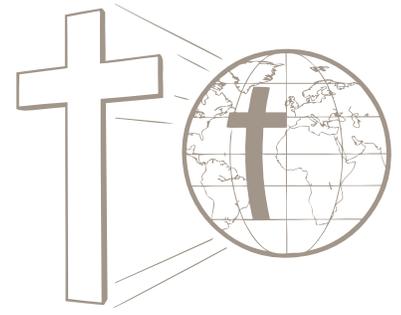


Foundation of Faith



*Remember
to Be
Thankful!*

When a Man
Robs God

Complaining
Is My Daily Bread

Experiences
with God

Mexico
Bible Course Report

How Can God Be
Just and Merciful?

Forget Not
All His Benefits!

October 2014

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Editorial

“You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:16).

This month we are reminded of Thanksgiving. All our readers certainly have a desire to bring thanks to God! We want to thank the Creator of heaven and earth that His eternal faithfulness reaffirms His promise to us every year: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). We were able to experience God’s kindnesses towards us again this year. Our Heavenly Father caused the sun to rise on the good and the evil, the just and the unjust (Matthew 5:45).

However, we did not only experience God’s benevolence in natural blessings. Yes, He opened His hand and supplied us richly with our daily bread, but God also gave us richly of the divine, heavenly manna. We thank God for His precious Word and all the promises it contains! We also experienced God’s favor in the gift of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. And not only that! We were able to receive daily from His fullness, and grace for grace (John 1:16)! He supplied us with comfort and assistance, love and mercy. Do you see it that way too? Has our faithful God not showered you with His limitless, unfathomable love?

O, let us thank Him and bring Him our offering of praise and tribute! We are His eternal debtors. In an old anthem, Rinkart expresses his gratitude as follows:

*Now thank we all our God
With hearts and hands and voices,
Who wondrous things hath done,
In whom the world rejoices;
Who, from our mothers’ arms,
Hath blessed us on our way
With countless gifts of love,
And still is ours today.*

I would like to remind all of us of a special obligation we have which, by doing it, will assure us of God’s continued favor upon us: “But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). If we do this and serve God faithfully, His favor and blessing will rest upon us!

H. D. Nimz

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When a Man Robs God

A preacher had a very stingy man in his congregation. Because this man professed to be a Christian, he was generally called the pious miser. Although he wanted the benefits of God's blessings and promises, he did not obey the command to honor the Lord with his possessions and with the first fruits of all his increase. The preacher felt that it was his duty to rebuke this man. Whenever this man was called upon to give an offering to the kingdom of God, he would offer as an excuse that he had a family to support.

One day as the preacher was making a visit in the village he met the pious miser working on his field. The preacher stopped to talk to the man, and he proposed that he set apart a section of his field to plant it and give the proceeds to the Lord. At first the farmer objected, but he finally agreed, and the preacher went on his way satisfied.

The farmer planted this portion of his field with corn, and it grew prolifically. When he next saw the preacher, he said that he had never seen corn grow so well. And more strangely, he planted the corn on his worst section of land.

"Well," said the preacher, "without a doubt the Lord has especially blessed the crop because you promised to give all the income from it to Him."

"I don't know," answered the old miser, "if I am obliged to give all of it to the Lord. I did not expect to reap more than one sack full of corn, but there are at least six sacks here. I think it is enough if I give just the one sack to God and keep the rest for my family."

The preacher tried to convince him otherwise, but he could not get a satisfactory answer. The preacher, therefore, left the farmer with a friendly admonition.

There was an unseasonable frost a few weeks later, and when the preacher next saw the man he asked if the frost had damaged any of his crops.

"Yes," he replied angrily, "every bit of grain is ruined except for the small parcel of land which I set apart."

"So the Lord's land was not touched," replied the preacher.

"You may call it the Lord's land, but I intend to use every ear of it for myself. No one with any sense would expect me to give it away when I cannot look forward to a harvest from the rest of my land."

The preacher replied, "Whatsoever a man sows, so shall he reap" (Galatians 6:7).

The miser beat a hasty retreat, and the preacher sadly went on his way with these words, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

Soon after, the preacher was transferred to another community, but a few months later he was traveling through the miser's neighborhood again. He went into a store to buy some things and asked the owner about the welfare of the people.

"You have certainly heard of Mr. E.'s loss," asked the shopkeeper.

"No, what happened?" replied the preacher.

"Well, you know his prized horse. Last night it tried to jump a fence and was pierced by a stake. The horse was severely wounded and died. The man has experienced misfortune after misfortune lately."

Some years later, the preacher moved back to the area where this incident had taken place. One evening while he was sitting in front of his house and reading, a man smoking an old pipe and wearing old clothes

approached the preacher with a slow walk. He was very tired and sat down on a nearby step to rest.

Upon closer observation, the preacher recognized the man as his old friend, Mr. E. He addressed the man by name. The man responded somewhat reluctantly, but seeing that the preacher knew who he was, he did not try to conceal his identity.

“Where do you live now?” asked the preacher.

“I don’t have a real home anymore,” replied the miser.

“Where is your wife?”

“She is dead.”

“And what happened to your land?”

“My land? I don’t have a farm anymore. I don’t have anything. I have lost everything.”

“Do you remember the time,” said the preacher,

“when you robbed God of what was His by taking the harvest that you had dedicated to Him for yourself?”

Startled, the man dropped his pipe. The pipe broke as it hit the ground. Nevertheless, the man pulled himself together and asked, “I would like to know what that has to do with my misfortune?”

The preacher tried to explain the situation to him, but the man was angry with the preacher, angry with God, and angry that his pipe broke. He simply got up and left.

May we learn from this story that we are only stewards of our belongings and that misfortune comes to those who cheat God. Sadly, this poor man lost not only his earthly goods, but worse still, he also lost his immortal soul.

God Is at Work

I often watched the farmers during planting season. With sharpened plows they cut deep furrows into the spring soil. One furrow would pile against the next until the entire field had been turned over. This plowing was necessary if the field was to produce fruit.

We are God's field. God sometimes cuts deep furrows in the landscape of our lives. The reason? He is preparing us to produce fruit!

I will never forget one of my friends from my university days. He was studying to become a lawyer. He had aced his exams and was now being considered for the bar. He came home for a visit during cherry season, and was excited to go and pick the sweet fruit in his father's orchard. No one saw what happened, but my friend was found with a broken spine next to the ladder that he had used to pick the tall cherry tree. He spent months in hospital, but no amount of medical expertise could restore his mobility. For 20 years he

would be an invalid, consigned to his bed. When he died, he was finally relieved of his physical suffering.

This was God's plow. It had cut an extraordinarily deep furrow in this young man's life. But the purpose was the same! God wanted to drop a seed in the cut that would bring fruit for eternity. My friend often testified, after he came to terms with his fate: "God had to bring this suffering upon me so that my inward man would not be eternally lost." God touched his body in order to redeem his soul. – "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:26)

Are you feeling God's plow as it cuts deep lines through your life? Hold still! He desires fruit from you! Before that can happen, He must prepare the soil and sow the seed. Be grateful! God is at work.

Thanksgiving

“Then you shall set it before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God. So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you and your house.”

Deuteronomy 26:10-11

These words were a commandment for Israel with regard to their firstfruit offerings and tithes. It might seem unusual to us that the instruction begins with the imperative, “you shall.”

I believe this word has something to teach us as well. If we become quiet before God and allow His Word to speak to us, we will notice it come alive in our worship. This godly direction fits the motive of our thanksgiving perfectly. What does it tell us?

Look above You!

What does that include? Above us is God. We believe and confess this. Both the Scripture passage cited above and the harvest remind us that we are completely dependent on God. Throughout the whole summer we are continually shown that God reigns in heaven. He determines sunshine and rain. Matthias Claudius expresses it beautifully:

*We plow the fields, and scatter
the good seed on the land;
But it is fed and watered
by God's almighty hand:
He sends the snow in winter,
the warmth to swell the grain,
the breezes and the sunshine,
and soft refreshing rain.*

*He only is the Maker
of all things near and far;
He paints the wayside flower,
He lights the evening star;
the winds and waves obey Him,
by Him the birds are fed;
much more to us, His children,
He gives our daily bread.*

*All good gifts around us
are sent from heaven above,
then thank the Lord,
oh thank the Lord
for all His love.¹*

In the scripture passage above, God wants to remind us that we enter His presence during our Thanksgiving celebrations. The phrase “before the Lord” is repeated. God does not only preside above the stars, He is also present over us. In the second verse of Deuteronomy 26 we read about the fruits of the land “that the Lord your God is giving you”. Yes, everything depends on God’s blessing! This gives us a reason to bow before the Lord. He gives us our daily bread. He gives strength for the workday. He provides job opportunities and an income.

We are to worship God. What does it mean to worship Him? The word “worship” actually means to “prostrate oneself before God.” The Israelites had brought their gifts. Then they were told, “you shall set it before the Lord your God, and worship!” Worship was a giving of themselves to God. When this inward gift was real, it was demonstrated through the outward action of offering. Worship and offering belonged together. Worship is part of an offering that is pleasing to God, and offering is required for true worship. It means we are thankful with our “hearts and hands and voices.”²

Look around You!

The Scripture passage further reminds us of “every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you.” God tells His people that He has given them to enjoy both the land “flowing with milk and honey” and all the fruits therein.

We recognize that the Lord has given us many good things this year as well. Some people prefer to see all the parts of their life that are not good. Yet, if we open our eyes for the good that God has blessed us with, then we will never have reason to complain.

When the Israelites brought their firstfruit offerings to God, they were supposed to remember how God had freed them from slavery in Egypt and given them good things to appreciate.

We too want to thank the Lord for redemption and salvation from the bondage of sin by the power of Jesus Christ. We have been delivered from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Colossians 1:13). We partake of the rich blessings of His table. We are blessed with every heavenly blessing.

Let us accept the physical gifts from the Lord with thanksgiving, without excluding our praise for the heavenly blessings. Jesus Christ should be our abundant life.

Look inside of You!

Our inward spirit, our heart, should also respond to this Word. “You shall rejoice!” Joy cannot be commanded, it is a gift. However, we can have an attitude prepared for joy. This is not something we have to attain with sorrow and trouble. God’s Word exhorts us to “rejoice in the Lord always!” (Philippians 4:4). Jesus wants to offer us true joy. We are more effective witnesses for Him when we have a joyful heart and

countenance.

Dare to be joyful! What if sorrows threaten to burden us again? Cast them all on the Lord! He did not say, ‘You shall worry,’ but rather, “you shall rejoice!” These words are true for every day of the year, for your entire life.

We should rejoice in the presence of the Lord our God! He is faithful. He is eternal and is our God. Should that not suffice? Through Him we have access to the wealth of His riches. A relationship with Him means we have life more abundantly. From His fullness we may take grace for grace.

1. Hymn. Claudius, Matthias. "We Plow the Fields and Scatter". 1782. Public Domain.

2. Hymn. Rinkart, Martin. "Now Thank We All Our God". 1636. Public Domain.

What Will You Reap?

Fall has arrived, and the farmer now harvests what he planted in the spring. This happens because of an irrefutable law: “for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). When wheat is sown, then wheat is harvested. Everyone understands this. God confirmed and defined this law when He stated: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22).

Just as God established the laws of nature, He also gave us moral laws to live by. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life” (Galatians 6:7-8). There is no one that can deny or change this. Just as fields are seeded and harvested, there will also be a harvest if we overstep God’s moral laws.

No one can escape the consequences when bad seed is sown. Whoever engages in a sin-filled lifestyle will have to bear the consequences. That is guaranteed. Sometimes it may seem that living in sin brings much joy and happiness, but this is a big deception. Sin will always pay out its rewards. It cannot be evaded. The bitterness that follows sin is inevitable. The law of seeding and harvest cannot be changed. We are warned, “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7).

Hosea writes, “They sow the wind, and reap the whirlwind” (Hosea 8:7). The truth of this verse can be seen in the lives of those who only live for the pleasures of this world. Their moral standards disappear, their health may be compromised, and in the end their life is miserable. They have no direction and are driven to and fro. Finally, they sink deeper and deeper

into sin and end up completely destroyed. How tragic when we see young people, who have their whole future ahead of them, ruined by sin. Their lives become filled with shame and disgrace. Someone living in sin will not make it to heaven. Those who are disobedient and ignore God’s commandments will reap the consequences. “For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption” (Galatians 6:8).

A son gave his father a lot of grief and heartache because of his sinful lifestyle. For every sin his son committed, the father decided to drive a nail into a piece of wood. Over time, there were many nails driven into that piece of wood. One day, his son found the Lord and remorsefully asked his father for forgiveness. He gladly forgave him. His father then went and pulled all the nails out of the board. When his son looked at the board, he started to cry, “Father, the nails are all gone but the holes are still there.” He very clearly realized that although he was forgiven, the imprints remained.

In spite of forgiveness, the destruction that a sin-filled life leaves on others can rarely be restored. The memories of those events will remain painful. Even the apostle Paul lamented, “For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God” (1 Corinthians 15:9).

We all want to experience a good harvest in our life. Therefore it is absolutely necessary to sow good seed. Most importantly, we need to become followers of Jesus Christ. Experiencing salvation and forgiveness of our sins is the only way this can happen. We need to make a new start if we want to sow to the Spirit and reap everlasting life. We do not just sow for this life but for all eternity. Let us then be very careful in what we sow.

Counting Our Blessings

God is good! His kindness exceeds every boundary our logic or imagination might set. He distributes His physical blessings to all people, and yet He has set aside special spiritual gifts for those people who love Him without reservation, and follow in His ways.

We were at a prayer meeting. The brothers and sisters of the congregation were encouraged to share a testimony to God's glory. As one after another shared their testimony, it became evident that they were all hinged on one thought: "blessings."

One said, "My daily prayer is that God would give me His blessing. I have no joy in life when the weeks pass by without a blessing from the Lord. When I am blessed, I am happy. My face shines with joy and others are curious to know the source of my joy." In response to this comment, another brother said, "It all depends on the extent of the blessings God bestows on us" – I believe the brother said it correctly. Now, what exactly are blessings?

The Physical Blessings

"For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God" (Hebrews 6:7). This Word is fulfilled on a daily basis. The Lord in all His goodness pours out His blessing on both the righteous and the unrighteous. He sends rain and sunshine, seedtime and harvest. It is a privilege to recognize this and take everything from His hand. He has given us a home, clothing and nourishment, neighbors and friends. Most of us are also blessed with health and strength to do our daily work.

We are also blessed with music. The highest expression of music is when songs are sung or played by God's children to the glory and praise of our great God.

If I attempted to list everything that is a result of God's goodness, I would not even be able to comprehend half of it with my limited understanding. Someday in heaven we

will be able to recognize the depth and breadth of God's love. The psalmist knew this and proclaimed, "For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward those who fear Him" (Psalm 103:11).

Think of the beauty and splendor of nature that surrounds us! The birds, flowers, mountains, forests, and oceans all speak to us by their ever-changing natural drama. In springtime God blesses us with singing and chirping, refreshing rain and thousands of other things. Do we fully acknowledge these as His good gifts? Do we always have a thankful heart?

Spiritual Blessings

All people can enjoy these material and physical gifts. Yet for us as His children, God has even greater blessings in store. We not only enjoy the wonders of His creation, we also have the great privilege of knowing His plan of salvation and appreciating things of eternal value.

These are the spiritual blessings. At the forefront is salvation from sin, which was already prophesied in the promise that God gave to Abraham, "in you and in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed" (Genesis 28:4). Salvation, and everything it encompasses, is by far the greatest blessing that God could bestow on mankind. Through justification, made possible by the suffering and death of the only begotten Son, our souls can be freed from the bondage of sin. From that moment, a new creation is born – a sinner becomes a child of God. The person who had formerly followed Satan enters into a relationship with God.

Through the second work of grace, sanctification, our

heart is fully cleansed by faith and the Holy Spirit dwells in us. What a blessed, wonderful experience! Each day we can drink from the fountain of His grace and mercy. This grace enables us to withstand temptation and claim the victory. It makes the load lighter, the difficult road more pleasant and gives us courage. It also gives us the joy we need, especially when we walk through dark valleys. This is why we should do our utmost to claim this blessing for ourselves.

Another blessing is divine healing. There are few who do not identify healing from physical illness as a blessing. Consider how deeply the infirm desire to be freed from their suffering. I have often heard people praise and thank God with joyful hearts for the healing of their body.

Special Gifts of Blessing

The heart of a Christian is refreshed when he receives a special blessing from God's hand that comes to him like a gift from heaven. Everyone has the opportunity to receive this kind of heavenly blessing. However, there are some prerequisites that we need to fulfill according to God's Word.

Full consecration is one of these prerequisites. There is more to this than most Christians think. Consecration means that we take every personal aspiration and every personal goal that we might still possess and lay them in God's hands for His complete direction and control. Let us give ourselves fully to the Lord and His will!

Obedience is equally necessary in order to receive the blessings of God. "Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). If we obey the entirety of God's Word, even to the smallest detail, then we will experience these showers of blessing.

In order to receive God's blessings, we must ourselves be generous, and give as the Holy Spirit leads us. It seems to me that God's children, who have been given so much, often neglect this critical area. This is often the reason Christians are lacking in spiritual blessings.

Brothers and sisters, let us grow quiet in the presence of God and contemplate all the blessings that we have received from the gracious hand of God. We will be overwhelmed by the fullness of all that God has given us!

O.M. Ballenger



Ungratefulness towards God

At times, it seems the most distinguishing feature of our affluent culture is our ingratitude. Even though our basic needs are more than met, we constantly find reason to complain. Often, these complaints are directed against our great, faithful, and merciful God.

“Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful” (Romans 1:21). This verse depicts the view that most people have of their Creator. There may be people who know nothing of God and therefore are unable to praise Him. However, there are only few people in civilized countries who do not know that God is the Creator and Giver of all good things.

We are all put off by unthankfulness. When we give someone a small gift, we are pleased when we sense it is appreciated. God has the right to expect us to appreciate what He gives us. After all, everything belongs to Him! He says: “For every beast of the forest is Mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills” (Psalm 50:10). Further, we read in Haggai 2:8: “‘The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,’ says the Lord of hosts.” And in Ezekiel 18:4 God declares: “Behold, all souls are Mine.” - He has bought all of us at a high price- with the precious blood of Christ! That is why the Lord should be praised more. Everything that we have comes from Him. He is the Giver of all good things.

I don't know if people have always been as unthankful as they are now. The Bible tells us about some of the circumstances that will characterize the end times. Among other things, unthankfulness is also listed.

It is a good custom to set aside one day of the year to express our thanks to God for all of the blessings we have received. But I believe strongly that it pleases God when we thank Him continually and immediately for the good that He shows us.

When Jesus healed the ten lepers, only one came back to thank Him. Jesus asked: “Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine?” (Luke 17:17)

I have been a witness of several wonderful healings where God intervened. From a human standpoint, the person was beyond hope. Regrettably, some of these people that were healed didn't give God the glory. Some do not serve Him at all! Oh, what unthankfulness!

In our day, people pray little—but they thank even less! Often we are driven to prayer because of our own interests. However, only love moves us to express gratitude.

We all have reason enough to be thankful. There is so much that we can be happy about and for which we should give thanks. When we are tempted to complain and to be unhappy about our circumstance, let us look around us and we will soon realize that we are privileged more than many others. A poor man complained that he didn't even own any shoes. But when he met a man who didn't have any feet, he thanked God, despite his poverty, that He had given him healthy feet.

If we were to thank more, we would be happier and make others happier as well. A thankful person is content. A godly man once said: “Nature is more thankful than man. The flower directs its blooms toward the sun. Your thanks should be the blossom that the sun of compassion awakes in you. But how often do the thoughts of man turn toward himself and not toward God!”

In a season of gratitude the soul anchors itself in God. Prayers of thanksgiving develop your childlike interaction with God more than prayers of petition do. A thankful heart has joy every day to come before God again. It also always finds an open door.

Let us give thanks as long as we have breath. We always have reason to be thankful. Johannes Arndt said: “Giving

thanks has many virtues: The knowledge of God, for it acknowledges that God is the source of all good. The fear of God, namely the childlike fear that the child of God receives from the Father of all benefaction. The humility through which one realizes that we don't have anything of our own but that everything is from God." In some cultures it is the custom to first thank God for a gift that is received, and afterwards to thank the giver.

Is there anyone who has no reason to thank God? How many of us are joyful for the good that the Lord has given us, but don't thank Him for it? Let us make it a practice to thank God for everything! How many blessings we are able to receive! Let us follow the example of the Psalmist, who said: "I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth" (Psalm 34:1).

God is Faithful!

God is unchanging. He stands firmly by His promises. His character provides a rock-solid foundation for us in the changing seasons of life.

God is faithful! The apostle Paul wrote these words in his second letter to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 1:18). He had found himself in a difficult situation and God had wonderfully granted him help and guidance. We can clearly see the great thankfulness and joy contained in these words; Paul was thanking God for His faithfulness.

We have certainly experienced God's faithfulness this year! Most of us have taken many things for granted. Now we need to stand still and reflect. Look around you and you will agree – it is indeed time for Thanksgiving!

With this in mind, God wants to remind us via His Word that HE is the Giver of all good things! The apostle James confirms this with the words, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning" (James 1:17).

We must therefore sincerely thank HIM as His followers! We must give thanks, with words, pure hearts, and deeds. We worship and praise Him, with deeds towards those who need help, and with thank offerings to the LORD.

How dependent we are on God's faithfulness, goodness and grace! We live only by His creativity and compassion. Every piece of bread, yes, all food on our table is a gift from God's good hand to us. With an aching heart, God often has to watch how His gift of love is ignored and thanklessly thrown away like a piece of trash. Living wastefully is not to God's glory. Let us instead bring glory to His name by

passing on the good which God entrusted to us. We give our thanks with the means that we have in order to advance the work of the gospel. The psalmist Asaph writes: "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God" (Psalm 50:23).

God's Word clearly shows us that sincere gratitude is the pathway to spiritual blessings. Have we not all received various blessings from the LORD? They will only multiply when our gratitude increases.

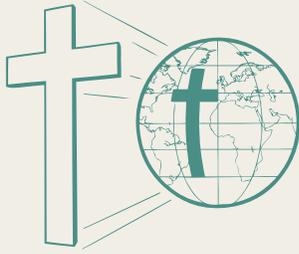
Indeed, God was and is faithful. We must not be unfaithful; we must prove our love and faithfulness to HIM. A quotation from long ago says, "If we keep thanking, God keeps blessing!"

Yes, what a faithful God! HE has never forsaken us (this could not always be said of ourselves). Therefore God calls to us in His Word: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2). How could we forget His grace and goodness?

Pass it on, that which God has entrusted to you. A lake that has no outflowing stream will get marshy and become a useless moor. The person who does not pass on what God has given him will likewise become unfruitful.

Let us examine our hearts before God so that our gratitude might be pleasing to HIM. How will you thank HIM? Remember – HE is faithful and wants to bless you!

Alfred Brix
Chilliwack, BC



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Forget Not All His Benefits!

At no other time of year do we experience the outpouring of God's blessings on us as during the harvest. That is why this special time of year brings such joy and excitement! An even greater joy is when God pours out His spiritual blessings on us. The prophet Isaiah, in pointing us to Christ, connected these two blessings when he wrote, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in the land of the shadow of death, upon them a light has shined. You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil" (Isaiah 9: 2-3).

Every year, without fail, our Creator gives us a global harvest. It is a miracle. People travel long distances to see the so-called wonders of the world created by man. But the miracle of the harvest is mostly ignored. We should pay attention to the words of a poet who wanted to open our eyes to the wonders God created:

*Who planted the flowers in the green field?
Who woke the sprouting seeds?
Who placed the magnificent, rustling shrubs and trees?*

*Who gave the cheerful little birds life?
Who gave them delicate wings to fly?
And say, who taught them to sing?*

*And when I look up and see the sea of stars at night,
And watch how they twinkle in ethereal splendor;
I truly wish to know, who turned on these lights?*

The answer then comes in the chorus of the song:

"My Father in heaven made it all!"

Who would not want to lift up their voice in praise to our God? When Jesus preached the Sermon on the Mount, He alluded to the wonders of the harvest when He said, "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?... Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these" (Matthew 6:26,28-29).

Yet Jeremiah proclaimed, "this people has a defiant and rebellious heart" (Jeremiah 5:23). What a problem! How many people still thank God today for the abundance of blessings they receive from a harvest? Jeremiah goes on to say, "They do not say in their heart, 'Let us now fear the Lord our God, who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest'" (Jeremiah 5:24).

God, the Creator of all things, did give the promise in His Word, "While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, winter and summer, and day and night shall not cease" (Genesis 8:22). Yet to have an annual harvest is not guaranteed. People worldwide have often suffered a failed harvest due to various circumstances such as drought. Joel reminds us of this: "The field is wasted, the land mourns; for the grain is ruined, the new wine is dried up, the oil fails. Be ashamed, you farmers, wail, you



vine dressers, for the wheat and the barley; because the harvest of the field has perished” (Joel 1:10-11). Here we see a failed harvest and a missed blessing. The consequence is hunger and hardship! - And then what can the “wise” and godless man do?

The following is a story that contains a great truth:

A robin and a sparrow are having a conversation about the life of humans:

“One thing I would really like to know,” said the robin, “is why the humans are always in such a terrible rush. They have worries, sorrows, and many afflictions, and never have the time to be happy and thankful. Can you solve this difficult problem for me? It seems to me that their life is pretty nice and comfortable!”

“Unfortunately, I can’t really tell you why they moan and fret and worry. I believe,” reflected the sparrow, “that they do not have it as good as you and I do. Our Father in heaven looks after us so faithfully. He gives us food and sunshine each day. He also knows exactly what we need. It seems to me that these humans do not know our Father.”

David tells us in Psalm 103:1, “Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me, bless His holy name!” So what is within us? Is there discontent, ingratitude, grumbling, anger, and bitterness? No praise for God can come out of such a heart. Melodious and godly praise can only come from a pure, grateful, thankful, and faith-filled heart. Are we in this kind of position before God?

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:2). A heart that is filled with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places can praise God anytime. Is He not the one who has redeemed us from all our troubles and iniquities? Has He not always provided us with His grace and mercy? Has He not always given us the necessary rain and blessed us with the fruits of the fields and trees?

Jesus taught us to ask for our daily bread and to give thanks. Our daily bread comes to us because of a good harvest. We should always give thanks for this gift. May God give us cheerful lips and a joyful and thankful heart!



Fighting the Good Fight of Faith

Paul said, "Fight the good fight of faith" (1 Timothy 6:12). This world is a battleground of spiritual forces. If we are spiritual beings, it is impossible to hold ourselves neutral and stand apart from those forces that are in conflict. We must stand on one side or the other of the battle array. Jesus has said, "He that is not with me is against me" (Matthew 12:30). Since we must be in the conflict whether or not we want to be, it is essential for us to be on the right side. When we know that we are on the right side, then the thing of greatest importance to us is the method of our warfare. Since we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against the principalities and powers of evil, it is not strange that our weapons should not be carnal weapons, which are effective against material foes, but those spiritual weapons that are "mighty in God" (2 Corinthians 10:4).

One great outstanding fact in this battle of life is that it is necessarily a battle of faith. As I observe some people's methods of trying to fight this Christian warfare, it seems to me that they are rather fighting the fight of unbelief or of doubts. Instead of being confident with the confidence that true faith gives, they are always fearful. They are never certain they are going to win. They are never certain that their methods are going to prevail. They are always trembling and uncertain. When they do gain a victory, it seems more like a piece of good fortune than the result of their fighting. When they see a conflict coming, they shrink from it and look for some way to evade it. They are filled with fear of the outcome. Sometimes they fight in desperation and win, and when they see that they have won, they are surprised. They were almost sure that they would lose the battle; they were al-

most certain of defeat, but in some way they won. That victory, however, does not give them much courage to meet the next conflict. They meet it with the same fearfulness, with the same unbelief, with the same doubt. There is not the joyful note of victory in their song. They do not face the future with confident expectation of winning. They are continually harassed with their doubts; they are constantly troubled with forebodings. It is better to fight like this than not to fight at all, but there is a better way to fight.

Faith is the mightiest of all weapons. When our spirits are armed with faith, we may go confidently into any battle. We may have expectation of winning. We may know before we fight that victory is ours. We may face our adversary with calm confidence and with a consciousness of an indwelling power that is greater than his power. Has not God said, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world" (1 John 4:4)? If our faith claims that to be so, then God will make it so to us.

We must have faith in God. He is our leader. The army that does not have confidence in the ability and courage of its leader is half defeated before it goes into battle. Most of us, I think, have confidence in God's ability as a leader, and in His power and wisdom, and believe that He is able to overcome our foes. It is not His ability that we doubt. The only question that confronts us is, "Will He use that power to conquer our enemies?" We see that He has made many promises. It is easy to believe, in a general way, that they will be fulfilled, but when it comes to making direct applications to the situations that we meet, it is there that faith sometimes fails. Will God fight for us on this special occasion? Will God help us now?



*Our faith is
the victory that
has overcome
the world.*

1 JOHN 5:4

Will He really make good His word to us? Or will He fail us in the critical moment?

If God's promises are true, then the ones that relate to our particular needs are true, and they are true now. If they are true to others, they are true to us, for God is no respecter of persons. And if they are true to us, they are true to us now as well as they were yesterday or will be tomorrow. It is so easy to think that God would help others. They are more worthy than we are. Do you feel this way? Do you feel that if it were somebody else in your place, you could easily have faith that God would help them?

This brings us to the next important thought: We must have faith in ourselves as well as in God. We must have faith in our integrity and loyalty. Do we mean real business for God? Have we thrown ourselves unreservedly on the side of God in this battle? Do we intend with all our souls to fight the good fight of faith? Do we have it really settled that we are going to do the right thing? So many *want* to do what is right, but they are not sure that they *will* do it. They mean to do it, but they are constantly afraid that they will fail in doing it. This is not faith. Have confidence in yourself, not only in your loyalty and integrity and purpose to serve God, but also in your ability to do it. You can do it. You can

do it as well as any one else. That doubt and fearfulness that you have will only be a hindrance to you. Get rid of it. Develop confidence in yourself--not overconfidence that depends upon yourself, but that true confidence that depends on God helping you, which arms you with courage and trust in God and in yourself.

You must also have confidence in your weapons. Our weapons are "mighty in God," we are told. God has told you how to win, and just as surely as you follow His instructions and trust in Him for results, He will cause you to wear the victor's crown. Our cause is a righteous one. Have faith in that cause, and know that right must triumph. But remember that you cannot win unless you put your faith into your fighting. "And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith" (1 John 5:4). Believe that you will win. No matter how weak you are, no matter how great your foe, no matter what may confront you, go into the conflict with that courage that is born of faith. Believe that God will give you the victory. Do not consider defeat at all. Let your faith mount up, and say: "I can win, and I will win. In God I will conquer." Throw away your doubts. Make an end of them. Trust in God. His word is true. You can believe it if you will, and believing it, you shall be "more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37).

*“The army that does not have confidence
in the ability and courage of its leader is
half defeated before it goes into battle.”*

Divine Healing Today

Can we experience divine healing today?

In the last two lessons, we saw how God can heal our diseases and ailments. We saw how we can come to Him to receive this healing. Let me reiterate the promise that He has given us: “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons . . . they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16:17-18). Let me also affirm once more that divine healing was not limited to the apostolic age; it is a reality in the present time. God wants to reveal His glory as He heals our diseases and ailments today.

In this lesson, we want to look at a series of Bible passages which show that God can and will heal today. God Himself says:

Exodus 15:26

“If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.”

Deuteronomy 32:39

“Now see that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me; I kill and I make alive; I wound and I heal; nor is there any who can deliver from My hand.”

Matthew 28:18

“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.”

Now let us look at what men of God have said:

Isaiah 53:4-5

“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.”

Psalms 103:2-5

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits: who forgives all your iniquities, who heals all your diseases, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies, who satisfies your mouth with good things, so that your youth is renewed like the eagle’s.”

James 5:13-15

“Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 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.”

It is clear that even in this day and age of advanced medicine we have every reason to seek help from God in affliction. However, we must note two things.

First of all, we need to look for the glory of God in our illness. Precisely when God does not respond immediately to our request for healing, it is important to consider whether our only concern is our own well-being. Even in the face of all these promises we should never appear demanding, or be of the opinion that God must heal us. He must not! Instead, we must. We must humble ourselves before God and give Him glory. He has admitted in His wise foresight that we will have pain and discomfort. Sometimes, He wants to teach us something through the disease. We should ask Him what He is telling us. However, because He can heal us, we may come to Him in faith and pray, asking Him to redeem His promises.

Secondly, we must not disparage nor condemn the doctors nor the brothers and sisters in Christ who seek help from the medical profession in their illness. The evangelist Luke was a doctor, and Paul did not condemn him, but took him on his missionary journeys. The Scriptures give us no

right to think ill of these people, nor do they ever deny the right to seek human help. We harm ourselves if we give this fanatical pride room in our hearts.

Finally, we want to again direct you, dear reader, to the

time when Jesus lived on earth and healed many people. “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8).

Robert Witt

Questions & Answers

*Is it important to obtain sanctification immediately or very shortly after conversion?
Must one even obtain it in order to one day have eternal life?*

In regard to us as humans, God has actualized a unique plan to make His grace fully accessible to us: the plan of salvation.

Through sin, man is excluded from communion with God. God abhors sin and the people who commit sin. But God is a loving, merciful, and gracious God. He offers each person the opportunity to be freed from the burden and guilt of sin. At conversion, man experiences the forgiveness of sin. This gives him the right to someday be forever with God. There is no other way to obtain eternal life with God in glory.

But conversion is not the only thing that God has prepared for us in the plan of salvation. It is God's will for us, as children of God, that we experience sanctification. This is why Jesus urged the disciples just before His ascension to remain in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4).

Why did Jesus emphasize this so strongly? As the Son of God, He knew that an oppressive time would come for His disciples after the Ascension. On the one hand, they were asked to be His witnesses and to proclaim the gospel both in their familiar communities as well as across the world. On the other hand, He warned the disciples that their missionary efforts would garner them a lot of opposition from the Jews. Since He could no longer be with them physically, they needed a special source of power in order to survive. For them, this source was the Holy Spirit. One can already see this in the life of the apostle Peter. Before his experience at Pentecost, Peter feared people. He denied Jesus three times after His arrest for fear of being recognized as a follower of Christ. After his sanctification at Pentecost, he was no longer afraid. Filled with the Holy

Spirit, he delivered a powerful Pentecost sermon that was followed by the conversion of about 3,000 people. We find another wonderful incident which testifies to the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts 4:1–31.

Based on these (and also many other scripture passages) it becomes clear to us that if we want to go through life victoriously under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we need the experience of sanctification. If we want to be an effective instrument in God's hand, we need the experience of sanctification. If we want to firmly resist temptation and the wiles of Satan, we need the experience of sanctification. But when, in terms of conversion, is the right time for this? The Bible is silent about this. One thing is certain: The sooner we recognize our need for this, the better it will be for our spiritual life. For Paul there were all of three days between conversion and sanctification. For others, it was months, and again for others, it was years. God must bring us to the point in our spiritual development that we realize that the only appropriate response to God's mercy is our sacrifice on the altar of God (Romans 12:1; New Geneva translation). When we are ready, we enter into the promised peace of God and rest from our own works. This rest includes “dying to oneself.” This death to self is perhaps the greatest obstacle to be cleared in the experience of sanctification. However, if we reach out for this experience, read God's Word with this desire, and attend church with this desire, God will inevitably bring us to the point when we give ourselves to Him completely and experience sanctification. The sooner, the better.

Herbert Kowalski
Hamm, Germany

BIBLE COURSE FOR YOUTH - MEXICO 2014

Jesus once said to His listeners: “Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart” (Matthew 11:29). There is still nothing better than to learn from Jesus. He is the Truth. If we learn from Him, we will build on the right foundation.

For several years we have tried to plan something during the summer that would help our youth to gain a firm foundation for their lives. This year we invited Brother Mielke to cover some topics of doctrine with the young people.

In a time when many false teachings are circulating, it is important to have a clear understanding of what the Bible teaches. It was a time of blessing! It is our hope that it will benefit our youth in their everyday walk with the Lord.

The following testimonies, written by participants, will give some insight into our time together.

Peter Ens



I thank God for the opportunity that I had to attend the week of Bible sessions with Pastor Mielke. Every day I looked forward to getting off of work early to gather with other young people and study God’s Word together. God richly blessed my soul throughout the week as I was strengthened and encouraged to stand up for Christ even more and to not let my faith be shaken.

Sometimes it seems like we believe something just because it is taught in church, yet we do not take the time to study how these teachings relate to the Bible as a whole. Pastor Mielke used many Scripture references to show us how the Church of God teachings match with what the Bible teaches.

For example, I never gave much thought to what Jesus meant when He said to Peter, “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth

will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). During one of the presentations with Pastor Mielke, it became clear to me that Jesus was showing the disciples the way to heaven. The way was through salvation, which was the key. Since they had experienced salvation, they now owned the key of knowledge. Today, we know the way to heaven, so we also possess this key. Jesus said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19a). It is our responsibility to share this key with non-believers. If we do not act on the opportunities that God gives us, we are taking away possibilities for others to follow Christ. My prayer is that God would help me see the opportunities He gives me to witness to others as a gift from God and to use them wisely.

Connie Peters



I am very thankful for God's great love to me. Spiritually and physically He cares for me like a loving Father. I also thank God that I could take part in the week of Bible lessons taught by Brother Mielke. I was richly blessed and learned a lot.

I would like to summarize one of the lessons we had. In Romans 12:2 we read "but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." The Greek word used here is metamorphosis, which means transformation or change. The process through which a tadpole becomes a frog is metamorphosis. It is also the process by which a caterpillar is transformed into a butterfly.

Paul speaks in Romans 12:2 of a metamorphosis of the mind, a spiritual metamorphosis. What does this change look like? A caterpillar is bound to the earth; it eats and eats and cannot leave the ground or plant it is on. For a butterfly the opposite

is true, it can freely fly and float in the air. This is similar to our experience as humans. We are bound to the earth, to sin, and try to satisfy ourselves until we are tired of living this way. That is when God can transform us. We were created for heaven. To be able to live the way Romans 12:14-21 describes it, we need this spiritual metamorphosis, the mind of Christ. Christ lived for others, not for Himself. Jeremiah and Ezekiel prophesied of a time when such a metamorphosis would be possible: "... and take the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezekiel 11:9).

Dear Reader, have you experienced this spiritual metamorphosis yet? Jesus wants to give you a new heart, so that you can live above the things of this earth and be ready for heaven.

Netty Knelsen



How Can God Be Just *and* Merciful?

An Irishman named Patrick came to Spurgeon one day and begged permission to ask him a question. Spurgeon granted this request happily but, knowing that Patrick was Catholic, asked the man why he had not gone to his priest with the question. Patrick replied: “I did ask my priest, but I am not satisfied with his answer!”

“Well, then, what is your question?”

“It is this: God is just, and because He is just, He must punish my sins. I have earned punishment because of the things I have done. However, you preached that God is merciful and gracious, and that He forgives sins. I do not understand how this is possible. God has no right to forgive sins if He is just. How can He simply overlook a wrong? He must act justly and punish sin. Tell me, how can God be just and simultaneously merciful to forgive sins?”

“He can do that through the blood of Jesus Christ,” answered Spurgeon.

“That’s what the priest said, too, but he said many other things I do not understand. And your short answer is entirely unsatisfactory. I want to know how the blood of Christ makes it possible for God to be just and merciful.”

Spurgeon understood what the man wanted, and now he sat down with Patrick and explained the plan of salvation to him like this:

“Patrick, suppose you have committed a terrible crime and killed a man. Suppose a judge passes a sentence on you that you must be hanged.”

“I would deserve that sentence,” replied Patrick.

“Now suppose I loved you very much. Could you see a possibility that I could save you? Is there anything I could do to save you from that walk to the gallows?”

“No, I see no way out.” Patrick was sure of this.

“But suppose I went to the queen and told her that I love this Patrick very much. I know that the judge

passed a just sentence on him. I know that Patrick deserves to die for the heinous crime he committed. But could I not take Patrick’s punishment upon myself and die in his place? That would satisfy the law, would it not? Someone must die to do justice for this crime. It is unlikely that the queen would accept this offer. But suppose she could do so—and you see, God can do this, because He has greater power and authority than all the kings and queens of this earth—suppose the queen would allow me to hang in your place. Could you still be called to justice for this crime at some later date?”

Patrick replied thoughtfully: “No, I think not. And should someone try, I could say: Did not Spurgeon already take the punishment for this? Leave me alone—because surely you don’t want to hang two people for the same crime?”

Spurgeon smiled at Patrick: “You have understood this. That is exactly how we are saved from our sins. God is just, and He must punish sin. But Jesus Christ said: ‘Punish Me instead. Let me die for these sins’—and the Father accepted the redemption offer from His Son. All the burdens of every sin ever committed were laid on Christ, and He was punished and killed on the cross to pay for every single one of those sins. God would not be just if He punished those again who believe in Jesus and His sacrifice on the cross with all their hearts, and accept Jesus as their Redeemer through repentance and faith. If you, Patrick, repent, believe that Jesus died on your behalf, and accept Him as your personal Savior, you can be saved and be free from your sins, guilt, and the punishment you deserved.”

“That is a wonderful gospel!” rejoiced Patrick. “I understand now how God can be just and merciful. I want to trust Jesus, who took my sins upon Himself and took the punishment I deserved, and I want to be justified through Him.”

Be Steadfast!

Chatting and laughing, a group of girls came spilling out of school. On the playground, they stopped: "Let's play ball together!" they said. All agreed, excitedly. Only one of them, a younger girl, did not want to play along.

"I promised my mother that I would come home right after school," she said resolutely. She turned on her heel and hurried down the street, soon disappearing behind a corner. She stood steadfast!

A group of boys stood behind a high wall. What are they doing so excitedly? They're smoking cigarettes. They're all trying desperately to learn how to use this awful poison. Only one of them stands to the side and declares: "My father does not smoke, and I'm not going to start either!" He stood steadfast.

The Bible tells us of four young men who were raised in the courts of the pagan King Nebuchadnezzar. You can read this story in Daniel chapter 1. They did not eat of the exotic foods on the king's table and did not drink

his wine. They remained steadfast, and God rewarded their faithfulness. They were soon honored and elevated to high positions by the king.

The Bible also tells us of other steadfast young people. You can read about the sons of Rechab in Jeremiah 35. They obeyed their father's commandment not to drink wine. God honored them by holding them up as an example before the entire nation of Israel!

Be steadfast, dear children! If you stand firm in the face of little temptations, you will learn to be strong in times of great temptation. If you learn early on to always remain steadfast, it will be easier for you as you grow older. The Bible says, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

Be steadfast! God uses steadfast, faithful, obedient people upon whom He can rely. We all want to become these people to the glory of our great and wonderful God!



“Complaining Is My Daily Bread”

Little Anne often looks at her grandmother with wondering eyes. She is visiting her grandparents by herself for the first time. At home, she has a cheerful young mother who loves to laugh and play with her. In contrast, her grandmother complains constantly. Anne can understand when she complains about her rheumatism, because when Anne had a toothache, it was painful too.

But her grandmother finds a reason to complain every day. She complains because it rained on her laundry day, or the milk boiled over, or her neighbor was not friendly enough.

The complaining never stopped. Anne did not like it at all and neither did her grandfather. The other day he said to his wife, “Complaining really is your daily bread, Mother!”

One evening when Anne was already in bed and was thinking wistfully about her dear mother, she remembered the lovely story her mother had told her on her last evening at home.

When mother told a story it really came alive. It was a story about the little girl whose parents were so worried because she was deathly ill. Nobody could help her. Her father ran to Jesus and asked Him to come quickly. By the time they got back, it was too late. The little girl had died. They could hear the wailing and crying of the women who were mourning her death.

“It’s strange,” thought Anne, “that there were women back then who had to do the wailing.” She forgot about the end of the story where Jesus brought the little girl back to life. She just had to keep thinking about the strange wailing women.

The next day, Anne looked at her grandmother attentively. Finally she asked, “Grandma, are you one of those wailing women?” Somewhat stunned, her grand-

mother dropped her knitting and replied, “Where did that idea come from?” - “You complain so much that I thought...” - “Nonsense,” her grandmother said rather brusquely, “your grandmother is old, has pain and many worries. You don’t understand this yet.”

When Anne was happily playing outside with her ball again, her grandmother remained motionless in her chair. Her knitting lay forgotten on her lap. - “A wailing woman? Am I really a wailing woman?” - She sadly shook her gray head. What had her husband said to her the other day? - “Mother, complaining really is your daily bread.”

Instinctively her eyes wandered to the bread basket on her kitchen counter. Thank God, she never had to worry about having enough bread. Grandfather had worked for the post office and therefore had a very good pension. She could look after her small household quite well. After all, she was just over sixty years old. Her children and grandchildren were healthy and all of them had a good income. Actually, she really had it very good. Still - complaining, her daily bread?

Grandmother was deeply shocked with herself. What did complaining about unimportant things ever accomplish? All it did was cast gloom over her loved ones. Besides, she realized that her constant complaining showed discontent with God’s leading in her life, since God was the one who determined the course of her day. No, no, she would like to take her daily bread, as well as all the little events in her daily life, out of God’s hand.

If she really practices this, her complaining will stop and she will be able to praise and thank God for His many blessings. Of this we can be certain.

Theodora Gensichen

The Hardest Task

*What is the hardest thing to master?
To keep one's calm, despite disaster,
To be content, when life's not vibrant,
Though you are right, to still be silent.*

*To bear one's cross, without complaining,
To still keep hope, when not attaining,
To rest, when you desire pursuing,
But haven't got the strength for doing.*

*To be content when you need others
Since you've grown frail, and it's a bother
To do the things you once found easy.
Your step is slow, no longer speedy.*

*Weighed down with years, instead of sighing,
O, be content and keep relying
On Christ and trust in His salvation,
To help you conquer your temptations.*

*Fix not your heart on earth's possessions,
Let it be free and make concessions.
When circumstances change around you,
Let peace and gentleness surround you.*

*Accept the things you cannot alter
And let your faith in no way falter.
And as the days keep on progressing
The Lord will not withhold His blessing,*

*You may not have the strength to labor;
Continue to live in God's favor,
And fold your hands in humble prayer,
And pray for others, since you care.*

*And when your time on earth is finished
Your joy, it will not be diminished.
Rejoice, the best is yet to come,
When Jesus says, "My child, well done!"*

Pentecost Conference

Herford, Germany

This year my wife and I were blessed with the opportunity to attend the Pentecost services in Herford. We arrived in Germany on the thirteenth of May and used the time before the services to visit various congregations and meet our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Although we had never seen each other before, we felt a wonderful connection. This is an indescribable blessing that God's children possess – to be united in God.

Pentecost is one of the special celebrations for Christians and took place this year from June 7-9. For decades, the Church of God in Herford has had the opportunity to celebrate Pentecost with many believers from near and far. It is reminiscent of Jesus' promise, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Everyone who attended this special celebration can testify of the Holy Spirit's working during our time together. The presence of

the Holy Spirit was evident in every worship service.

It is wonderful that we could gather as God's family from many congregations in Germany and also from abroad, especially since working together for the Lord is so important. It is God's will for His people to be unified. Our Savior prayed for this. In John 17:22 we read, "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one." We read of the unity of the disciples at the time of Pentecost in Acts 2:1, "When the day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place".

The motto for these services was, "Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" Brother Peter Ens, from Mexico, was the guest speaker. God was able to use him to bring the Word with clarity. He spoke about the following topics: "The pursuit of the disciples before Pentecost", "God's remedy for sin", "The baptism with Spirit and fire", "The result of Pentecost" and "God loves you".

In the Old Testament we read that the nation of Israel





worked together on the construction of Jerusalem's wall "for the people had a mind to work" (Nehemiah 4:6). This attitude was visible during the services. The song presentations from the choir and musicians, as well as the joyful participation of the children, were a blessing during every service.

The breaks between the services allowed for time to talk with brothers and sisters and to share experiences. Like many other celebrations, this was one filled with joy and blessing. Although there was much work and sacrifice involved in the preparation, it was worth it, for God gave His blessing. May God richly reward all who contributed for their time, money, and effort.

On the last day, after the final service, the opportunity was given to be anointed. This time was also a great blessing. More than 20 people were anointed with earnest prayer. May the Lord glorify Himself in the lives of those who took this promise for themselves.

My desire is that the motto of these services would be fulfilled in our lives: "Be filled with the Holy Spirit!" Or, as it says in Ephesians 4:15-16, "may [we] grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ— [...] in love."

Manfredo Günter
Oberá, Argentina





Experiences with God

“Lord, I love the place where You live, the place where Your glory dwells.” (Psalm 26:8)

Ever since I became God’s child, it has been my heart’s desire to be in the house of Lord. Every time I am in His house, God blesses me richly. I never go home empty; God strengthens me, and fills me with new courage and joy. I experience God’s blessings in my personal devotions, too. God’s Word is to dwell among us richly. It is food for the soul. I am so thankful that we have preachers who bring us God’s Word, and I pray for them, that they might have joy to preach the gospel, because 1 Corinthians 15:58 reminds us that our labor in the Lord is not in vain.

I have experienced God’s faithfulness, as Psalm 33:4 states: “For the Word of the Lord is right and true, He is faithful in all He does.” Some time ago I suffered pain in my chest that eased when I lay down. But the pain worried me greatly, because my husband died of cancer, and I was afraid that I might also have cancer. I knelt down and prayed, asking God to help me. He heard my prayer. Since that day I have never had chest pain again. I am so thankful to God for this answered prayer. To Him be the glory! I recall a time when God spoke to me and said: “What is it that you want when you pray? Do you want your life to be easier, or do you want the Lord to be glorified?” I answered that I desire His glory, and that I might have the joyful assurance that I would be with Him one day.

I also find the Foundation of Faith to be valuable. I am so blessed by reading of the experiences that others have had with God. As His children, we want to pray for one another, that we can be faithful to Him. It is the sincere desire of my heart that others would find the Lord, because God does not wish for anyone to be lost. In 1 Timothy 2:4 we read of “God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.” We can never thank God enough that He loved us, and gave His life for us, that everyone who believes might be saved. I feel we have a huge responsibility to intercede for others in prayer, and not get tired of doing so. I am so thankful for all the good things that we take from God’s hands daily and that we live and work in freedom.

“Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all His benefits!” (Psalm 103:3)

Elisabeth Martens
Seminole, USA

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Church Conferences 2014

Fest Conference in Edmonton: October 11-13, 2014

NOTICE

Campmeeting 2015 in Germany

August 29 to September 5, 2015 in Blaubeuren

"Only fourteen days separate us from the campmeeting in Anderson, which will take place from May 31 to June 9, 1912. This is a wonderful opportunity for all Germans to hear the pure, undefiled gospel preached in their mother tongue. The Word of God, which is the only means by which souls can be set free, will be preached in the power of the Holy Spirit. Everyone will be offered the help they need for body and soul. A rich buffet for the soul will be set out so that people can truly enjoy this wonderful time of fellowship. When thousands are gathered in one place, powerful prayers can be lifted heavenward and move God to action on His kingly throne. The chains of sin and Satan can be broken, and souls can be set free. Please pray earnestly for the powerful working of the Holy Spirit and the success of the campmeeting!"

(excerpted from Evangeliums Posaune of May 17, 1912)

Like our brothers and sisters in Christ from many years ago, we look forward to a season in which we experience God's powerful working among us. Pray earnestly for a burning hunger and thirst for the presence of God and His Word; pray earnestly for the powerful working of the Holy Spirit and the success of this campmeeting. Please pray that God would guide us in the preparation and the conducting of the services. We are entirely dependent upon God for His help!

FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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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.

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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 10

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.

Afterwards

O, how bitter is the cup of sorrow,
The taste of medicine;
But how thankful we will be when tomorrow,
We see the good therein.

O, how hard it is for the heart that's boastful,
To break, to break in two.
But a true prayerful heart has the most pull,
When there's no hope in view.

O, there is no joy when the shears are purging,
From the branch the wild shoots;
But what wonderful growth will then be surging,
As the vine brings forth fruit.

Lord teach me to be still, when I am crossing
Through the valley of distress;
To know that afterwards t'will be a blessing,
For it brings peace and rest.