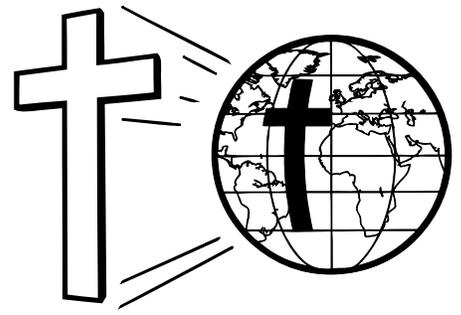


Foundation of Faith



Faith & Assurance

**Saving
Power**

**Assurance of
Salvation**

**What does
God Think of
Me?**

**Financial
Stewardship**

**A Matter of
Perspective**

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Editorial

The 11th chapter of Hebrews lists some heroes of the faith. Let me name a few of them:

- *By faith, Abel brought a special offering.*
- *By faith, Abraham demonstrated obedience.*
- *By faith, Jacob blessed his sons.*
- *By faith, Joseph prophesied the Egyptian exodus.*
- *By faith, Moses' parents hid their little boy.*

This chapter of Hebrews contains the expression "by faith" 21 times. We meet people who trusted their Creator God, listened to His Word, and obeyed it. To them, God was real: they did not question His existence and omnipotence.

In Romans 4:20-21 we also read about Abraham: "He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform."

What heroes of faith! The centurion from Capernaum was such a hero (Matthew 8:5-13)! Concerned about his servant, he beseeched Jesus: "Lord, my servant is lying at home paralyzed, dreadfully tormented." When Jesus responded that He would come to his house, the centurion answered: "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed." Jesus was amazed at his faith, saying to the onlookers: "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!"

Dear friend: God is still looking for such heroes of faith today! You can become one! Strengthen yourself in the Word of God, pray, and then trust the Lord completely. He will strengthen your faith and your assurance!

H. D. Nimz

Saving Power

Death had gripped him by the neck. Now, when he most needed it, the philosophy of his life and friends failed him. He died. His greatest legacy were his final words and his death.

In the first year of my work as a pastor, a strange incident occurred. The entrance of the town church bore the inscription, “The Gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes” (Romans 1:16).

On one occasion, a man came with his wife and two children. Although they had not visited the services before, they continued to come. The man listened attentively each Sunday, and after two months he requested to speak with me. When he began to speak, he told me of a shocking experience from his childhood.

“I was barely twelve years old when my father, a freethinker, became seriously ill. He was much respected, and he had a good position in the capital as the chief inspector of railways. At first, my father received many visits from his colleagues and friends, but when it became evident that a recovery was unlikely, the visits dwindled. Once, however, he asked my mother, with fear in his voice, to invite three of his favorite colleagues and the president of his freethinkers association.

“Evening came and everyone came as he had planned. Quietly they sat by my father’s bed and here and there one of them would utter an encouraging phrase, such as, ‘Friend, take heart. You will soon get well.’ Or, ‘Be brave. Things will get better soon.’

“My younger brother, my older sister, my mother, and I were also there. My father, with sweat on his brow, suddenly cried out, ‘Friends, you are lying to me! You and I both know that I am dying, and now I want to confess openly and honestly that I am no longer comfortable with my freethinking!’

“Then, he turned to the propagandist of freethinking, who with his liberal speeches and ungodly lectures had led many astray, and said with a loud voice, ‘My dear friend, tell me the best of what you have to say,

but say it on your truth and honor. Were you always sincere in your speeches? Can you guarantee that everything you said was true? Is there no God? And if there is one, can people make it without Him?’ The freethinker stuttered, ‘My dear friend, you are excited. Be reasonable! You must believe that you will get well again.’ My father shouted hoarsely in reply, ‘You are lying to me in the hour of my death!’ The four men rose up suddenly, and one of them said, ‘Hold it together. Be brave, man!’ As they left, my father shouted after them, ‘Hold it together! But that’s just it. I have no hold on life!’

“My father died that same night. After his friends had left, he said to us, ‘Let us pray!’ When we had prayed with deep feeling, my father fell back onto his pillow and said, ‘You must forgive me for not setting a better example. I did not know better. I listened to liars, but I want you to know that there is a God! There is an eternity! Do not follow my example. Seek God.’ He lay exhausted for a while, but suddenly, we heard my father speak these words, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ Those were my father’s last words.

“And now, you will naturally be interested in what my mother, my siblings, and I did next. Unfortunately, we were no more interested in God than before. My mother went to church every now and then. As children, we thought that there would be time to consider God later on in life. Later, when I started my career and moved to this city, God just wasn’t on my list of priorities. However, when I passed this church and read the inscription, ‘The Gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes,’ I felt God’s gentle nudge. The next Sunday, I visited the worship service with my family. And as you well know, I kept coming.

“One thing I must confess: I did not fully under-



stand everything right away. I probably did not pay enough attention. However, I soon began to wonder about the inscription on the pulpit. During my third visit, I began to look around the sanctuary, and I noticed a verse written on the pulpit. Because I was sitting too far back, I could not make out the words. That is why I wanted to sit closer to the front. After all, it was a verse that brought me into the church, and now I really wanted to see what was written on that pulpit.

“And so it came about that on the next Sunday I sat at the very front, and before the service began, I read the verse on the pulpit, ‘Behold, My eye has seen all this, My ear has heard and understood it’ (Job 13:1). I said to myself, ‘What a strange verse!’ It was true that I had heard many things, but I understood little. I thought to myself that these words were like a vow, ‘I will pay much closer attention from now on.’ And I did.”

After he had recounted his story, the man smiled

happily and said, “I now know that the Gospel has power to save.” – This incident occurred around Christmastime. Shortly after the New Year, I conducted his funeral. God wonderfully led this man to His salvation and then redeemed, he died suddenly of heart failure.

However, the story does not end here. While I told the story of this man’s conversion at his funeral, his mother and his siblings were so touched by the Gospel that they gave their lives to Jesus, and today they joyfully serve God. This man’s wife and children continued to visit the church services, where they sat in front of the pulpit that the man had loved so much. They too became children of God.

May this true story, dear reader, serve to strengthen your faith. However, if you have not experienced the truth of this story, then, in faith, take hold of these words: “The Gospel is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes.”

A Matter of Perspective

A man once stood on a soapbox at Hyde Park Corner, pouring scorn on Christianity: “People tell me that God exists, but I can’t see him. People tell me that there is life after death; but I can’t see it. People tell me that there is a judgment to come, but I can’t see it. People tell me there is a heaven and a hell, but I can’t see them.” He won cheap applause and climbed down from his “pulpit.”

Another struggled onto the soapbox and answered:

“People tell me there is green grass all around, but I can’t see it. People tell me that there is a blue sky above, but I can’t see it. People tell me that there are trees nearby, but I can’t see them. You see – I’m blind.”

“But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe...” (2 Corinthians 4:3-4). “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

Assurance of Salvation

There are some things about which we are absolutely certain. Of other things we may be relatively sure, and of some things we can only entertain hope. When it comes to the state of our soul, we need to know with full assurance.

When you ask religious people or active church members, “Are you saved from sin?” – “Do you have assurance of salvation?” their answer is often vague. They almost always respond, “I hope so.” – “I am striving to live a Christian life and I hope that I will be saved.” They do not know for certain.

And yet, when we read the New Testament, we find definitive and positive statements regarding the assurance of salvation. Those men and women knew with certainty that their sins had been forgiven. They knew that their lives were pleasing to God. They could say with John, “We know!” (1 John 3:14) They knew that they had passed from death to life. They were certain their names were written in the Lamb’s Book of Life. They knew they were abiding in Christ. The apostle Paul expressed this assurance of salvation for true children of God with the words: “For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1). “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:8). These Bible passages hold such assurance. There is no trace of any

doubt or uncertainty. They were certain of salvation because they knew that they had been obedient to God’s Word. They had done the Lord’s will and could accept His promises in faith and be assured of their salvation.

Christ came to this world from heaven to give us the assurance of salvation. When the angel announced Jesus’ birth he said to Joseph: “And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21). Jesus did not come to save people in their sins, but to save them from their sins. That is exactly what makes the Gospel message so wonderful. Christ came to free those who were enslaved and bound by sin and to redeem them completely. “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

Dear reader, if you have not attained assurance of salvation, you still can. Make a firm commitment to break with sin and decide to no longer live in it. This is true repentance. Those who truly repent turn away from sin and turn toward God. You cannot repent without being deeply sorry for the sins you have committed. How can you be truly sorry for your sins if you have not made the decision to leave them behind? The penitent soul must confess his sins. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

After confessing your sins to God, ask for forgiveness. Christ gave us the promise: “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you” (Matthew 7:7). If you find it difficult to attain this assurance ask God to help you. Ask Him to help you let go of anything that hinders you from grasping forgiveness and salvation. He will answer you. When we draw near to God, He will draw near to us (James 4:8). This is something we can rely on. When the father of the prodigal son saw him coming from afar, he ran to meet him (Luke 15:20). Likewise, God comes to meet every sinner who has decided to come to Him.

In our time there is much half-hearted Christianity. Do not be satisfied until you have the assurance of forgiveness of sin and the knowledge that you have gone from spiritual death to life. If you want to enter heaven you must be born again and become a child of God now, during this time of grace here on earth. We are completely transformed through the new birth. This is the proof that we have attained spiritual life: the old life of sin has ceased, a new life has begun, and the peace of God is reigning within.

Only those who are certain of their salvation are truly happy. The knowledge that God’s favor rests on our lives gives us joy here on earth. This happiness continues into eternity if we remain true to the Lord. Then we will enter into the indescribable glory of heaven, which “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). The apostle Paul was certain that he was on the way to this glorious goal. He knew that the crown of righteousness was waiting for him when his earthly career was over. We can have this same assurance. He said himself that this crown is laid up for everyone who loves the Lord, not just for him (2 Timothy 4:8).

We might be wrong about certain things in this life, and our error may be harmful to us. However, this is nothing compared to the loss we will suffer if we are in error about the salvation of our soul. If we are called from this life without the assurance of salvation, we will be lost. Only the blood of Jesus can redeem the soul. That is why it is vital for us to be certain of our salvation!

R. Howard

Active Faith

*In faith we near the Savior,
And cling unto the cross.
We live within His favor;
He saves that which is lost.*

*In faith we hate transgression
And cling unto His love.
We hold to that confession
To seek the things above.*

*In faith, despite temptation
We stand upon the rock.
We claim the one foundation
We trust the Word of God.*

*In faith we rest in Jesus,
Not on the works we do.
It is His power that frees us,
Through His salvation true.*

*In faith we give God glory
For what the Lord has done.
For the salvation story,
The blessings through His Son.*

*In Christ we claim his promise
By faith and not by sight,
Confirming what is honest,
Receiving what is right.*

*We wait, for we’ll be given
To share His majesty.
And one day up in heaven
We’ll see what we’ve believed.*

The Witness of the Spirit



“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” (Romans 8:16)

Many people are uncertain of how the witness of the Spirit is to be understood. It is the Lord’s will and the privilege of every child of God to be sure of their own salvation and to experience the joy this brings. We can have the same assurance as the man that Jesus healed of his blindness had. He could say: “One thing I know: that though I was blind, now I see” (John 9:25).

It is similar in the natural world. A farmer owned a field that was full of stones. Only with the greatest effort was it possible for him to feed himself and his family from it. When he died, he left the land to his oldest son. Just by chance, he discovered traces of gold. Investigations revealed that the stony land contained large riches. And the father passed away as a poor man because he didn’t know the riches that were hidden in the stony soil. The son became a rich man. The difference between father and son was just the fact that one did not know what he owned, while the other knew.

The witness of the Spirit is both direct and indirect. The direct witness is that God’s Spirit witnesses to our spirit that we have become acceptable to God and become a child of God. The indirect witness is somewhat similar to the witness of a good conscience toward God. This is a conviction we should gain from the Word of God and from our personal experience. The Word of God tells us that all who produce the fruit of the Spirit are children of God. When this fruit is visible in our lives, then we can draw this conclusion: I have met all of the conditions of biblical salvation and produce the fruit of the Spirit. For

this reason, I am certain I am a child of God.

We can expect this same Spirit who convicts us of our sins to also bear witness that our sins have been forgiven. And the Bible confirms this: “For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God” (Romans 8:15-16). (Also read Galatians 4:6 and 1. John 4:13.) These Scriptures teach us that it is the privilege of every child of God to have the witness of the Spirit.

The Bible gives us numerous indicators that our sins have been forgiven and that we have become children of God:

1. Faith: “Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God [...] He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself” (1. John 5:1 and 10).
2. Love: “We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren” (1. John 3:14).
3. Obedience: “Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1. John 2:3).
4. Works: “My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth. And by this we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before Him” (1. John 3:18-19).
5. Fruit: “Therefore by their fruits you will know them” (Matthew 7:20). “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Galatians 5:22).
6. A big transformation or renewal: “Therefore, if any-



one is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2. Corinthians 5:17).

7. A large contrast between us and the world: “We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one” (1. John 5:19).
8. Peace through reconciliation: “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1).

When none of these characteristics are visible in the life of a person, then he has reason to fear that he has not been born again. But if these characteristics can be found in your life, then cling to the promises of the Lord. If you are still a young child in Christ, do not be anxious if not all of the above-mentioned characteristics can be found in you. You are still growing in grace.

We should also be careful that we do not mix up the witness of the Spirit with our own feelings. Some take the feeling of an overwhelming, special joy as evidence of the witness of the Spirit. It is good to feel joy, but each of us will experience these feelings in different ways depending on our personality. Feelings of joy can also be temporary. They come and go. But the witness of the Spirit is something permanent, in times of joy as well as sadness. If we have become obedient to God in all things and persevere in our obedience, then we will rejoice in the witness of the Spirit of God and in the assurance of being His child.

Adapted from A.W. Miller

Not Seeing Yet Believing

*Not seeing, but believing
Is what I ask, dear God.
Rejoicing or in grieving
Help me to waver not.
If bright the sun is shining,
Or dark the clouds I see –
Oh, let me be reminded
That Lord, You are with me.*

*Not seeing, but believing
That You will guide my steps,
Anxiety relieving,
I know You'll help me yet.
You know the load I carry
You've measured it for me.
It will not be too heavy,
If I trust and believe.*

*Not seeing, but believing
When You lead through the night.
In darkness, still perceiving
Your love, mercy, and might.
I praise you. You're beside me
Though obstacles are great;
Your hand in mine will guide me.
You never come too late!*

*Not seeing, but believing,
In faith I'll carry on.
O'er mountains and through valleys
Until that day will dawn
When I am up in glory
For then with clarity
I'll see my whole life's story
And that You were with me.*

Faith and Trust

Our “enlightened” culture is depriving our children and ourselves of the child-like faith God wants to see in us. Doubt is in vogue; questioning God seems to be the rule for survival. But where does doubt ultimately land us? How can we have child-like faith?

If we have surrendered ourselves completely to God, we will have taken a step of faith in order to attain “the land flowing with milk and honey.” From now on, our faith should always increase, but the enemy is still trying to lay difficulties and obstacles in our path. Through Jesus Christ the child of God has the abundance which he needs so desperately in his daily life. In his heart lies a desire to take possession of even more of this abundance, and the only means to receive it is through faith.

The expression “faith” is often misunderstood; in reality, it is one of the simplest concepts in the world. To have faith simply means to accept what God says and to act accordingly. Everything else we must leave to God and trust that He will do what He has promised us.

We all practice faith in our daily lives. We show faith and trust in the people around us. Should it then be more difficult to have faith in God and display complete trust in Him? Should it be easier to accept a person’s testimony over that of the living God? Should it be easier to fearlessly give our earthly interests to our weak and erring peers than to come with our soul’s issues to a God Who understands our every situation and can help?

Therefore say decisively, “Lord, I will believe!” Stand firm on God’s promises. If you have previously entrusted something precious into the hands of earthly friends, then I encourage you to entrust yourself and all your interests into the hands of your great heavenly Friend. Yes, entrust to Him everything and never allow the smallest thought of doubt to arise in you. Remember

that trust and worry can never be together.

Would you call it trust if you were to ask a loyal friend to do something and then spent your days and nights worrying if it would be done correctly? Likewise, you cannot speak of trust if you entrust the salvation and protection of your soul to God and yet live your days in fearful thoughts and doubts. If a believing soul has truly entrusted something to God, he will cease to fear and worry about it. If he still does, then it is a sign that he does not trust Him.

How little true faith exists among those that profess to belong to the Lord! No wonder that our Lord asked the sad question: “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8) He will see much activity, much verbal fervor, and doubtless many sanctified hearts. But will He find faith, the one thing that He values above all else? Everyone who professes to be saved should ask themselves this serious question.

There may lie a dark path before you, but it is exactly now that you have the privilege of proving your sincere trust in the Lord. You have certainly already trusted Him in several situations and experienced His help. Trust Him now in all things and see if He will not respond in a way that is far beyond your understanding. This is not according to your power and wisdom, rather by His great power that accomplishes all things in you. Can you not leave your issues in the guidance of Him Who wonderfully controls the entire world? Or should you continue to fearfully worry? Away with such unworthy doubts! Acknowledge your God’s great power and constancy! All your difficulties and doubts

will dwindle before your firm decision to have faith and trust Him.

All things are possible with God, and “all things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23). Faith has in earlier times “subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire”. Through faith, loyal children of God have “escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens” (Hebrew 11:33-34). These things are still experienced by children

of God today, whose faith is living and unshakable.

Therefore resolve firmly, “I can trust my Lord and I will trust Him. No power of earth or hell will make me doubt my wonderful constant Savior!” The most pleasurable offering we can give to God is complete trust. Remind yourself in every dark hour that, even if you now go through a little while of being “grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:6-7).

Substitutes

During the war years it was often necessary to find replacements for things that were needed but no longer available. These substitutes were usually very similar to the things they were replacing. However, they were still inferior to the original. Since these substitutes were necessary, most people were willing to accept them without objection.

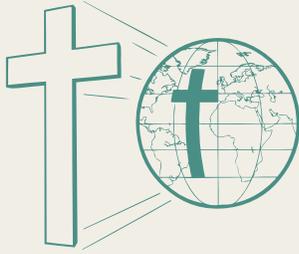
Even in the realm of religion there are many “substitutes” that have led to a departure from the faith that was once delivered to the saints. The devil offers all kinds of substitutes for spiritual truth. He has used many means and methods to deceive, mislead, , cause divisions, and prevent people from following the teaching of the Bible. Here are some of these substitutes:

1. Church membership has replaced the new birth.
2. Writing cards, shaking the preacher’s hand, and the like, has become a substitute for seeking the mercy seat.
3. Having good intentions or “turning over a new leaf” has replaced repentance.
4. Voting in church members instead of using God’s plan of adding members to the Church has been accepted.
5. Pastors have attempted to open the door to the Church, even though Christ said: “I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved” (John 10:9).
6. Believing with the mind instead of the heart and soul.

7. Church membership, but no salvation.
8. Good works, a good reputation, and church and social positions have replaced a holy life.
9. Statements of belief and the doctrines of men have been accepted as a substitute for the teachings of the New Testament.
10. Many religious denominations and organizations have taken the place of the New Testament Church.
11. Human leaders have taken the place of Christ, the true Head of the Church. Church government has replaced the leading of the Holy Spirit.
12. Formality is considered the substitute for the worship of God in spirit and in truth. Various social functions occupy the important time of prayer meeting.
13. Emotional expressions, fanaticism, and unseemly behavior are sometimes substitutes for the baptism of the Holy Spirit and the biblical manifestation thereof.

If we take all this into consideration, we recognize that today’s religious world has gone astray from many biblical teachings and the actions of the early church. Yet God’s initial plan prevails. Christ Himself, and His disciples, revealed His divine plan to us. We have no right to change anything or accept a replacement. If we claim to be the New Testament Church, we need to set aside all human substitutes and continue in the teaching of the Bible.

O. C. Hall



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

The Value of Assurance

Our world is filled with uncertainty. We are unaware or unconscious of most of what goes on around us. Yet when our own lives are touched by an event and our well-being is at stake, we immediately search for answers; we desire certainty.

People are aware of the high value of assurance. None of us like to be in situations where there is uncertainty. These make us feel insecure and anxious. For instance, if we become ill and notice that our health continues to decline, we begin to worry and start looking for reasons. We also look for assurance that we will get better. Similarly, we would not undertake a new venture until we had clarity and were certain that it would be beneficial for us. A prudent person always looks for assurance in life. We desire it, search for it, and require it. Uncertainty causes stress and restricts us. Assurance brings freedom and makes us happy. Insecurity and doubt are the opposite of assurance. Doubt places us in the murky area of the unknown. We are not living in complete light but also not in complete darkness. We are hovering in a fog where we feel very vulnerable and self-conscious. Do not live or act in a fog. Assurance is the answer!

Paul wrote in 1 Thessalonians 1:5: “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” The apostle writes about the value and necessity of assurance in the life of a Christian. He explains that in the midst of uncertainty, a Christian can have this strong and solid assurance in God. Undoubtedly, our everyday life will have uncertainties. However, in our spiritual

life we have a wonderful assurance to live by. We can thank our God for this.

Assurance is based on facts, realities, truth, accuracy, infallibility, and security. Knowing this, we are filled with joy! Every assurance, coming in a positive light, soothes our spirit, blesses us, and gives us a wonderful feeling of joy. We can sense this joy in the apostle Paul when he stated: “For our gospel (our message) did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance.” What a clear and victorious testimony! The church in Thessalonica stood on a firm foundation of truth and the full light of the gospel. Everyone in the surrounding areas knew of their sound faith. This was the result of clear preaching and living an exemplary life “in much assurance.” An exemplary life would not be possible if one had an uncertain, doubt-filled faith.

In addition to this wonderful certainty in the church, Paul could speak openly about the assurances in his personal life. In Acts 16 we read how Paul was suddenly called away from his ministry in Asia to go to Macedonia (Europe). He would have probably preferred to stay in Asia but God showed him through a vision that He had other plans. We read in Acts 16:10: “Immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to



them.” We see how important it is to have assurance of one’s life direction, decisions, and work. A proverb states: “The right man in the right place!” This is a justifiable statement. For example, how can someone perform a job if he or she is not up to the task? Paul writes of God’s clear direction in his journeys (Galatians 2:2). He did not choose the place where he would preach. He paid heed to God’s calling and direction for him to minister.

In Romans 8:38 we have one of the most important assurances: “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” What a powerful statement! This testifies to a profound and poignant assurance!

At a funeral that I attended, my eyes were drawn to the words on a wreath ribbon. The words were from the Bible verse in Romans 8:38; “Nothing shall separate us from the love of God!” What a comforting assurance! This promise goes beyond death and the grave. Death separates, and this last farewell is often very painful and sad. However, for the disciples of Jesus there is a bond and a confidence that even death can not sever. The certainty of eternal life ranks higher than anything else. It also has the greatest value. Do we have this assurance and are we thankful for it?

When Paul was finally taken into custody after his many persecutions and saw that his end was near, he wrote to Timothy: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith; Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing” (2 Timothy 4:7-8). This is assurance and there is nothing superior to this. Paul was concerned that all of God’s children should have this certainty of receiving the crown in eternity for their faithfulness. He exhorts his readers in 1 Corinthians 9:24: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.” In a race, the runners are vying for a perishable prize. In our walk with God we are striving for an everlasting one. Paul had this assurance. Do we? Therefore his admonition: “Run in such a way that you may obtain it!”

How to Work God's Joy Machine

It was a bright, sunny morning as Brother Little-Joy walked down the street toward the railway-station. But somehow the brightness of the morning was not reflected in Brother Little-joy's face. He seemed gloomy; his gaze rested upon the ground. As he entered the waiting room, he saw a man with a smiling countenance, and he said to himself, "Why, there is Brother Joyful."

Brother Joyful, seeing Brother Little-joy, hastened to him, shook hands with him warmly and said: "Good morning, Brother Little-joy. What a fine morning this is! It seems that all nature is rejoicing in the spring sunshine. But, Brother Little-joy, why do you look so gloomy this morning when everything else seems so bright?"

"Oh," said Brother Little-joy, "I have so many troubles and worries and perplexities, so many trials and difficulties, that it seems I have little joy in my life. I can never understand how you are always so joyful. You always have a smile for everybody and never seem to have any of the worries and troubles that other people have. You seem to be, as Paul said, 'always rejoicing.' How I wish I were as you are! It must be a happy life."

"Oh," replied Brother Joyful. "I think I have my full share of the troubles of life. You know every one must expect them. We all have plenty of them, but that is not the cause of your trouble. It is not the number of trials and perplexities people have that keep them from being joyful. Some of the most joyful people whom I know have many cares, sorrows, and troubles. There is just one thing wrong in your case, Brother Little-joy. You have not learned how to work God's joy-machine."

Brother Joyful laughed, and his eyes twinkled as he said, "Come over here and let me give you an object-lesson."

So they walked over to the side of the room where two machines were standing side by side.

"You see this weighing-machine," said Brother Joyful. "I will just step upon it and get weighed."

He stepped upon the platform of the machine, but the indicator remained at zero.

"Why, it seems it does not work this morning!"

"Of course not," answered Brother Little-joy, "you have to drop a penny in the slot before it will act."

Then Brother Joyful took a penny from his pocket and dropped it into the slot. The indicator immediately flew around on the dial.

"One hundred and seventy-two pounds," said Brother Joyful. "That is just what I weighed two weeks ago. Now let us try this one, and have some music."

So saying, he took a disc from the rack and adjusted it in the machine and pressed the lever, but nothing moved; no music came forth.

"Why," said Brother Little-joy, "it will not play until you drop a nickel into the slot."

"Oh," said Brother Joyful, "that's the way!"

He dropped a nickel into the slot, and the machine began sounding forth its melody.

Sitting down on a seat near by, they listened until the music ceased, when Brother Joyful said:

"You see I might have stood there on the platform of that weighing-machine all day and wished to have known my weight ever so much, but I should not have found it out until I had dropped a penny into the slot. We might have stood there by the music box all day, and wished to hear it play; but until the nickel was dropped into the slot, there could be no music. Now, God has a joy-machine, and it works on the plan of the slot machines. You can see its picture almost anywhere in the Bible. But there is a real place where you can get the joy – real joy and there is plenty of it. This music box will play a tune for each nickel dropped into it, and so God's joy-machine will yield you a heart full of joyfulness every time you can get it to work, and it always works whenever you proceed right. Some people merely stand around and look at the box. They see others



getting joy out of it and often try to get joy, but somehow it does not work for them. The trouble is that they do not put in the coin; they do not do what is necessary to get the machine to work. The joy is there, plenty of it, enough for everybody. There is no reason why people should be without it.”

“Well,” sighed Brother Little-joy, “I would give almost anything if I knew how to get joy like you, but I suppose it is not for me.”

“Right there is where you are mistaken,” said Brother Joyful. “Take another lesson from those machines yonder. They are set out in plain sight, and the public, everybody who wishes, may, by dropping coins into the slots, get what the machines have to give. The more coins dropped, the better the owners are pleased. They do not want the weights, they do not want the music; these are provided for the public; and whosoever will, may have his full satisfaction on certain conditions. Now, God’s joy for his children is just the same. The more they have of it, the better pleased He is. The more joyful they are, the more joyful He is. You are mistaken in thinking that you are denied joy. You are not denied it any more than you are denied music from the music box. If you know how to operate the box and are willing to pay the price, you may have plenty of music. It is equally true that if you are willing to pay the price, you can work God’s joy-machine all you please.”

“Well,” said Brother Little-joy, “I do wish I knew how. And what do you mean by the price of joy?”

“It is something many people have not learned yet,” answered Brother Joyful; “but I will tell you the secret. I will tell you how I get God’s joy-machine to operate. A specified coin is required to operate these machines, but there are many different things that will work God’s machine. Sometimes one thing will do it, sometimes another, and sometimes it takes several things together. The first thing I try is obedience. Whole-hearted obedience to the Lord never fails to bring me a good supply of joy, but that is a price many people are not willing to pay. They would like to have the joy, but when it comes to obeying God and throwing their whole soul into that obedience, they draw back. Often they obey reluctantly, with more or less unwillingness in their hearts, or they want to do it just a little differently from God’s way. That kind of obedience never makes the joy-machine work. There are others who are willing to obey God, provided He will do this and that to suit them. Such people wait a long time for their joy. So long as the heart is closed up against God’s commands, you can count on God keeping a lock on the joy-machine.

“Sometimes, and very often too, we have to drop some trust into the slot. If you are doubting God and questioning whether He means what He says, or whether He will keep his promises, the machine will not work. When I want a feast of joy, I make sure that I am obeying God, and then I tell Him that I believe Him, that I trust myself and my all completely into His hands, and that I feel perfectly safe in doing so; that I believe His eye is over me and His everlasting arms are beneath me and that He will work out everything for my good and keep me in whatever circumstances I am placed. That makes the joy-machine work. Often it brings ‘joy unspeakable and full of glory.’

“Of course, there is something else that goes with obedience and trust, and that is really a part of them. It is submission. Unless our hearts say, ‘Thy will be done,’ the joy-bells will not ring much. If we get any joy, it will be only a sort of human enthusiasm. I say the heart must say this. It is not enough for the mouth to say it; the heart must not say it reluctantly or hesitatingly, for the joy will not come until the heart submits unreservedly.

“Praise is another thing that makes the machine work; that is, the kind of praise that comes from the depths of the heart – the kind that comes spontaneously from a deep appreciation of God’s goodness and mercy. Only those who obey God have this kind. We may shout God’s praise loud enough to be heard two blocks away, but if we are not obeying Him, He knows it is a pretense, and it will not work the machine. One may be ever so enthusiastic, and seem to be very happy, but if he is not obeying God, what he gets does not come out of God’s joy-machine. Praise amounts to much when there is obedience back of it, but is nothing but noise when it is otherwise.

“Sometimes it is patience and long-suffering that make the machine work. Sometimes when opposition or accusation come or when railing, abuse, scorn or similar things must be borne, the joy-machine does not work immediately. We have to put a good supply of patience into the slot, and perhaps suffer a while, but when the proper time comes, they will make the machine work all right.

“A smile or a cheery word or a bit of song, a kindly greeting, or almost any kindly act put into the slot may fill up our cup with joy when we are not expecting it. Sometimes nothing but enduring a hard trial will start the joy flowing. One may not be very joyful during the trial, for the joy generally comes at the end of the trial. Some people think that it would be pleasant if they could put their trials into the slot and make the joy-machine work, but it does not work that way. It is the endurance that makes it work,

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Living Gratitude

I want to challenge you right up front with a question. Would you describe yourself as a grateful person? The question is difficult to answer at first. In these situations, we tend to compare ourselves with other people. The key is how you “live out” thankfulness to God.

There was a time in my life where I realized that my thankfulness toward God did not come with full conviction. For a long time I said a memorized prayer before eating. At one point I stood at the table and asked myself: “What does my prayer actually mean?” I want to give thanks to God, my Father, for daily provision and blessing. Instead of simply reciting grace before a meal, I actively started to thank God. Since then it is a very conscious ‘thanks-giving’ and not a ritual or tradition. I discovered that there were many other times I simply prayed out of habit, without being truly aware of what I was saying. We should pray more consciously and with greater awareness. God blesses you and me every day. Do you take it for granted, or do you see the gifts of God?

In order to be thankful, we have to realize how much reason we have to be thankful. We generally forget very quickly and soon become ungrateful. A few months ago, I read in Deuteronomy 6:10-12 how God warned the Israelites not to forget Him after they came into the land which God had promised them.

Have you perhaps forgotten God and what He has done for you? Do you live as though your successes and achievements are your own? Ingratitude has its origin in the fact that everything is taken for granted. Two chapters later (Deuteronomy 8), we are once again called upon to remember God in all the blessings that He gives us. God commanded the people to have celebrations at regular intervals to bring thanks to God. We celebrate Thanksgiving once a year. However, we should bring our thanks to God in an ongoing Thanksgiving. I’ve noticed that it helps me to remember those things for which I want to be thankful to God all my life. Not

for nothing does David say in Psalm 103:

“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, who redeems your life from destruction, who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies.” (Psalm 103:1-4)

In Ephesians 5:20 and in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 we are even prompted to always be thankful. If things are going well for us, this is an easy task. But how do I behave when things do not go the way I had wished or imagined? Am I perhaps even tempted to blame God?

To be thankful even in difficult situations, we need faith. We must trust that God is true to His Word and will never let us down. This is the basis for a thankful life in all circumstances. The Bible tells us in Romans 8:28: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” When life is going well, or when we look back at a situation in hindsight, it is much easier for us to say these words. But it is in exactly these times that our faith in God and our true thankfulness is demonstrated. A good example is found in Job. After losing all his wealth and his family, he could still say the following words: “The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD!” (Job 1: 21b) In the following verse it states that he did not sin against God in any way. Job trusted God even in this humanly-speaking hopeless situation. He was even able to praise God. True gratitude is not dependent on our situation.

“Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God.” Psalm 50:23

Eugen Igel,
Kirchberg, Germany



Sanctification and Character

Question: Does our character, our natural tendency towards optimism or pessimism, influence our spiritual life? To what extent does sanctification influence it?

Answer: This question is very important because a wrong or flawed model of practical sanctification has caused many people doubt or uncertainty about their experience of sanctification.

The question already assumes the fact that all people have a different character. God created us so that we can complement and help each other. Each character type has its strengths – but also its weaknesses, that must be dealt with. Thomas’ doubt has become proverbial, but it was he who said: “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). Jesus had just told His disciples that He would go to Jerusalem and would die there. Peter, on the other hand, was happily willing to testify that Jesus is the Son of God (Matthew 16:16), but later he was the one who denied Jesus.

Weaknesses and negative character traits are amplified or even spawned by the corrupt nature. Sanctification is necessary precisely for this reason! God wants us to surrender our will, our ego, and our whole existence to Him and place them under His direction (Romans 12:1-2). The Holy Spirit is to govern us – not our ego or our character. The apostle Paul puts it aptly when he says, “Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to His cross

and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit’s leading in every part of our lives” (Galatians 5:24-25 NLT).

The sanctified nature does not make us a copy of other Christians so that we are identical in all things. Rather, it makes us holy vessels that God can use according to His will. At sanctification, a sanguine does not become a melancholic. The Apostle Peter is thought to have had a sanguine temperament. If we observe Peter after Pentecost, we still find him as a passionate, outspoken follower of Jesus who no longer served Jesus under his own power, but as one who had placed his entire life and character under God’s direction. Sanctification does not take away our natural character. We simply submit it to God’s direction, and for that very reason God can use different people in different places in His kingdom. Bold choleric are often valuable tools in the mission field where they spread the word of God without fear or timidity. Quiet phlegmatics and melancholics are often very useful, for example, in the care of the sick, in counseling, etc. God can and will use every character type! Will we surrender ourselves to Him and allow Him to use us?

John Reimer
Barrhead, AB

Experiences with God

God's Helping Hand

When I look back in my life I can clearly see God's helping hand. I remember a particular Sunday morning. Our pastor preached a message about God's power. It was a blessed service. Afterwards we chatted with some friends and were invited to dinner.

However, life can throw unexpected events at us. While we were eating dinner, I started to get pains in my body that escalated so quickly that I soon could hardly sit straight. I had to be taken to the hospital. In order to diagnose the problem, the doctor recommended surgery. For someone who likes to have as much control over her life as possible, this was a difficult decision to make. When I began to pray, however, I remembered that we can trust our Heavenly Father at all times, even in uncertain circumstances. We prayed for the operation to go well, thanking God for His promise never to leave nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5b).

I did not know how or to what extent my life was going to change, but I knew that God was faithful, and He gave me an inner peace.

When it was over, the doctor informed me that the operation had gone well. The first few hours were extremely painful, but I prayed for God's help, and He answered my prayer. He gave me a kind and compassionate nurse. He has also given me a husband who stood by my side during this time. My family and friends prayed for me, which lifted my spirits.

Last year brought a number of health challenges. However, my faith has remained strong because I have witnessed how God uses challenges like these to bring us closer to Him. Jesus remained with me every step of the way. I can only praise Him for it!

Ann Thiessen
Seminole, Texas

"But those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint." (Isaiah 40:31)

In April of 2000 I was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. We were devastated. When we left the doctor's office, my wife embraced me and said, "We will go through this struggle together." For the first while, I needed no medicine. In 2013, I also contracted amyotrophy, a muscle-weakening disease. It immediately made itself noticeable in my eyes and other areas of my body. Today, I have to take a lot of medications. I have suffered a lot in the last years: back pain, difficulty sleeping, stomach problems, hot feet, and extreme exhaustion.

However, we continue to always bring our needs to God. How He has helped and blessed us over the years! We have received so much goodness from His hand. I was 19 when I arrived in Edmonton in 1958. I stayed with my sister Herta Hohenstein with the intention of continuing my studies. For the first time, I was able to regularly visit the church services. I was very glad to be able to seek the Lord that same year under the preaching of Brother Gustav Sonnenberg.

In the years that followed, I had the privilege to hear the Word of God from Brother Berndt, Brother Nimz, and Brother Semenjok. I really appreciate the church services because we did not have them during the war years in Germany. We were also blessed richly by the beautiful songs that we were able to sing and hear, the wonderful church Fests, and the fellowship and prayer with brothers and sisters in the Lord. We are also thankful that we can still serve the Lord in a free country.

Thus, I conclude with Job: "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2:10) Also, God's word promises this: "Those who wait on the Lord shall renew their strength" (Isaiah 40:31). I experience this daily and thank God for it. I praise and glorify His name!

Dear brothers and sisters: please continue to pray for me that I will remain faithful to the end.

Eric Feigel
Edmonton, Alberta

Faithful in the Least

Barbie was an 8 year old girl who lived in a small village near the ocean. She often went to the local grocery store with her mother. It was an old-fashioned grocery store with a scale on which the grocer, who had owned the store for more years than Barbie could imagine, still weighed out nuts and sugar and candy. Sometimes he even let Barbie play with his scale and weigh things out.

One day, after Barbie had finished playing with the scale and her mother was ready to go home, Barbie didn't put everything back where she had found it. Instead she kept one big fat chestnut clenched in her hand. She knew it did not belong to her, and I'm not quite sure why she kept it that day, but she did. She liked the way it felt in her hand. When she got home, she felt a little bit bad about taking something that didn't belong to her, so she decided to hide her guilty treasure. She went out into her little garden where her mother had taught her to plant and take care of her own flowers. She dug a hole beside a rosebush and buried the nut deep into the ground.

Barbie thought that would be the end of her wrong-doing.

But it wasn't. Lunch didn't taste very good that day. She didn't even want dessert. Mother thought Barbie must be sick, so she let her lie down on the sofa. Mother settled her little girl with a blanket and pillow and went to do some laundry. The room was very quiet, except for the ticking of the living room clock. Barbie listened to the ticking, and it seemed to her that the clock was accusing her: "Barbie is a thief. Barbie is a thief." Tears began to roll down Barbie's cheeks. When her mother came in to check on her, Barbie sobbed: "Mommy – don't you hear what the clock is saying?"

Mother was puzzled. "I hear the clock ticking, but it's not saying anything, honey," she said. She felt Barbie's forehead to see if she had a fever. "Oh, Mommy," sobbed Barbie. "The clock is saying: 'Barbie is a thief.'"

Then Mother realized that Barbie was not suffering from a fever but from a guilty conscience. Barbie told her mother everything, and after she had confessed to her mother, Barbie and Mother knelt down and confessed Barbie's sin to God. Then Barbie ran out into the garden, dug up the chestnut and walked back to the grocery store with her mother. They told the friendly owner the whole story. He was so pleased at Barbie's confession. He said, "Barbie, ask the Lord Jesus to help you always to have such a tender conscience. I want you to keep this chestnut as a reminder for the next time you are tempted to do something that you know is wrong."

Barbie is grown up now. She still has a little jar on her dresser with a chestnut in it. That nut reminds her of the sins of her childhood that she confessed and received forgiveness for.



Mother-in-Law's Prayers

The young wife was getting acquainted with the family of her husband. She was surprised to learn a special secret.

It was my first morning in my husband's home. We had arrived late the night before. As I had never before met my in-laws, I prepared for the meeting with great anticipation. My mother-in-law had nine grownup children – seven sons and two daughters. All of them had returned home for the occasion so that the whole family could be together. The long tables were filled on both sides as we sat down for breakfast.

My mother-in-law had made exceptional pancakes, and everyone ate well and enjoyed themselves. The conversation centered around an array of topics and no one seemed to be in a hurry to leave the table, even though there were many things to do outside on the farm. Everyone, including the seven sons remained at the table after the meal. It was clear to see that they were still waiting for something. Mother, who had served everyone was not yet finished with her meal and all waited for her. But this was not the only reason.

I looked questioningly at my husband. But before he could respond, my question was answered. Mother stood up from the table, took a Bible from the ironing board and expressively read a chapter aloud. This was something I had never experienced in my parent's home. My husband, whom I had just married prior to the visit, had not told me about his parent's tradition. He probably wanted to see what kind of impression this would make on me. Indeed, I was speechless.

After reading the chapter from the Bible, my mother-in-law, along with my father-in-law and all other family members, knelt down to pray. I followed their example and knelt down as well.

Then my mother-in-law began to pray. Never in my life had I heard such a heartfelt yet simple prayer as the one that was rising to the throne of God. She thanked God for the many physical and spiritual blessings and

for His protection in the previous night. She thanked especially for her family and asked for God's blessing on each individual member. She prayed for each son and for each daughter and for each of her daughters-in-law. She did not forget to bring a single one before the throne room of God.

I cannot express in words the feelings that overwhelmed me. A spirit of godly fear came over me that morning. It was one moment that I will not forget for as long as I live. Once the family devotion was over, everyone got up and was soon busy with their work.

When I was alone with my husband, I asked him: "How does your mother manage to get all her grown sons and everyone else to patiently wait for family devotions?" "Oh, that is how it has always been by us. We would feel that something was amiss, that something was missing if we didn't have our morning devotions," he answered.

And the more I got to know the family of my husband, the more I learned to appreciate them. It is something that keeps them closely connected, a spirit of mutual esteem and love. Some of the children still do not confess to be saved, but even these have a holy fear of God and godly things. They show true interest not only for family devotions, but spiritual things in general. The seed of God's word was planted early in their hearts. And the spirit of prayer that resides in their home did not leave a single one of them untouched.

On that day I made the decision that in our home the family altar also needed to be established and that family devotions should be maintained on a regular basis. It is barely necessary for me to say that my husband was in agreement; he was actually waiting for me to make this suggestion on the day that we visited his parents' home.

No sermon and no book about the importance of

family devotions could have made a deeper impact on me than the first prayer of my mother-in-law that I had heard in the family circle. As I got to know her better, I saw that she truly put God first in all things. Serving God was a true matter of the heart for her. Through this I have learned to appreciate and love her more and more.

In this home there certainly would have been no

shortage of excuses to occasionally leave out family devotions. During harvest, as at all times, they took time for prayer before they started working. And God blessed them visibly. The men and women that left this home took something along for life that is worth more than silver or gold.

Ellen G. Olsen

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and the endurance will not make it work until it is dropped into the slot, that is, until we have endured through to the end of the trial.

“Then, I find things in my pocket-book, too, that I can drop into the slot to make the machine work. Money in the pocketbook will not make God’s joy-machine work any more than it will make yonder machine play music. When people look into their pocketbooks and see only money, the only joy it can make is a sort of selfish, human joy. I know of people who can see something besides money in their pocketbooks. Why just the other day, Brother Sympathy looked into his pocketbook and saw a sack of flour there for the Widow Grimes. And last fall one day, he looked into it and saw a whole ton of coal for old Mrs. Benson and an overcoat for Tom Jones, and a little later he found a pair of shoes for Johnnie Peters. Of course, he took them all out and delivered them to their owners. I suppose you wonder why his face shone so in meeting. It was because these things, and many more like them, kept God’s joy-machine going.

“Now, Brother Little-joy, I have told you a few of the things that will make the machine work when put into the slot, and I am sure that if you will use them, your joy-cup will not be empty much of the time.”

“Well, Brother Joyful,” said Brother Little-joy, “you have surely taught me a lesson. If that is the way to get joy and if I can have it as well as anybody, I think I shall try to get my share in the future. But how am I to get rid of all my troubles and worries and heavy burdens?”

“Why,” answered Brother Joyful, “you are working the wrong machine; you do not get such things from the Lord.”

“What do you mean?” asked Brother Little-joy.

“Why, Satan has a slot-machine also, and many

people are working it overtime. Some good people are working it, but they do not know they are using Satan’s machine.

“Please explain yourself,” said brother Little-joy.

“It is this way,” replied Brother Joyful; “Satan has a great machine, or I might say several different ones, and there are many different ones and there are different things that can be dropped into the slots to make them work. But none of the things that work God’s machine will work Satan’s. Now, you have, you say, trouble and gloom and such things. These come from Satan’s machine. This is the way it works: You drop some unbelief into the slot, and you get darkness and fear; doubts, and you get gloom and despondency; disobedience, and you get condemnation; fear, and you get weakness; murmuring, and you get discouragement. Oh, there are many things you can get out of Satan’s machine; and he is very glad to have you get them. Drop in some cross words, some fretfulness, some self-will, a little pride, a little suspicion of the brethren, a little envy, or anything of that sort, and you will get a return from Satan.

“Now, as I said, Brother Little-joy, you have been working the wrong machine and if you will just think a while, you may be able to tell what you have been putting into the slot to get these things that you would like to be rid of. Perhaps it is a little disobedience or self-will or unbelief. Make a good prayerful search and find out; then stop dropping things into the devil’s slot machine, turn your attention to learning how to operate God’s joy machine, and I am sure you will soon see a gratifying change.”

As Brother Little-joy walked out of the door, he said to himself, “I think Brother Joyful is right; I will begin working the other machine.”

What Does God Think of Me?

Most people are concerned about what others, especially those they consider important, think about them. Yet which of us still cares what our Creator, our God, our eternal Judge thinks of us?

What does God think of you? This is certainly a serious question of great importance, for God's thoughts of us are what determine our eternity. Our life or death, our salvation or condemnation depend on these thoughts. Have you ever seriously contemplated this question before? Did it lead you to a godly repentance? Perhaps you ask, "Why should I? I am perfectly content with myself and with my God." Yes, but is God also pleased with you? Is it not therefore much more important to ask and to know, "What does God think of me?"

Thousands upon thousands of confessing Christians have never dared to ask themselves this question. If the world is fine with their actions, and they can, as much as possible, cover up the evil that lives and works in us all, then they think, "Why should God be angry with me? Why should He be so exacting?" Alas, humanity does not want to bow before God's righteousness, but prefers outward appearances. To be honored by peers and praised from the world – that is the highest ambition.

What about you, dear Reader, would you like to know God's opinion of you? Do not say as many do, "No one can know that!" It may surprise you, but you can indeed know the opinion of God. For He Who has created the mouth has spoken "in time past to the fathers by the prophets" and "in these last days [...] to us by His Son" (Hebrews 1:1 and 2). In His Son Jesus, God's opinion of mankind was fully revealed. If you take God's Word in hand, you will not only find that "All flesh is grass, and all its loveliness is like the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6), but it also says, "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" and "every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5; 8:21).

God has an opinion of you. How people view you is not as important, for no person will determine your eternal fate. It is God who decides where you will spend your eternity. He decides according to the condition of your heart, according to your attitude. He "looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God" (Psalm 53:2). He sees your heart, whether it wants to serve Him or if it loves sin. If you go against your better judgment, against your conscience, or even against God, God is thinking about you, and His thoughts determine His judgment of you. When you turn to Him, submit to Him in humility and love, He thinks about you then as well. Pay attention to the difference here: God once said to Samuel, "I remember that which Amalek did to Israel... now go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have" (1 Samuel 15:2 and 3). Another time, an angel was able to say to Cornelius, "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God" (Acts 10:4). God thinks about each individual. There may be circles where one politely asks one another, "What do you think about God?" But much more precious are the groups who study the question, "What does God think about us... about me?" Religious conversations and studies are only useful when they lead people to ask the question, "What does God think about me?" In Jeremiah 14:10 we read, "He will remember their iniquity now, and punish their sins".

Dear Reader, perhaps it may seem to you that there is no relationship between you and the living God, but in reality, this relationship does exist. You cannot hide yourself from your God. He sees you, and the way He sees you is how He thinks of you. When He sees that you mock Him and His Son Jesus

Christ Whom He sent into the world and that you jeer at the offering of salvation at Golgotha, when you consider yourself smarter than the Bible, then you will not escape the judgment of God Who determines your fate.

What does God think of you? Change God's thoughts through a change of your heart. Turn your steps to the true faith in the Lord Jesus and to obedience to love,

and God will think of you according to what you have in your heart. He will not reject a humble and broken heart; He will rush to you and He will lavish you with wonderful heavenly blessings. It is not what you think of God, but what He thinks of you that determines your soul's salvation. Therefore, hurry and save your soul!

Entry Not Prohibited

The gospel does not raise fences, hedges or barriers. No one is prohibited access. It says: "Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17). In the world it is so often reversed.

Recently I read a large poster with huge letters. It said: "Entry prohibited under penalty. Dogs are not allowed to bathe in this lake." The lake was a small, swampy pond coated with green slime, and the land which was not to be entered was a field with all the grass trampled. "Entry prohibited under penalty!"

How different it says in the Gospel. There you can enter without prohibition, for it says: "Whosoever will, let him take of the water freely" (Revelation 22:17 KJV). You can come to the rich feast. You can crisscross the Promised Land, and no one asks you if you have permission to do so. For the Lord says: "Who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). An open door is set before us that no one can shut, and we can enter without asking.

On a trip I once saw an inn with a gorgeous garden. On the door it said: "Strangers who do not live in this inn are always welcome to wander in this garden." It is noble and praiseworthy. It is after the manner of the Gospel: Come in and let it be well with you! "Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, and let your soul delight itself in abundance" (Isaiah 55:2). "Come in, O blessed of the LORD! Why do you stand outside?" (Genesis 24:31). The Lord draws us to Himself with cords of love. He has never driven a soul away, and He will never do so. As long as the covenant of grace lasts, access to the meadows of grace are prohibited to no one. On the contrary: All who come are invited guests. Only a few special favorites may drive through a king's gardens, but the Lord Jesus opens the gates of grace to all who come. He gives all

believers a golden key, so they can even enter the King's house at all hours. Who would then refuse to come here?

On that poster it said: "Dogs are not allowed to bathe in this lake." But for the living water of God's grace there is no forbidding. Every poor sinner may come and drink and wash himself clean. Of course, bathing in a small, shallow pond should be banned, because it would be very contaminated. But no one prevents us from bathing in a large river or in the endless sea. Where there is infinite abundance, unlimited use can be allowed. The least pure sinner may immerse himself into the stream of living water. It is still crystal clear, although thousands of unclean lips drank of it, and thousands of impure souls washed themselves white as snow in it.

"Welcome! Welcome!" – that is the cry that is heard from Calvary, from the wounds of the dying Savior. Yes, the call from the lips of the exalted Christ, who sits at the right hand of the Father rings sweetly in our ears as well. "Let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely" (Revelation 22:17).

No one is an intruder when the call to come is so all-encompassing. Those who want to hold back the sinner work for the devil. Not those who come, but those who do not come transgress the Lord's commandment. Some people think that it would be arrogant to believe in the Lord. But it is just the opposite. The worst arrogance is to doubt the love of God, the power of the atoning blood and the saving power of the Holy Spirit. Get rid of the arrogant doubt! Believe in Jesus and His blessed gospel and trust Him! He wants to help you.

C. H. Spurgeon

Financial Stewardship

Regardless of whether you've been entrusted with much or little wealth, God regards you as a steward of your earthly possessions. He watches us, often adding His blessings to our faithfulness.

The introduction of money into this world is an example of God's wise and wonderful foresight. We read in God's Word that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" (1 Timothy 6:10), but money itself is not the root of evil. The guilt does not lie with the money, but with those who misuse it, for money can be used for both good or bad. In all civilized nations, money is a factor of indescribable importance that plays a role in almost all situations of life. It is the means through which businesses transact. It is only when money is used with godly wisdom that it can serve for good, and it is therefore of great importance for those who fear God to know how this important gift is to be used. Perhaps we are able to summarize all that we need to know about money in the following three simple rules:

1. Earn all that you can!

The "children of the world" view this point differently than we do. We should not try to earn money at the cost of our lives or our health. We should not start or manage a business that robs us of our sleep or appetite, on which our nature is clearly dependent. We should try to earn all that we can without our spirit being stressed more than our body. We should therefore not be willing to deal sinfully against God's law or the law of the land. We should earn all that we can without harming our neighbor. If we love our neighbor as ourselves, we would never want to harm our neighbor's assets. If we are filled with "brotherly love," it is not possible for us to sell our wares over the lawful price. Furthermore, we cannot earn money by harming the health of our neighbor; that is, through selling destructive products such as alcohol or drugs.

Earn all that you can through the correct applica-

tion of the understanding that God has given you. It is a shame for a child of God not to help, through his walk and his work, those who know nothing of God. Continually learn to shape today better than yesterday through your own experiences and those of others, and through study and reading. Try to make the most of what was placed in your hands.

2. Save all that you can!

After you have done your part to earn and acquire the things of this world in honor and through wisdom and untiring diligence, here is the second rule of powerful Christian living: "Save all that you can."

Do not throw away your money through unnecessary expenditures. Do not use even a portion of your money to appease the desires and lusts of the flesh, the eyes or pride. Do not waste one part of this important gift on modern furniture, costly clothing, or unnecessary jewelry. The Lord says also to you, "What is that to you? You follow Me" (John 21:22).

Never give money in order to appease the "pride of life" or to receive compliments from people. Be content with the honor that comes from God. Why should you give money to buy your children expensive clothing or similar excess? Why should you awake pride, vanity, and harmful lust in them? Why should you make the temptations that will come even more difficult? Do not leave it to your children to spend the money that is in your possession, for they will come into pain and trouble through this. It is therefore up to you to protect your children. Have compassion on them.

3. Give all that you can!

If you first earned all that you could in honor and integrity, and then you saved all that was possible, then



you need to give all that you can. If you want to correctly understand this third point, then think about the fact that when the Lord of heaven and earth gave you life, He placed you not as owner of this earth, but as caretaker. He trusted you with various good things, and because He only entrusted them to you, He cannot be separated from them. Just as you do not belong to yourself, but to Him, so it is with everything you rejoice in, especially your possessions. He has specifically told you what to do with your possessions, and this simple service will be rewarded, for He has promised it. If any doubts arise in your thoughts about what you are allowed to spend, then you can easily take care of it by calmly and seriously asking yourself the following questions:

1. What attitude is associated with this action? Am I aware that I am only a caretaker and not an owner?
2. Through this, am I acting in obedience to His Word? Through which Bible verse does He command me to act this way?
3. Can I bring these costs and these actions to God through Jesus Christ as an offering?
4. Through this action, do I deserve a reward at the resurrection of the righteous?

You will need more guidance than what is given here to be rid of the doubts from these thoughts. You will receive a complete and clear light through this.

John Wesley

Salvation in No One Else

A 75 year old Chinese gentleman shared the following testimony with his congregation on the day that he was baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus:

“I was 25 years old when I recognized that idol worship was vain and that our temple was not a place where I could find that which makes me happy, nor could it take the debt from my heart and conscience. Then I saw the fireball of the sun and cried: ‘O sun, take the load from my heart!’ After praying this prayer day after day and receiving no answer, I thought that salvation came from the moon. And I prayed an entire year to the moon. Then I prayed for a year to the stars. Since my longings remained unfulfilled, I gave up all efforts as hopeless, and was convinced that I would have to continue to carry my load. I said to myself, ‘There is no peace on earth.’

“I was already old and blind when they brought me into this congregation several months ago. Here I heard the Good News that the Lord Jesus, the Son of God came from heaven in order to seek the lost, comfort the sad, and to reconcile the sinners with God. It was then that I called out to Jesus and found peace for my heart and conscience. This was what my soul had cried and longed for. Now I am truly happy. Finally, the load has been taken from my heart.”

Like this man, have you also searched for rest, peace and happiness in temporal things? All the things of this world are fleeting and cannot bring lasting peace. Only in the Lord Jesus can eternal joy, eternal peace, and eternal shelter be found. He alone can take away the sin which causes your sadness and unrest.

Are You a Child of God?

In answer to this question, many all too often reach for excuses as if no definite answer were possible. And yet you have the privilege of definitely knowing that you are a child of God. Let us look at several Scriptures according to which we can test ourselves to see where we stand before God.

You Must be Born Again

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3). Birth is the entrance into life. Before you can get to know God’s peace and rejoice in being a child of God, you must be born again. You must be able to point to a definite time where you started a new life, where you recognized God as your Father and Christ as your Savior. Before this time you were dead in sins and transgressions. However, since then, you are able to lead a new life, a life that God’s Spirit makes possible.

Turn to God

“Then he said, ‘I tell you the truth, unless you turn from your sins and become like little children, you will never get into the Kingdom of Heaven’” (Matthew 18:3 NLT). To turn implies a change of direction, turning away from what you once were, to what you now are. The old will then have passed away and all things will have become new. You have become a new creation in Christ. You were once a sinner, but you are now a child of God. Now you are able to lead a life in grace, love and humility. However, if no change has taken place in your life and all the same addictions still exist, then you are not a child of God. You have not been born again and still live in your sins.

Justified by Faith

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Ro-

mans 5:1). You were a sinner, without hope, without peace and outside grace. But through God’s love and mercy, you have been acquitted of your sins and guilt. You may now be pure and innocent before God. The power of sin is also broken and you can, through God’s grace, lead a new life. Not only are you free from the bonds and chains of sin, you can also be sure of God’s sweet peace that has entered your heart. It is God’s miracle of grace that allows a person who has sinned against God to be able to live pure and holy through the Lord Jesus Christ.

No Condemnation

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1). Who has not felt the weight of condemnation? God alone knows the sighs and tears of those whose hearts are heavy laden with the sins they have committed. But one who is redeemed is free from such burdens. He is free from condemnation and guilt. He has placed his faith in Christ, and God mercifully forgave him and accepted him as His child. He who is redeemed knows this in his soul. O, how sweet the peace when one has received deliverance from guilt and condemnation. Every child of God can possess this sweet peace.

Faith that Jesus is the Christ

“Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God” (1 John 5:1). This is, however, more than a historical or purely intellectual belief; it is the true and saving faith. Is your faith in Christ so honest and sincere that you have accepted Him as your Savior? If not, then you are not yet a true believer in the biblical sense of God’s Word.

Faith and Baptism

“He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but

he who does not believe will be condemned“ (Mark 16:16). Some lay very little importance on baptism because it is only an ordinance. It is true that water does not have the power to wash away sins. But baptism is one of God’s commands. Whoever carelessly neglects it or intentionally omits it should ask himself whether he can disobey God and then expect to stand before Him. It says: “He who believes and is baptized will be saved.“

Children of God Do Not Sin

“He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil. Whoever has been born of God does not sin. – In this the children of God and the children of the devil are manifest: Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is he who does not love his brother“ (1 John 3:8–10). This Scripture says loud and clear that

there is a difference between the children of God and the children of the world and the devil. Children of God are saved from their sins and no longer sin. If you do something that you know is a sin, then the Lord tells you that you are not a child of God. Whoever sins is simply a sinner.

You may once have been saved and been baptized, but if you have once again lost the peace of God and live in sin, then you are not a child of God. Remember: a person reaps what he sows!

Dear reader, it is a great privilege to be a child of God. The Apostle John writes: “Beloved, now we are children of God“ – and once more “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him“ (1 John 3: 2 and 1).

F. Jeninga

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Believing is Trusting

Believing is trusting and hoping,
Not doubting the Word of the Lord.
By faith, you're relying and coping,
Not fearing life, death or the sword.

When Jesus spoke to His disciples:
"Believe God and believe in Me,"
Then all who in faith were not idle
His wonderful glory did see.

We cannot please God, the Almighty
If we don't believe in our hearts.
The prayer of faith He hears kindly,
And His loving favor imparts.

In prayer, God's praises expressing,
With faith you can ask and receive.
Your path will be graced with God's blessings,
Until you see what you've believed.

H. Weber