tale to him, and he could only reply, "There is no hope for a policeman."

There are many other people today in various situations who say: "There is no hope for me. There is no use for me to try." Those Ephesians might have talked the same way. They had just as much reason to do so as any one else. Probably some of them did talk like that and were lost; who can tell? There were a great many, however, who turned from idols to serve the true and living God, received Christ into their hearts, and found the power of salvation in the gospel. They found power in the blood of Christ to cleanse them from their impurities, and not only that, but also to raise them so far from the mire of sin and wickedness abounding around them as to keep them faithful in Christ Jesus while still dwelling in Ephesus.

It is not so much a change of environment that people need but a change of heart and of character. Diamonds are often found embedded in volcanic mud; mud surrounds them on every side, and yet they have lain there for centuries and are still diamonds. What is the secret to it? Why have they not become contaminated? It is because the mud never entered the diamond; that was the reason that the Ephesian saints could be faithful and still live in Ephesus. They were left amidst the foul mud of corruption, but the mud was taken out of them, and



*“It is not so much a change of environment
that people need as a change of heart and character.”*

the grace of Christ kept it from getting back in again.

We cannot get away from the mud and defilement of sin in this world. Sin will always be all about us. Its stench will be in our nostrils from day to day. Our eyes will be offended by it, and our ears will be shocked. But as long as we keep it all on the outside, we can be saints and faithful in Christ Jesus.

We are told that one of the chief things for us to do is to keep ourselves "unspotted from the world" (James 1:27). Philippians 2:15 tells us, "that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world." Paul says to Timothy, "[do not] share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure" (1 Timothy 5:22). We are not only to keep free from committing any sins of our own, but also to avoid sharing in the sins of others. That is very important.

Now, we are as it were, in Ephesus. There is sin abounding all around us. God wants us so to abhor the sins of others that we shall not follow them, nor find pleasure in those who do sinful things. There are two ways in which we can share in other people's sins. One way is to approve of their evil works. It may be that we ourselves would not do those things, but if we approve of someone else's doing them, it is just about as bad.

Never allow yourself to approve of another's sins. You cannot keep clean and do it. Again, we may be sharing in other people's sins by sharing in the results of them. If a man cheats another in business, and then I share in his ill-gotten gain, I am sharing his sin. It may be that I would not steal my neighbor's melons, but if another steals them, and I, knowing his theft, eat of them with

him, did I not share in his sins? And so it is with all the affairs of life. We must keep ourselves separate from sin. We cannot help being in Ephesus. We must live in this corrupt and sinful world. So the important thing is that we pay attention to keeping ourselves in Christ, unspotted from the world. If the Ephesians could do this, so can we. But to do it, we must walk uprightly. We must not stoop down into the mire of sin, but keep ourselves erect, and keep our spiritual nostrils above the poisonous gases of sin.

Lot was a man of God. He dwelt in Sodom, and we are told that his righteous soul was tormented from day to day because of the wicked conduct of the Sodomites (2 Peter 2:7-8). But he kept himself clear; he had no part with them; he hated their sins. When we reach a place where we do not hate sin, where we can see it and hear and know of it and find no vexation in our souls, where it causes us no uneasiness, where we have no particular repugnance for it, then it is time that we were becoming awakened. We are commanded to abhor that which is evil, and it is only by so doing and by keeping ourselves clean from it that we can be safe in Christ Jesus and dwell in the wicked world.

There was a bit of heaven in every Christian heart in Ephesus. That bit of heaven was just as pure as the celestial realms above. We too have that heavenly element in our hearts, and in that transplanted bit of God's holiness, all the plants of righteousness that bloom in the courts eternal will flourish. But we must guard these plants by keeping the gates of our hearts closed night and day against evil. Only in this way can we remain pure and acceptable to God. This we can do and be holy and faithful in the worst "Ephesus" that exists today.

Conditions for Divine Healing

In our previous lesson we saw that God has promised us the miracle of divine healing. In this lesson we want to see what people must do for God to fulfill this wonderful promise.

Faith

God does not heal arbitrarily. There is one condition that a person must meet if he wants to experience divine healing. This condition is faith. We read in the Gospels how Jesus healed people. There is a phrase He repeatedly said to the healed, “Your faith has made you well” (Matthew 9:22, Mark 10:52, Luke 17:19).

In the story of the paralytic, whom the four friends let down through the roof to Jesus, we read, “When Jesus saw their faith” (Mark 2:5). And when Jesus came to Nazareth he did not do as many signs and wonders as He had done in other places. In Matthew 13:58 we find the reason for this: “Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.”

We see quite clearly that faith is a necessary condition for the experience of divine healing. But how must this faith be procured? Each of us believes that God is omnipotent and can therefore heal any disease. We would give intellectual assent to that statement. We believe it as a valid theory. But that is not the faith that God wants to see. God wants to see a practical faith. He wants to see us exercise a faith that claims the promises of God for ourselves; a faith that holds fast to these promises and believes that God can and will heal us from the current ailment we suffer. In cases where people are unconscious or so seriously ill that they cannot have a clear thought, or even with small children, this faith has to be mustered by those who desire and ask for the divine healing of these people. And so we come to the second condition.

Prayer

In some cases, this faith alone is sufficient to experience healing. In most cases, an additional condition needs to be met. Prayer. We should not only believe it, we should also ask for it. People came to Jesus and asked Him for healing. And Jesus healed them. Every promise of God will be claimed through faith and in prayer. This is no different with the promise of divine healing.

When we think about divine healing, there are two additional truths that we wish to examine. The first is the anointing and laying on of hands, the second is the spiritual gift of healing. These are not directly conditions, but rather further opportunities God gives us.

Laying on of Hands and Anointing

In Scripture, we find two places which direct us to a practical procedure for prayer for healing of the sick. In Mark 16:17-18, Jesus says, “And these signs will follow those who believe: [...] they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.” James picks up this topic and gives instruction on what had likely become the approach in apostolic times. He says: “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven” (James 5:14-15).

We read here of laying on of hands and anointing with oil. In this case, these actions have no cultic character. It is not a special oil that combines certain healing powers in itself. No special power flows through the hands of those praying for the sick.

For the elders and for the sick, it is an act of obedience. They place themselves into the will of God.



Therefore, the purpose of this act is to strengthen the faith of the patient, making him aware of the effectiveness of the power of God.

The Spiritual Gift of Healing

When Paul writes to the Corinthians of the gifts of the Spirit, he mentions the “gift of healing” (1 Corinthians 12:9). We see in Scripture that some of the apostles had this gift. Even in church history, we know of individuals whom God equipped with this gift. It

involves the ability to pray the prayer of faith for the sick, that God may answer, even if the patient cannot muster the faith. Please read the story of the lame man at the temple gate in Acts 3.

Divine healing is a gift of God's grace. We must come to God in faith with our needs and know that He listens and is willing to glorify Himself in our lives.

Robert Witt
Gifhorn, Germany

Experiences with God

“All the ends of the world shall remember and turn to the LORD, and all the families of the nations shall worship before You.” (Psalm 22:27)

I would like to give a testimony to the glory of God. I am deeply grateful to God for the accusations of the evil one, the temptations and confusion that He allows from the evil one.

When I became a Christian, I knew nothing of the command “watch and pray.” But God allowed the temptations, so I was constantly striving in an inner battle. Due to the accusations of the devil I prayed constantly for forgiveness, but nothing changed. Yet this is how Jesus maintained my prayer life. Oh, how great is Jesus! How great is His love!

Through temptation He taught me faith, endurance,

persisting in faith, crying out to God, holding fast to God's Word, humility, and gratitude. I learned that Christianity does not consist of resisting the devil and his temptations, but that Christianity is sanctification, mission, and complete devotion and sacrifice for Jesus.

Let us pray that all God's people would be sanctified and many dear souls will be saved, for soon there shall be “no more time.” I have no words to describe the goodness of Jesus; I love Him more than anything. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. I thank Him with all my heart; He alone deserves all the glory. He is the greatest, the most holy, the best. He is everything and above everything and has the last word in everything. To God be the glory!

Erich Schall
Lörrach, Germany

Experiences with God

“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 forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases.”

(Psalm 103:1-3)

I can bless the Lord because He forgave my sin debt and in grace saved and redeemed my soul! But there were times when I was in great need and distress; there were times when my life was in danger. I lay helpless in my pain, and I thought that death would swallow me up. These were times when I called upon my Savior! He did not always answer me according to my wishes, but in due time He helped me, healing me of my physical ailments and rescuing me from danger.

In August of 1969 I was almost completely paralyzed. I was only able to slightly move my head and feet. The pain was so great that I could not sleep at night. I pleaded with God in prayer, examining my heart while seeking His face. Very early in the morning, as first rays of sunlight were appearing, I clearly heard the voice of God: “Your mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens; Your faithfulness reaches to the clouds” (Psalm 36:5). The message was so personal and direct! It touched me deeply, and I knew that God’s mercy would reach me too. The next morning, I asked a few brothers to anoint me according to James 5:14. Two weeks later I was able to walk again! Yes, the Lord heals, and I praise and thank Him for it! He is “Jesus Christ...the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

In 1979, I suffered from a severe food poisoning while in Mexico. The skin below my waist turned a blue-green color. When she saw it, my wife exclaimed, horrified: “You look like my grandmother before she died!” Her grandmother had gangrene.

It was noon on a Sunday. I had preached in the morning service. But now in our home, it was as though “the sorrows of Sheol surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me” (Psalm 18:5). I wanted to sleep, but my body fought against it. By Tuesday, all I could do was cry out, “Lord, help

me!” My family and the church prayed for me, and God miraculously helped me!

Two weeks later, we happened to be in the office of a Mexican doctor on account of one of our children. “And how are you doing?” he asked me, casually. I showed him how I was able to pull off whole sections of my blue-green skin.

“Poisoning!” he cried out. “Rattle snake! Fish poisoning! Deodorant!” I shook my head each time. Then he said “Fresa!” Ah, that was it! Strawberries...

I had purchased strawberries from a gentleman on the street in the city. The fruit had been transported from the west of the country and had stood for a day in plus 35 degree Celsius heat. My wife had tried to sort out the not-so-fresh-looking strawberries, but I had stopped her: “They’re so expensive and you’re wasting them?!” – And then I proceeded to eat four or five of the rotten ones. Later, I learned that rotting strawberries can produce potassium cyanide! If the toxin had traveled upwards in my body, I would probably have died. But, bless the Lord, O my soul! He heals our diseases and rescues us from perilous situations!

God’s healing touch is still one of His great acts of mercy today. It is a mystery for us when and how He intervenes. But we are to pray and have faith. God is the One who decides what is good and right for us.

During the Fest services in Aylmer this summer, a number of people expressed the desire to be anointed. They had faith that God would help them. We acted in accordance with James 5:14, and then commended them to the grace of God. Bless the Lord, O my soul! A few days later we received the news from one of them: “God has helped me! The Lord has graciously heard and healed me!”

May all of us depend on the Lord, always hoping for the best from Him! We will surely receive grace and help from Him in times of need.

H. D. Nimz
Kitchener, Ontario

God's X-Ray Machine

"Tomorrow morning we want to get an early start into town. Come Werner, it's time for you to go to bed now!"

"What are we doing in town, Mama?"

"Don't you remember? After your physical check-up at school, the doctor ordered some X-rays!"

Werner became quite silent and thoughtful. That afternoon he had been in the children's Sunday School hour. The teacher had earnestly pointed to the Savior who had suffered and died on the cross for the children's sins. Even a child's heart is full of dark spots and can only be cleaned by the blood of Jesus – that's what he had said.

"Mom, how does the X-ray work?" Werner asked.

"It's easy son, and it doesn't even hurt. The doctor places you in front of a white screen, turns off the light and turns on his machine. Then he can see how you look inside."

"Oh Mother, then I am not coming with you," cried Werner and burst into tears.

"Why are you crying? Why don't you want to come along? I told you, it won't hurt."

"The doctor will be able to see all the dark spots that I have on my heart. Or does he not see them? Every lie creates a dark spot, and the times I was naughty or disobedient, or when I've quarreled with others. Mama, I think my heart must be very dark already. You're even older, Mama; your heart must have even more dark spots. Have you already been examined?"

"Son, the doctor can't see any of these dark spots."

"Oh Mama, if not him, then the Lord Jesus. The teacher said He sees all the sins of your entire life. But He can also wash them away. When He died on the cross for our sins, the soldiers came and stabbed the Savior in His side with a spear. Out of His wound came blood and water. With this blood He reconciled us. Mama, has He made you and father clean already?"

An awkward silence followed. Werner's mother was deeply touched by these words.

"Mama, wouldn't you like to attend the church service sometime? Then you can hear the teacher yourself?"

The next evening Werner attended the church service with both his parents. They were spoken to by the gospel and they experienced that "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses ...from all sin"(1 John 1:17). Werner gave his heart to the Savior too. Together they could sing:

*All my sins that God did record,
have remained on Calvary's tree.
My heart is clean, heaven's my home,
my name is there, I'm free.*

Dear child, do you have dark spots on your heart? Remember, only the Savior can wash them away, and He wants to do that for you!



SERIES: CHARACTERISTICS OF GOD

IV HOLINESS

V LOVE

VI OMNIPRESENCE

GOD'S OMNIPRESENCE

Omnipresence, by definition, is the property of being all present. God is everywhere. This is one of the first doctrinal truths that is taught in Sunday School. In Psalm 139 David asks of the Lord: “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast” (Psalm 139:7-10 NIV). David acknowledged that there is no place where God is not.

God is Transcendent and Immanent

The omnipresence of God encompasses both His transcendence and His immanence.

The Bible teaches us that God is transcendent: He created the universe, but He is above all creation and surpasses all limits of the universe and time, so in effect, He is not anywhere (Ephesians 4:6). This is not to say that He does not exist anywhere, but that His location cannot be pinpointed to a particular place. He cannot be limited, because He is infinite. When King Solomon dedicated the temple he had built, Solomon proclaimed: “The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built!” (1 Kings 8:27 NIV)

Taken alone, God’s transcendence might lead us to believe that God is distant and uninvolved in both creation and our lives, that He just allows the natural world to unfold without intervention. But God’s omnipresence also includes His immanence. As much as God is above all He created, He has chosen to be

near His creation (John 1:14). God sent His Son and chose to limit Himself to a physical human body to live among us and demonstrate His desire to be near us. But the resurrected Christ who ascended to heaven and is no longer limited by space nor time, remains near and present in our lives. The Bible tells us that Jesus is sitting at the right hand of the Father (Matthew 26:64; Colossians 3:1; Hebrews 8:1; 12:2), and at the same time He told His disciples “Surely, I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

God Fills Heaven and Earth, but Is Not Heaven or Earth

In Jeremiah 23:24, God proclaims: “Can anyone hide himself in secret places, so I shall not see him?” says the Lord; “Do I not fill heaven and earth?” says the Lord.” Believing in God’s immanence while denying His transcendence, would lead to pantheism, which teaches that God is immersed in the very fabric of creation, or that God IS everything. God does not inhabit every inanimate object. He is not in a gold statue that has been molded into the form of an idol. He is not in a crystal, giving that object the power to bring healing. God is not everyone or everything, and not everyone contains divinity. Paul reminds us in Romans 1 that God’s invisible qualities, His divine nature and eternal power, have been made clear to us, but a sinful humanity failed to glorify God, and “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator” (Romans 1:25). There is but “one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all” (Ephesians 4:6).

The Omnipresence of God Is Comforting

When God is properly understood, God's omnipresence is comforting.

My friends at work cannot sleep when their children are out. I can. The knowledge that God is everywhere in the universe and time means that there is not a time or place where our children are outside of God's reach and protection. I trust He is watching over them.

God's omnipresence allows Him to be completely present in all places at all times. This is not to say that God spreads Himself out over all of the universe thinly, like we might butter a piece of bread. God is without physical form, so He is everywhere in the universe with all of His being – completely and wholly. He is in every place, immediately accessible to those who call on Him (Psalm 145:18). I have often sought support from friends or family, but sometimes they are distracted by their own problems, and in spite of good intentions, they are only half-listening. As humans, we are limited to a finite amount of caring and attention. We cannot divide our attention without taking a part of that attention away from both things. But God can. Wherever God is, all of Him is there and we have His undivided love, attention, and protection.

The Omnipresence of God Is Convicting

Of course, the omnipresence of God also means that we cannot hide from God should we want to. Jonah hid in the depths of a ship in an attempt to escape from God's presence, causing God to send him to the depths of the ocean within the belly of a fish to prove to Jonah that there is nowhere to escape God's presence. Hebrews 4:13 puts it all into perspective: "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

We cannot hide in order to escape God's judgment, but thankfully, we can escape His judgment through the grace and mercy of His Son who took on human limits to bring God's mercy to us. This brings God's transcendence, sovereignty and holiness full circle with His immanence and grace. Together they complete the definition of God's omnipresence. God, who is without limits, is everywhere in the universe at all times. He is present in every situation, able to impart His power and mercy to every person at any moment. We cannot escape His judgment, but we are also not beyond the reaches of His loving arms, where He is ready to redeem us, protect and care for us.

Benita Tovstiga
Hamilton, Ontario

A MISUNDERSTOOD LETTER

"Do you know, Mother," said the young man, "I really can't find any joy in reading my Bible anymore. There are so many passages that are difficult to understand. For the modern thinker, the contradictions and inconceivable ideas in the Bible are unattractive."

His mother laughed. "My boy, you are reading the Bible completely wrong!"

"Well, how am I supposed to read it?" her son retorted.

Soothingly, his mother laid her hand on his arm and replied, "I will give you an example. Do you remember how you spent two years in the army without being able to come home? I regularly sent you letters telling you about everything that was happening here at home. One day I received a letter from you saying: 'You write about all these different things that are happening in our home town. I'm confused. Have things changed

so much since I left? How long have I been gone, that I don't even understand your letters anymore?"

"You didn't write and say the letters from me are not readable for a modern thinker. You did not comment and say that there are contradictions in my letters. You just simply asked, 'How long have I been gone that I don't understand your letters anymore?'"

"The Bible is just like a letter. It is God's letter to us. If you cannot understand His letter, then the fault is not with the letter but with you. You need to examine yourself and ask: 'How far have I wandered from my heavenly Father that I can no longer understand His letter to me? I need to search His Word more diligently so that I learn to understand Him again.'"

Her son did not say another word. From that day on, he saw the Bible in a completely different light.

Stress

“I’m so stressed!” This is a common exclamation made by people living in this day and age. Young people experience stress, and even seniors as they advance in age seem unable to live in a calm and relaxed state. Where does stress come from, or what is the cause of stress?

There are a number of reasons that cause or increase stress that could be mentioned. And each person reacts differently to stress, depending on his or her temperament.

The Pressure of Our Time

The pressure of the modern world in which we live can impact people negatively. They feel as if they are being pushed. The pace is much quicker than it was several years ago. In a short timespan we can travel to a distant location, and so on.

The efficiency of our time often increases rather than decreases our stress. Things still do not go quickly enough. This is the case for the homemaker, the student, and the businessman. We work and run and barely fit enough into a day. Our modern technology does not seem to help us become calmer or more contemplative. It does not help us to better manage our time. It’s as if someone is whispering in our ear, “Hurry, hurry! You must, you must!” Consequently, we barely take time each day to come to our knees and renew ourselves in prayer. Nor do we call a Bible verse to memory to draw strength from the Lord and become refreshed. Yet this is so crucial in order to complete a task with blessing. Jesus says, “Ask, and it will be given to you” (Matthew 7:7). And Paul admonishes us to “be anxious for nothing” (Philippians 4:6).

The Lord wants us to be diligent in our work. However, it is better to complete a task with care than in haste, for the danger exists that we will not be satisfied with our work later on and our nerves will become tense as a result. We must be self-disciplined to manage our time properly. This includes planning time increments where we can take a break and be renewed.

Difficult Circumstances

Someone we love might suddenly pass away, or we may be affected by an illness. In these circumstances we must be careful about asking the question “Why?” We live in a

fallen world. Through sin, problems and death came into the world. Therefore we must try not to blame God. Our all-knowing God allows things to happen, but regardless of what happens, He has thoughts of peace toward us (Jeremiah 29:11). He wants us to learn and grow from all things. If we were able to view every situation from an eternal perspective, we would find many blessings that remain unseen in this life.

The list of causes for stress could be continued: We are treated unfairly... We are falsely accused... No one understands us...

How are we to act in these situations?

In all circumstances our best option is to pray and ask God for help. We should lay our burdens down, become still, simply tell Him everything, and place ourselves in His guiding hand—regardless of how small or big the problem seems. The Lord Jesus invites us with open arms: “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

Too often we think we can cope on our own. We suffer alone and think we will manage by ourselves. We often do not take enough time to ask the Lord, “What purpose does this serve?” The Lord has a plan for us and wants to draw us closer to Him, to form us and to prepare us for a specific purpose. The enemy, however, is busy trying to convince us that our need is too small or insignificant to matter to God. Homemakers especially are greatly tempted in this area. For this reason they sometimes work themselves into a pit of worry where they soon find no escape. They come to a point where they lose all hope and some even sink into depression, a state into which overly-conscientious or melancholy people may fall.

Careful Not to Doubt

If we are easily discouraged, we should especially be on guard not to allow ourselves to doubt, which is the first

step to unbelief. We should take God at His Word and claim the promises that are freely available to all His children. We must not place too much value on our feelings. Scripture tells us of Abraham: “[...]who contrary to hope, in hope believed” (Romans 4:18-20). This passage often strengthened my faith in difficult times.

Every child of God sometimes goes through valleys where he or she thinks: “My situation is beyond help,” or “I am the only

one that is experiencing this!” To Elijah, God said: “there are still 7000...” Only when our heart obediently relies on God’s Word shall it be healed. Yes, with child-like faith in His Word, we know His grace is sufficient. The time will come when we can joyfully praise God.

Aganetha Friesen
Neustädt, Mexico

No More Family Devotions?

Are you familiar with Mr. Mende? Let me introduce him to you. You may discover that you already know him!

Mr. Mende is a married father of two children, and an account manager at an office. Every day when Mr. Mende goes to work, you will witness the same ritual: He tosses his coffee down while standing; he breezes through the hallway, grabs the jacket his wife is holding out to him, into which he has wrestled himself enough, by the time he has reached the bottom stair, to close its last buttons; and then, with his jaw still working vigorously at the last bite of breakfast, he deftly, but just barely, makes it into the crowded city bus. Then, at 8:00 am on the dot, he crashes into his office, greeted by a desk piled high with yesterday’s work.

In the evening he returns home, exhausted, sinking into his chair behind the evening paper. After supper, he reaches for the paperwork he’s brought home from the office. He has to work overtime in order to settle all of the accounts. On two evenings of the week, he goes out to do bookkeeping work for an acquaintance as a favor. On Sunday, he sleeps in until 10 am—a person working as hard as he does deserves some rest!—and in the afternoon, he heads for the sports stadium.

But now, if you asked Mr. Mende about his wife and children, he would look up, startled. My family? Oh yes, right. Well, they’re fine, I think. And the kids, how are they doing in school? If you asked Mr. Mende a question like this, he would refer you to his wife. He is not privy to the many details of his children’s lives. After all, he is too tied up with all his work and hardly sees them.

But if you wanted to really perplex Mr. Mende, you would ask him if he ever takes his family to church, or leads them in family devotions. Church? Well sure! At Easter and Christmas, yes, they go to church! And family devotions?

Well, he has no idea how to do such a thing, and even if he did, he has absolutely no time for it.

This is the life of Mr. Mende. How closely does it resemble yours? Perhaps I’ve introduced you to yourself? Perhaps you have come to have time only for your work, and none to speak of for your family? Head over heels you stumble out of the house in the morning, day after day, and the accumulation of stress has you visiting the doctor more and more frequently. And family devotions? You haven’t done that with your loved ones in years!

If this describes your life, God is calling you to repent and turn back to Him! It is a great blessing for the family to spend time reading God’s Word and praying together on a daily basis. How, indeed, shall they find their way through a dark world without stepping daily into heaven’s light? The Psalmist says, “My soul clings to the dust; revive me according to Your word” (Psalm 119:25); and, “This is my comfort in my affliction, for Your word has given me life” (Psalm 119:50). ‘Dust’ is the word the psalmist uses. Is this an accurate description of your situation? It is God’s Word that pulls you up from the dust. It is remarkable and life-altering to know about and utilize the power that flows from the Word of God!

We must reach out our hands to the Word of God. By looking into it diligently we find wisdom, direction, strength, and courage for the day ahead. In fact, the careful, faithful reader of God’s Word not only finds counsel and help for specific life situations, he finds the Helper, the Counselor Himself, Jesus Christ! He is the only Redeemer and Savior, who, through His death on the cross, frees us from our sin and makes us into children of God. We then have the blessed benefit of walking through this life hand in hand with our Father in Heaven.

Journey to Pallasovka 2014

“I am seeking my brothers!” That was the first message many years ago at the camp meeting in Kamenska, Kazakhstan in 1991. It was also Brother Nimz’s first message in Pallasovka.

We can look back with thankfulness and say: “The Lord provided grace for our journey”.

Brother Nimz had long expressed the desire to visit the brothers and sisters in Pallasovka and Lipovka. Several of them had often attended the meetings in Kazakhstan. God opened the doors and made it possible to make this journey from April 30 to May 14, 2014. Brother Waldemar Raimann from the church in Eppingen and I were also able to go along on this trip.

Geography

We have often been asked: “Where is Pallasovka?” Pallasovka lies east of the Volga River, between Saratov and Volgograd, not far from the Kazakhstan border. The exact location of the church building in Pallasovka, Volgograd Oblast, Russia, is: 50.050721, 46.899009. One can enter these coordinates in Google Maps to see the site of the church building.

History

Just like every other church, the church in Pallasovka has its own history. Brother Ebel visited this region at the beginning of the twentieth century, as did Brother Döbert and Brother Malzon. There was at that time a Church of God in Krasnyy Kut, north

of Pallasovka, as well as in other villages. During World War I, many were evacuated from Volhynia into this region.

Before the departure to Germany was permitted in the 1990s, a few families still remained here, led by Brother Viktor Laub. In 1994, he asked Brother Waldemar Grüner to come to Pallasovka. It was a sacrifice and not an easy task, but the Lord opened many doors and made the relocation of the Grüner family possible. In time other families arrived, and today there is a group of around 60 people, led by Brothers Waldemar and Eduard Grüner, and Brother Waldemar Buch.

The Journey

The trip went very well and we were joyfully received by the brothers at the airport in Volgograd. Because we arrived at midnight and Brother Nimz had already made the long trip from Western Canada, we stayed overnight in a hotel. In the morning, we visited Daniel Grüner (age 15), who was in the hospital in Volgograd after major surgery. By the time we arrived in Pallasovka it was already around 7:00 pm. The May holiday provided an excellent opportunity to hold a church conference. We had two services on both Saturday and Sunday and a special youth service on Sunday evening. Altogether, we participated in 13 services during this entire time. Brother Waldemar Raimann was a great help with translation.



Lugovskoje

I would like to give a special report about a service in Lugovskoje. This village is about 100 km north of Pallasovka and a small group gathers there in the home of the Moskalenko family. On Wednesday, May 7, we drove there in the afternoon. A service was planned for 4 pm, and along the way we picked up a few others from the villages. Brother Nimz had asked me to prepare a message of 25 – 30 minutes, Brother Raimann to prepare a testimony of 10 minutes, and then he would close with a short message. Brother Moskalenko opened the service, there was a lot of singing, my message was 35 minutes long, Brother Raimann's poem and testimony 30 minutes long, and Brother Nimz's message (with translation) was 50 minutes long. Then there were still a few other testimonies, so that the entire service lasted three hours. One sister said that for her the time had flown by unnoticed. The hunger for God's Word and the attentiveness of the listeners was great, and the presence of the Holy Spirit was clearly felt. That is surely only thanks to the many prayers and to God's grace.

Lipovka

During the second weekend, we were in Lipovka, near Saratov. The way there lies north, and when one drives through the fields, it is 220 km. If one takes the regular roads, it is 120 km further. The shorter way was not always easy for us. We had to drive a long way around a swampy section. We were joyfully received in

Lipovka. A small congregation, consisting mainly of sisters, has existed here since the middle of the 1990s. Sister Karina Movsesjan and Sister Amest Safarjan lead the congregation. They have their own building and the congregation has made progress despite many hardships. There are very few job opportunities here. The people have to provide for themselves by working from home. This was my fourth time there and I have wonderful memories of my first visit with Brother and Sister Gutbrot and Brothers Roland Stieben and Viktor Penner. The Lord blessed us richly at that time; there was a great spiritual hunger in Russia due to adversity. But even now we were able to rejoice in God's presence and blessings. On Sunday afternoon we returned to Pallasovka.

We also visited various families. Sometimes people gathered together spontaneously and there was wonderful spiritual fellowship. We were to help them spiritually, but we ourselves learned much. The blessed morning devotions and prayer meetings will remain unforgettable.

God's protecting hand was with us on our return home. We are very thankful for the hospitality we experienced as well as for all those from many congregations who prayed for us. May the Lord continue to strengthen and bless the bond between congregations. To Him be all honor and praise.

Helmut Brose
Herford, Germany

Experiences with God

“Through the Lord’s mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ‘The Lord is my portion,’ says my soul, ‘therefore I hope in Him!’”

(Lamentations 3:22–24)

I will never forget Wednesday, the 19th of January, 2011. I would like to give a testimony of what the Lord did out of compassion on my 80-year-old body. I did not want to write anything at first because all our friends and relatives had already heard of it here and also in other countries. My conscience however told me that many others also needed to see the good that God did for me.

That Wednesday I drove to prayer meeting in my car, as I had done for over 50 years, when suddenly another car appeared and hurtled at me with great speed. It slammed into the side of my car and rammed me over the sidewalk and lawn and finally against a tree. A man rushed out of a nearby house in time to see the driver run off. My car was crushed and I appeared to be dead. He called the police, who carefully removed me from the car and brought me to the hospital. I was so severely injured that they rushed me to a hospital in Vancouver that was better equipped to deal with severe trauma incidents.

It was a 25-year-old man who had caused the accident. He was known to the police as an alcoholic, and had no driver’s license at the time. That evening, he had been drunk and was already on the run from another accident, hence the speed that almost cost me my life. Everyone who saw the car, even the doctors who performed the numerous complicated operations on me, agreed that I should not have survived the crash. It was only God’s great goodness that allowed me to live, and also granted the doctors the wisdom and the talent to piece me back together again.

Exactly how the accident happened and all that happened to me I only know from what they told me later. It was three weeks before I was fully conscious. I know I would not have endured the pain and discomfort during that time had I been conscious.

As I slowly grasped what had all happened, how my body had been practically crushed, I prayed hard that God would simply take me home. This was my darkest hour. Later I asked for forgiveness, and today I rejoice that I am still living and I thank Him for it.

On the very first day, the doctors worked for three hours to reposition my neck vertebrae and my left shoulder blade so that my head would have its proper foundation. It was an operation of extreme difficulty and the doctors could not guarantee my survival. My wife encouraged them with her faith that the Lord in heaven would do a miracle on me. One of the doctors agreed with her and it was truly a great miracle, as I had been completely paralyzed and could not move my arms or legs. My body took its time to heal, and my legs later had to relearn how to walk.

My heart was also affected, certainly because of the great loss of blood I endured. My lungs collapsed and several ribs were broken, posing danger to my internal organs.

The doctors were contemplating yet another operation, when one of the doctors suggested delaying a bit. Our Lord and Savior intervened here as well. The individual ribs found their places without human intervention and everything healed together well. My lungs give me no difficulty today. After I was fully conscious, I felt such extreme pain in my body that I screamed out loud. An examination led immediately to another operation. My abdominal cavity had filled with blood and my bowels had become infected. The intestines had to be washed and partly separated and led to another exit.

To me it seemed this was the beginning of the hardest time for me. I had tubes attached to my body everywhere; I was fed intravenously, was not able to drink anything, and could not move hand nor foot. I could lie only on my back, which in time developed bedsores. At the same time, the doctor explained to me that I would have to stay in the hospital for five to six months; an impossibility, it seemed to me.

Finally, finally, the long-awaited day came when the tubes were removed from my body. What a relief and

cause for rejoicing! For the first time I was able to have something to drink. I cannot even begin to describe this joy. But even though I was very grateful for this step forward, I began to think, "I don't want to stay here. I need to do something so that I can start moving my arms and legs again. I want to go home!"

The initial stages of my rehabilitation were very difficult for me; I won't let myself speak of it now. I could write much of how I learned to walk again.

My desire for a normal life only increased, so I did everything the medical staff asked me to. I was thankful for their love and patience with me.

My time in the hospital was just three days short of six months. I thank all who thought of me in prayer and carried my suffering before God's throne of grace. Those prayers made it possible for me to return home!

I know that brothers and sisters everywhere have prayed for me. God bless you all for that!

I also would like to thank all those who visited me. It is at times like these that one truly notices how brothers and sisters care for one another.

I am happy and grateful today that I am at home, and that, together with my wife, I can again be a part of the church services.

Ed Fechner
Chilliwack, BC

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Conventions

Canada

Fest Services in Edmonton: October 11 - 13, 2014

Argentina

Fest Services in Buenos Aires: September 16 - 21, 2014

Fest Services in Oberá - Misiones: September 24 - 28, 2014

FOUNDATION OF FAITH

Editor

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

Editorial Team

Dieter Jeske

Sieghard Schulz

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

•

The FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a journal of vital Christianity, published in the interest of the Church of God, that takes a clear and decisive stand for full salvation in Christ, the unity of all true believers, and the truths of the Bible.

The editors reserve the right to abridge and edit all materials and information submitted for publication. Research sources are listed for information only and should not necessarily be construed as an endorsement or recommendation.

•

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

All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission.

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 9

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a trademark owned by Christian Unity Press in the United States and foreign countries.

Printed in USA.

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

More Fruit

As a visitor to a garden admired the grapes hanging from its surrounding walls, the owner told him: "I hired a new gardener, who told me he could not do anything with this vineyard if he was not allowed to cut it back to the root stump. And he did, until nothing was left of the stalk. For two years no grapes grew. But now this is the amazing result."

God has great things in store for us and will do marvelous things to get our attention. The pruning shears are held by the hand of God and are guided by His holy love. People who already bear fruit in their lives will bring forth more fruit. People whom God wishes to use for special tasks must put up with a thorough pruning from Him.

Joseph had to suffer more than his brothers. Through this "pruning" he later became a blessing to many people. The Holy Spirit said of him through Jacob: "Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a well; his branches run over the wall" (Genesis 49:22). God's great question to us is this: Are we willing to allow ourselves to be pruned by Him, so that He can make us the blessing He planned for us to be?