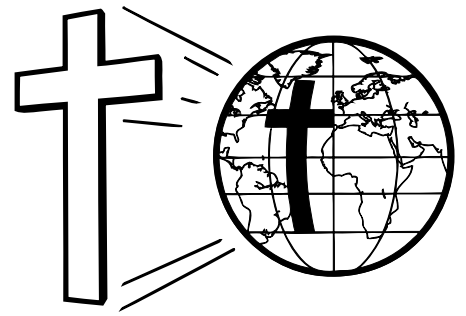


Foundation of Faith



Christ Is Risen!

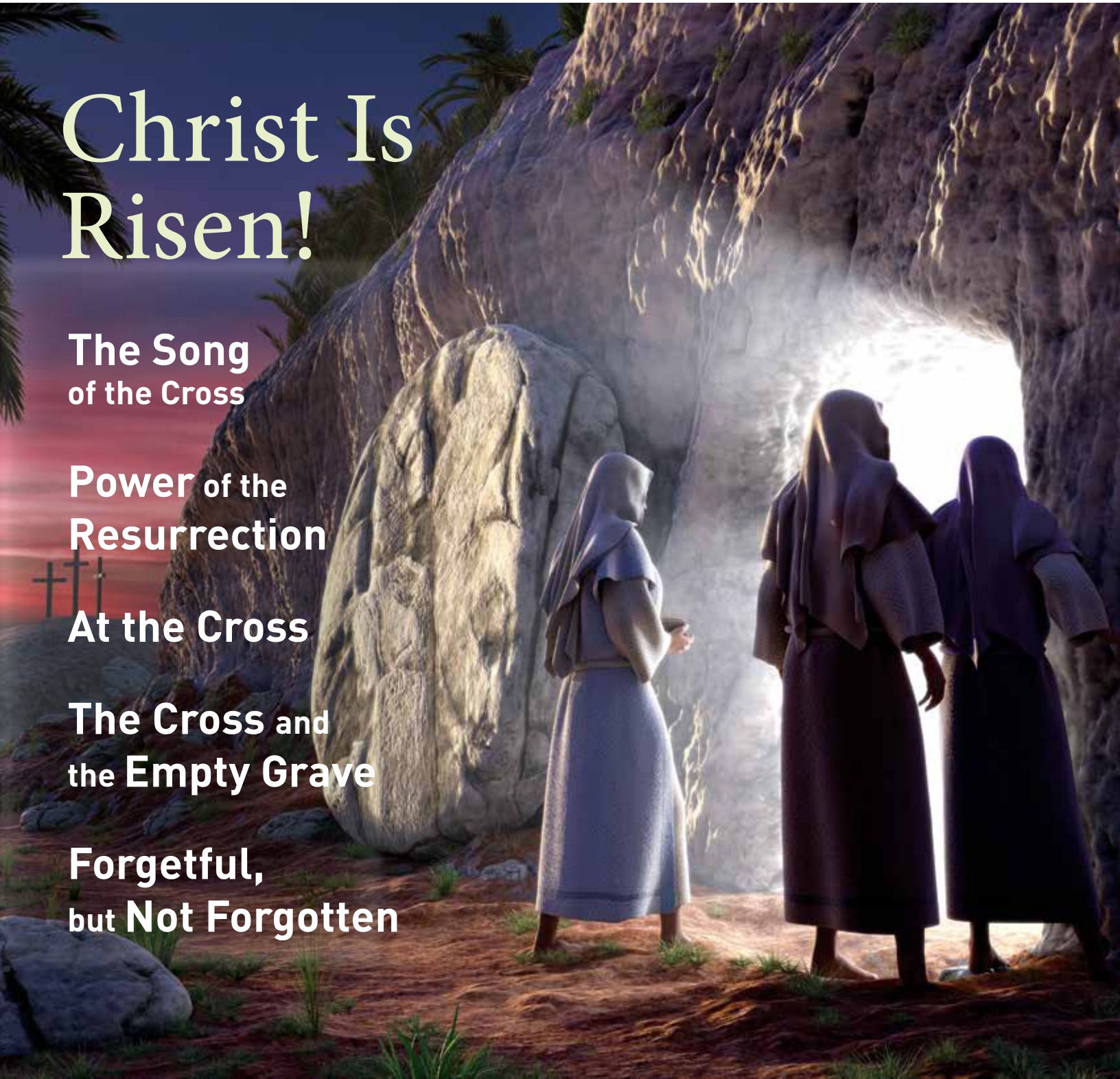
**The Song
of the Cross**

**Power of the
Resurrection**

At the Cross

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Editorial

Christ is risen! What a wonderful Easter greeting that sounds from year to year and from place to place! Yes, Jesus lives! He has risen from the dead. Our omnipresent Savior can now be found everywhere except in the grave. He has thrown off the shackles of death and brought us eternal salvation!

Christ's resurrection is the cornerstone of our faith. Jesus suffered for us at Calvary, taking the punishment for our sins upon Himself. God accepted Jesus' payment for our sins. Through His death and resurrection, Jesus reconciled us with God, bringing us peace, deliverance from sin, and new, everlasting life!

The joy, faith, and sense of victory that this knowledge brings the believer is reflected in a poem by Christian E. Gellert:

Jesus lives, and I with Him;

Death, where is now your terror?

Jesus lives, and now through Him,

I'll pass through death's dark barrier.

Transformed by His bright light,

I trust, till faith turns to sight.

The resurrected Lord revealed Himself marvelously to the disciple John when he was on the Isle of Patmos. He said to him: "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore" (Revelation 1:18-19).

Dear Reader, no matter what happens to you in this life, regardless of how the powers of darkness may war against you, remember that Jesus is already victorious! He is the resurrected, living Lord! Therefore, trust Him in every situation, for He has promised us, "Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20)!

H. D. Nimz

The Song of the Cross

It was before Easter. Adolf Stöcker, the founder of the Berlin City Mission, led a conference for volunteers at the mission. He opened with the hymn: “While in the Garden of Olives.” None of those present knew the song, but that did not bother the old man. He just sang it alone, and by the third or fourth time we were able to sing along. The song and the melody made a lasting impression on us. We felt as if we were transported into the inner sanctuary of God’s love.

A few days later, one of the missionaries from the City Mission was walking along the harbor at midnight. Deep in thought and devotion he sang that song to himself. All at once he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was the hand of a girl that slept during the day, so that she could pursue her dark trade in the night.

„You like to sing?“ she asked.

„Yes, I love to sing,“ the missionary said.

„I like to sing too,“ she said „but not such depressing religious songs, but happy songs.“

The man replied: „Certainly, the song is not a happy song, but it is a beautiful song, very beautiful and true. I will sing it for you.“ And without waiting for a reply he sang the whole song for her.

*While in the Garden of Olives,
On that last night I was praying;
Blood-red, my sweat it was draining,
Flowing for you from my brow.
Oh, don't you care, don't you know?
Will you not think of me now?*

*Angels can say what transpired,
Wounded and mocked on the morrow,
Silent for you through the sorrow,
Soldiers, they beat on my brow.
Oh, don't you care, don't you know?
Will you not think of me now?*

*Spat at and mocked without mercy,
I was the lamb they were leading;
What caused the wounds that were bleeding?
The crown of thorns on my brow!
Oh, don't you care, don't you know?
Will you not think of me now?*

*As on the cross, I hung dying
I thought of you. Now in glory
It's still not the end of the story;
Love needs to reach you somehow.
Oh, don't you care, don't you know?
Will you not think of me now?*

A mission outreach was happening at a harbor in Berlin, a song reaching out to the heart of a girl of the night!

And remarkably, the girl listened. The song escalated. And the girl? She listened attentively, and in silence. Tears swelled up in her eyes and started to roll down her cheeks. As soon as the song was finished, the girl shook the missionary’s hands, turned and hurried off. He still managed to give her a card with the words, “If you ever need me, here is my address.” Then she was gone into the darkness of night.

Years went by. The mission worker had pretty well forgotten this encounter. Then a letter arrived in the mail. “A member of our church asked me to write this letter to you. Years ago you sang a song with much meaning to a young girl at a harbor in Berlin. The girl could not forget the song. It went with her day and night. It became so powerful that she could not stand her life of sin any longer. She left Berlin and moved to our city. She found a job as a domestic worker, and earned the trust of the people who hired her. She married a simple, but hard-working laborer. She told him about her past, but he loved her so much that he was willing to overlook

it. For a number of years they had a happy marriage. At church, she was not only a regular visitor, but she was also very dedicated in trying to help people with addictions.

A few weeks ago this lady became severely ill, and she has now passed away. While she was dying, she asked me to

please write to you and tell you that the song was not only instrumental in getting her to leave her life of sin, but it led her to Christ. She found peace for her soul and forgiveness for all her sins in the Blood of Jesus. She died in peace and is with the Lord.”

Power of the Resurrection

On one Easter Day in London, D. Torrey brought a street sermon in front of a huge crowd of people.

A man from the audience interrupted the passionate speaker by asking the question: “How do you know that Christ really rose from the dead?”

Just as Torrey wanted to answer the question, a stranger stepped forward and called with a loud voice: “I am a machinist and observe the steam power. How do I know what kind of pressure the steam produces? I don’t even see the steam. But I see how strong the power is on the pressure gauge by a little pointer that moves correspondingly. Now I once was a drunkard, a hopeless slave to alcohol. And the power of Christ was strong enough to pull me out of the pit and change my entire life. By this I know from personal experience that Christ rose from the dead.”

This simple testimony of the machinist accomplished more than many a convincing argument. The Risen Savior reveals Himself personally to those who believe in Him. Whoever seeks salvation by Him will experience this personally.

“It Is Finished”

The powerful words our Lord spoke from the cross became a solid anchor for Dora Rappard’s faith. She was a devout child. When she turned 15 though, the Holy Spirit revealed the sinfulness of her heart such that she considered herself to be the worst of sinners. One night her despair increased to the highest level. She cried out to God for salvation. Suddenly the words of the Savior, “It is finished!” in conjunction with the apostle’s words: “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved, you and your household,” shone within her.

“My ear did not hear a voice,” she wrote, “My eye saw no light, my soul did not feel a special touch, but my faith

solidly understood the clear word of the gospel. She had found the solid ground that became her eternal anchor. She experienced that of which she later sang:

*“O Word of Life, my faith can rest in you.
Upon this Rock I’m grounded and secure.
For God’s plan of salvation is complete.
Take it sinner, it’s for you,
There is nothing you can do,
God has done it all for you.
It is finished! It is finished!”*

At the Cross

“And the people stood looking on.” (Luke 24:35)

If we had lived during the time when Jesus was crucified, how might we have reacted? On what side of the cross might we have taken our stand?

No other person’s life and death has so impacted people and the history of mankind as that of Jesus of Nazareth. He was unique in every way. His contemporaries often did not know what to make of Him.

We read of Him: “And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29). When soldiers were sent to arrest Jesus and they came back empty-handed, they were asked: “Why have you not brought Him?” The only excuse they could come up with was, “No man ever spoke like this Man!” (John 7:45-46). Even His own disciples were often confounded by Jesus.

Yes, Jesus was different. While thousands cheered Him on, others campaigned for His death. Jesus showed little concern for public opinion, however. His concern was to fulfill the will of the Father. Everything else was secondary. His love stood in stark contrast to the legalism and hatred of many of the religious leaders. In the end, His enemies managed to condemn Him to a horrible death on a Roman cross.



Simon Brings Relief

John reports that Jesus carried His cross to Calvary. However, Matthew and Luke tell us that Simon of Cyrene was commanded to carry the cross for Him. Whatever the case may be, we can assume that Jesus initially bore its weight. When He could no longer bear it, Simon, who was visiting Jerusalem from Cyrene in North Africa and was the father of Alexander and Rufus, was commanded to carry it. It would be interesting to know what Simon thought of this. Did he know Jesus of Nazareth? Was he sympathetic to His cause? Was he willing because of Jesus, or because he was coerced by the soldiers?

Carrying a cross is never easy. There are people today who grumble and complain when they are required to carry a burden for Jesus' sake. Does that describe you as well? Or do you see it as a blessed privilege to carry a cross for His sake? To carry someone else's burden can bring us either blessing or bitterness. Happy are those who gladly volunteer to carry a cross for Jesus' sake.

The Sorrow of a Mother

Mary, the mother of Jesus, was present at the crucifixion. How did she react? Who could possibly suffer more than a mother who sees her child subjected to pain and hardship? When she pushed her way to the cross on that fateful day, what thoughts may have possessed her mind? She may have been thinking about the extraordinary circumstances that surrounded the birth of her son. Perhaps she retraced in her mind the journey she and Joseph took with their twelve-year-old Jesus to the temple in Jerusalem. There, in His Father's house, He had taught the teachers! Maybe she thought of all the miracles and healing that she witnessed during the years of His public ministry.

But what was Mary thinking about Jesus now? Had she accepted Him as the Messiah? Was she able to grasp why He, the Son of God, had to die, why He had to suffer such a despicable death? Until her dying day, Mary will have praised God that she had the exquisite privilege to carry Jesus under her heart; that she had been able to care for Him, and raise Him from infancy, through childhood and on to adulthood.

Two Criminals—Two Attitudes

That day, two other men were crucified, one on either side of Jesus. Various translations refer to these men as robbers, bandits, evil-doers, or criminals. Initially, these men regarded Jesus as just another unfortunate transgressor of the law who was suffering his deserved punishment. So, they joined those who tortured Jesus and mocked and ridiculed Him. We read in Luke 23:39-43: "Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save

Yourself and us.' But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.' Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.' And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.'"

Strange, how two men in the same predicament were free to make a choice: One chose eternal death, the other eternal life.

Where Were the Disciples?

The disciples must certainly have witnessed the crucifixion as well. How did they react? John was there, comforting Mary, Jesus' mother. Judas Iscariot had committed suicide. Where were all the rest? We read in Luke 23:49 "But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things." How Jesus could have used his friends' support in this moment! How He must have longed for a comforting word from them. How disappointed the disciples must have been in their behavior in the subsequent days. If only they would have mustered more courage and loyalty. If only they had taken the right stand at the cross.

What Is Your Stand?

Had you and I lived in those days and in that place, would we have behaved any differently? Indeed, what stand are we taking today? Are we concerned only about our public persona? Do we run with the crowd? Do we follow from afar? Are we silent when we should speak up? Do we complain when a cross is placed on our delicate shoulders—even if it's just for a moment? Genuine followers of Jesus stick with Him even unto death. They see it as true joy to be able to suffer with their Savior. They consider it a high honor to stand unshakable underneath His cross.

We live in a time of unparalleled comfort. It is an era of individualism and narcissism where little thought is expended on behalf of others. It is high time to decide on which side of the cross we will take our stand. Shall we, like the one criminal, hurl brash accusations at Jesus, or will we, like the other one, ask the Savior to remember us in grace, and thereby experience eternity at His side?

Jesus Christ is re-crucified every day and in every place. Do you stand by without opening your mouth or lifting your hand in His defense, thereby admitting free course to the evil around you? Or does the entire world know that you belong to Jesus and are willing to stand with Him, ready to stay there without asking what the consequences may bring you?

Dale Oldham
(1903-1984)

The Resurrection of Jesus

“He is not here; for He is risen.” (Matthew 28:6)

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the basis of the Christian faith. This fact differentiates Christianity from all other religions. Their founders are all dead, but Jesus lives! The grave and hell could not retain the Prince of Life. He rose out of the grave triumphantly and testified through His resurrection that He is truly God. When we pray to this Prince of Life, we don't pray at His grave but gather around the throne of Him who once was dead but who is now alive forever and ever (Revelation 1:18).

The Reality of the Resurrection

The appearances of Jesus Christ after His resurrection testify of this miracle. The Bible clearly states that He appeared to Mary and that she recognized Him when He talked with her. He gave her the assignment to go to His disciples and tell them the good news that He lives.

He also appeared to the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus. They were sad, and their faith had begun to waver. They had hoped He would deliver Israel. But after Jesus died and was placed in a grave, their faith and hope disappeared. When Jesus approached them, explained the Scriptures to them and later broke bread with them, they recognized Him and were able to believe again. Filled with joy, they rushed to Jerusalem to announce to the other disciples that Jesus was alive and had met them.

Paul testifies, too, that Jesus appeared to him. What a difference this glimpse of the living Savior made in the life of this apostle! First a persecutor of Christians, then a follower of Jesus! First a proud Pharisee, then

a humble disciple who counted all things for loss so that he could gain Christ. Yes, it was this glimpse of the living Savior that kindled the fire in his heart, which burned until he had spread the message of salvation through Christ throughout the world.

But the empty grave is further confirmation of His resurrection. It is absurd to think that the disciples had stolen His body, as some claim. What did they want with His body? And even if they had dared to go to the grave, how would they have removed the body? Didn't the Roman guards stand in front, and wasn't the grave sealed?

And what a change this experience made in the lives of the disciples themselves! Their sadness transformed into joy and their despair into hope. Only the resurrection could have brought that about.

Even today, only a living Savior can influence and transform people. We know from experience that He takes His place in a believing heart and changes our life. Faith in a living Savior gives us a living hope of future glory.

The Necessity of the Resurrection

The Lord Jesus had to arise from the dead to validate His own words. He had repeatedly said that He must die but that He would rise again on the third day. If He had remained in the grave, He would have been a deceiver. But, thanks be to God, He arose and thereby proved to the whole world that He is the true Son of God.

And what use would the preaching of the gospel be if Christ hadn't risen? We would have no gospel! “And

if Christ is not risen, then your faith is empty,” says the apostle, “and our preaching is in vain!” (1 Corinthians 15:14) But, praise God, He lives! We have the message of salvation for a sinful world. He lives, and because He lives, we will live too!

The Importance of the Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus from the dead is of great importance, for otherwise our faith would be in vain. We would still be in our sins. Those who are asleep in Jesus would be lost, and we would be the most pitiable people of all, says the apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 15:19). Only a living Savior can give us a living hope and a living faith. Only He can forgive sins and deliver us from death and from hell.

If Christ had not risen again, then we would have no hope for the future. If He weren't living, then we wouldn't live either. What a dismal thought! But hasn't God put this hope into the heart of every person? We know that Jesus lives, and because of His resurrection, we will also live, and will one day be reunited with our loved ones who died knowing Christ.

We can pass on this Easter message to the whole world: We have a living Savior! He came triumphantly out of the grave. And through Him, we too can triumph over sin, death, and hell. With joy we can chime in with the apostle: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? [...] But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:54-57).

Triumph of Life

After that awful night full of despair and inner turmoil, Easter morning broke with a new message: It was the salvation-bringing message of the gospel for the whole world!

It was a sad and painful time for the small crowd who had been with Jesus. What did life have to offer from now on? He, Whom they had followed, in Whom they had believed and clung to in fervent love, for Whom they had left everything and in Whom all their hope rested, was taken from them. What was to become of them? They entrusted all their worries to Him. He always knew what to do, even when everyone else was baffled. Whether it was a hungry crowd standing before Him, or sick and demon-possessed people brought to Him, He was able to help. He gave help when people were convicted by His words, or were in anguish, or when the weather was fierce and the wind against them. He knew what to do when death stretched out its cold hand to someone. But now? What sorrow!

It started with a triumphant entry. The crowd grew larger as the procession neared the city. They were joyful

when the praises of Hosanna had sounded! They were glad to be committed to the Reason for this jubilation. With joy they joined in, saying, “Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!” (Matthew 21:9). How great was their Master! Soon their desires and hopes would be fulfilled. – That is what they had hoped and thought.

Then the events began to unfold: the cleansing of the temple, the conflicts with the priests and scribes. The situation escalated and became strained. Then came the memorable, unforgettable supper, the betrayal by one of His disciples, the struggle in Gethsemane, the arrest, interrogation, verdict, and finally the terrible death on the cross and burial. – They all remained behind with their own suffering and pain.

How was it possible that their Lord and Master could suffer such a tragic end? Did He not have the

power to escape it? Had He not snatched away death's prey many times before? How could He be overcome by death? Yes, how could death even dare to tear away the One most dear to their hearts? – The hours passed. The yearning for their Lord and Master continued to burn in their hearts.

The night passed slowly and the new day dawned. And, like everything else under the sun comes to an end, this night of despair ended too. Behold, it was not death, but life that triumphed in the end. The bonds of death had to yield to the power of the Prince of Life.

An angel stood at the tomb. A bright light shone from him. How useful were the cunning plans of Jesus' enemies who tried to seal and guard the grave? What was the heavy stone compared to the power and strength of the heavenly messenger? What was the seal of Pilate even if he were the most powerful on earth? What good were the guards? They were lying on the ground, scared, and too frightened to move. Then the angel grasped the heavy stone and rolled it away. The tomb was open and the Prince of Life walked out. The darkness gave way to the light.

O, glorious and wonderful Easter morning, triumphant over death! All worry is gone; the bitter suffering has fled. Sadness now gives way to joy. The anchor of hope has been secured.

The Easter light illumines us as we read this wonderful story. "Do not be afraid!"; the angel of God calls to us. "Jesus lives! He is risen!" (Matthew 28:5-6) – There is no Christian faith without this Easter faith. Christ is not a dead figure or portrait on display in some church. No, He is the Living One, the Resurrected Savior. After His resurrection He lived another forty days on earth before ascending into heaven. During this time He had many interactions with His disciples.

The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a miracle of God that cannot be truly fathomed with the human mind. No other fact in the history of the Kingdom of God, or any other world event, has been confirmed by so many credible witnesses as the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The world has rejected Christ. "Away with Him!" is still a cry of many today (John 19:5). What does that mean

though? Through His resurrection God vindicated Jesus to all the world and crowned Him with glory. What more is needed?

Praise be to God! We are serving the living and resurrected Savior who is, yesterday, today, and in all eternity! This may be unpleasant for the enemies of Christ, but for all who are called by His name, this is pure joy. Because of Easter, we can count on the risen Savior at all times. He has promised to be near those who call on Him. He knows and sees all our needs and is always available to help.

Perhaps you are in sorrow, like the disciples had been. Then know: He lives! He is not dead! He is at the right hand of His Father in heaven, taking His place as mediator and intercessor for us. He wants to give us all that we ask in His name. He prays on our behalf. Whenever two or three are gathered in His name He is in their midst. Always count on the living, present, wonderful Savior, in life and in death! Christ has abolished death's power. The empty grave speaks to us of the wonderful victory Jesus won over death. Imagine the horror we would feel in the face of death, or the sadness and despair we would experience with the passing of a loved one, if Jesus had not conquered death. In light of this, we can imagine what heartbreaking pain those feel who do not believe. Yet since Easter, death's world has been pierced with the wonderful sounds: "O death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? ... But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:55-56).

Christ is the resurrection and the life; whoever believes in Him will live even though he dies. Physical death for the believer simply opens the door to His eternal kingdom. Without the resurrection our lives would be hopeless. Yet Christ is risen! He lives forevermore. Life has won the victory! The light of Easter shines through all the world's darkness. The joy of Easter overcomes all sadness. Blessed are those who have experienced this. What a glorious message: life has triumphed over death!

L. Bennet

Easter

Every year Easter is celebrated. In some religious movements special traditions have been established and it is considered unthinkable to have Easter without them. In the Russian church the greeting “Christ is risen!” is used. The response to this greeting is “He is risen indeed!” Easter is a day to reflect on Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

The first message of Christ’s resurrection came from angel’s lips. Women came in the early morning hours to anoint Jesus’ body. As they reached the grave, they found it empty. Then two angels approached them. They said: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!” (Luke 24:5-6) In surprise, the women hurried from the grave to tell the disciples what they had experienced. On the way they met the risen Savior; they heard His greeting and fell down before Him. The event was too overwhelming; yet now they knew that He was risen indeed. In this manner He revealed Himself to a crying Maria Magdalene, to Peter, and to two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus. Finally, in the evening He appeared in the midst of the surprised disciples and said, “Peace be with you” (John 20:19). He proved to them that He had indeed risen from the dead. Now the disciples were certain of Christ’s resurrection. In this manner they became witnesses of His resurrection and spoke of it to the leaders of Israel and the common people. The testimony of the resurrection was one of the main topics of conversation in those days.

And wasn’t the resurrection of Christ a wonderful event? He, the crucified One whose side was pierced with a spear from bottom to top, rose from the dead. This is too much for the human mind to comprehend. Regardless, He stood alive before His disciples, and a doubting Thomas was able to place his hand in His side and his finger in the nail marks. No wonder he cried, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28) Thus he was convinced of the Resurrection. Then John wrote: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of Life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father

and was manifested to us” (1 John 1:1-2). He testified of the eternal life that came to him through Christ, the Risen Lord. Even the apostle Paul gave his testimony and wrote to the Corinthians: “Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time” (1 Corinthians 15:8). For this reason he also claimed that He: “...has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10). The testimony of the resurrection of Jesus could not be denied by anyone because of all the wonders and signs that happened in the name of Jesus. That was supported by these words: “And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs” (Mark 16:20).

The Risen One was the main topic of the sermons in the early Church. A dead Christ would not have brought these fearful men out in public, but because of the resurrection of their Lord they became fearless go-getters. The Spirit of the Risen One was inside them and equipped them, despite all threats, to proclaim Christ’s resurrection. This message also brought victory in all the world, and millions submitted to Christ as their Lord and King. They willingly gave up their lives in the battle against sin, superstition, and heathen idolatry because they knew that they too would rise again and live.

Our Christian world has for the most part forgotten the huge significance of the resurrection of Christ. A large number of those who stand behind the pulpit do not believe in the physical resurrection of Christ. Today is a time when the life-giving doctrine is rejected without considering the clear teachings of the Holy Scripture. The Apostle Paul once asked: “Why should it be thought incredible by you that God raises the dead?” (Acts 26:8) Unbelief allows a person to sink into a dark night where no hope can be found. How different it is for the children of God who proclaim, “I know that my Redeemer lives!” This knowledge comes from a personal experience with the resurrected One. He came into their lives, changed them completely, and gave them a new heavenly perspective. They experience Him repeatedly through wonderful answered prayer, and together they testify: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever!” (Hebrews 13:8)

Gustav Sonnenberg (1898-1980)

The Cross and the Empty Grave

“God has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.” (2 Timothy 1:9-10)

The cross of Calvary and the Resurrection of Jesus have become a sure foundation and solid anchor for my faith. Years ago, when I bowed my knees before the Lord and confessed all my sins to Him, the power of His Resurrection worked complete forgiveness and release of my guilt caused by all my trespasses. I am very thankful to God for eternal life in Christ. If Jesus had not died and risen from the grave, our faith would indeed be senseless and in vain.

Good Friday

When Jesus held the Passover with His disciples, He knew that He would suffer and die shortly. This was no ordinary type of suffering and death. He would die the death of a criminal, although He had never done anything wrong.

When He wrestled in prayer in Gethsemane and the fear of death overwhelmed Him, He yielded fully to the will of His Father, even when He had the power to ask for legions of angel to come to His defense. The enemies of Jesus – particularly the Scribes and Pharisees – demanded that Jesus step down from the cross, if He indeed was the Son of God. Many bystanders mocked Him, saying, “He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God” (Luke 23:35). The criminal to the right of Jesus understood: “I am guilty, I need forgiveness,” and humbly asked Him to remember him when He would depart. Jesus responded generously, “Truly, I say to you: Today you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43).

Good Friday is a sad day in which we remember and reflect on the passion, suffering and painful death of our Lord Jesus Christ. He took our sins upon Himself and suffered the punishment we deserved. For our sake, He allowed Himself to be betrayed, mocked, spit upon, offended, beaten, whipped, and a crown of thorns pressed on His head. He went the difficult way to Calvary for us, carrying the heavy cross. He had His hands and feet pierced by nails, drinking the bitter wine before He died an agonizing death. However, despite all the pain and suffering, Jesus asked the Father to forgive His enemies. What happened on Good Friday was to fulfill all the Scriptures. Only after the sacrificial death of Jesus could there be a resurrection, and that is our reason to celebrate Easter.

What Is It All About?

My sins and yours nailed Jesus to the cross; it was our debts that made His death so gruesome and bitter. Because He took our punishment upon Himself, we can now live, provided we have received His gift of grace. Through His blood He has paid the price and redeemed us.

Moses raised the brass serpent in the desert so that the people could look upon it and be saved from the poisonous snake bites. Similarly, we can turn our eyes to the crucified Christ, who suffered and died for our debt of sin. We now look up to the finished work on the cross that Jesus has completed for us. At the same time, however, we also look up to Jesus, who rose from the dead and defeated death and the power of evil.

The Empty Tomb

Augustin once wrote: “What a death that gave a mortal blow to death!”

The resurrection of Christ declares that death does not have the last word and we do not have to perish but can live eternally. Jesus rose from the dead and overcame death once and for all. With that He proclaimed a triumphant victory over Satan and death. Therefore, we no longer have to fear that Satan can overcome and bind us again. Jesus sets those free who come to Him with sincere and repentant hearts.

The Resurrection of Jesus Is A Fact

All doubts and arguments that the disciples stole the body of the Lord while the soldiers were asleep must be exposed and rejected as falsehood and evil gossip. The frightened disciples could never have overpowered the Roman soldiers watching the tomb. The Scriptures testify, “And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat on it. His countenance was like lightning, and His clothing as white as snow. And the guards shook for fear of Him, and became like dead men” (Matthew 28:2-4).

The women at the tomb became the first witnesses of the Resurrection when they heard the message by the angel: Jesus is risen! Come and see the place where He lay. The stone is rolled away, the tomb is empty! Jesus has risen triumphantly!

Hope for Everyone

The Resurrection Day means eternal hope for all believers. Now we can all turn our gaze to the Crucified, who suffered for our guilt and sins, died and completed the work of redemption for us. We can all look upon the Author and Finisher of our faith, knowing that He will not disappoint or leave us.

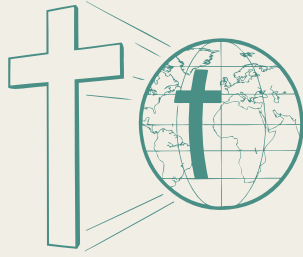
Christ is risen indeed! Through His death and Resurrection we are now able to live in the blissful hope to be with God for all eternity.

Dear friend, if you hear the voice of the Savior, I urge you to accept Him into your heart. Then the Resurrection Day will not only be an important historical event, but also the most beautiful celebration experience for you.

Let us be Christ’s witnesses and call out to the world: “Quit your searching! Take hold of the eternal life that is readily available in Jesus Christ!”

Martin Kehler
Winnipeg, MB





Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

“He Is Not Here”

“Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen!” (Matthew 28:5-6)

Another translation says: “He is not here anymore”, meaning that, “He was here,” again confirming His death. The women who are mentioned in this passage knew of His burial because they had seen where He had been laid. But why was He no longer there? The angel stated it simply: “He is risen!” How was this possible? Peter gives us the answer: “you [...] killed the Prince of Life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses” (Acts 3:15). Death could not hold Him. Death was defeated. If God wills it, death must release its victim! On Easter morning, this glorious fact was witnessed by the surprised visitors at Jesus’ grave-site. They had come to the grave deeply depressed but left it with great joy, telling the others of the resurrection.

We know that our lives here on earth end with death. And with death, our life story is completed. Even among the greatest of the great, there is no exception. Our Bible text directs us clearly to the One who was the exception! When we visit the grave-site of those who have gone before us, we know that their bodies rest in the grave. No one expects anything different.

With this expectation, the women visited the grave-site of Jesus on that early Easter morning. But something was definitely different! The grave was empty, which is why the angel could proclaim: “He is not here

[...], come, see the place where the Lord lay” (Matthew 28:6). The omnipotent God had raised Him from the dead and had given Him life once again. Initially, this was incomprehensible for both His friends and His enemies. But it was the will of God! Jesus was the exception! With His resurrection, His life story continued.

His faithful followers did not conceal these events. The reality of the resurrection gave them an Easter message to proclaim which was at the same time the life-changing gospel message. The memorable appearances of Jesus after His resurrection reinforced their message. No one could deny it. Jesus was as alive as they were. For forty days Jesus spent time with His disciples. He sought out those who mourned and wept. He continued to talk and minister to His disciples. The message of the resurrection would never be extinguished. This message produced great changes. The worries, fears and sadness of the disciples were changed to “great joy!” At the same time, it caused restlessness and confusion among the religious leaders and enemies of Jesus. It was a message about Jesus’ victory and how faith in Him would give eternal life. The reality of the resurrection made it possible to have communion with Jesus. And so the unexpected message by the angel: “He is not here” is



extremely important for us. Death stops any kind of communication with our loved one. When in our mind's eye we stand before the empty grave of Christ and believe that He has indeed risen from the dead, then it is possible for us to have a lifelong relationship with Him.

Matthew gives account of an earthquake that took place on that very first Easter morning. This event should have been heard around the whole area. Even Matthew should have witnessed it. What use was a seal and a heavy stone to fortify the tomb in an event like this? Where God exercises His power, human actions are useless. Like the seal, all human power was shattered. The stone was gone, the grave was empty! Even the armed guards at the grave were filled with fear and terror. The Almighty had acted and shattered the plans of the people, even silencing the rulers.

The mere fact that the resurrection took place on that Easter morning was decisive. The grave was empty! The Living was not among the dead. Death was defeated and life triumphed! All this explained the “great joy” that is so rare at a grave-site. The women had been determined to perform certain rituals at the tomb of Jesus. Yet Jesus rose victoriously and began to visibly work among them again, healing wherever He went. They fell down before Him, stunned and full of adoration. A welcome of this kind had never been displayed at a grave before. Since everything was so new and different, a new set of duties awaited them. Jesus told them: “Go and tell My brethren[...]” (Matthew 28:10). They quickly passed on this message to those who were mourning and crying.

What should we do? We want to keep faith in the resurrection and the victory of Easter. Just like the first witnesses, we also want to be part of the Easter joy and pass it on. Let us thank God that we have a living Savior. We want to seek encounters with Jesus and allow Him to heal us. We want to wish all our dear readers a happy and blessed Easter!

Be Brave

“Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” (Ephesians 6:10)

Be brave. Only the brave are strong. The coward is a weakling; if he has strength, he dares not use it. We must be brave, for life is a battle. The forces of good and evil are in deadly combat. You cannot avoid having a part in the conflict. You must fight whether you will to do so or not. There will be obstacles to meet no matter where your path may lead. You must overcome them or they in turn will overcome you.

Do not dream of a time in this life when all your obstacles will be overcome. There is no day so bright but the darkness follows. There is no ship that sails the sea but must meet the storms. No tree sinks its roots so deeply into the soil but its strength is tested by the gale.

Upon you will blow the piercing winds of adverse circumstances. Things will come that you cannot foresee. Do not shrink before them when they appear. Lift up your head, throw back your shoulders, look them squarely in the face, and with courage born of faith meet them in the strength God will give you.

Sometimes it may seem that to endure is impossible. Your strength may fail, but when you have come to the end of yourself, God will add strength, and that added strength will

mean victory. Be brave. It is only when you bravely face the foe that you can know the measure of your strength. There can be no defeat to him who will not be defeated. Circumstances may prevail against you for a time, but if you fight manfully on, the seeming defeat will end in victory.

Napoleon once fought a battle and lost. His troops were driven back. One of his marshals, who with his troops had not arrived in time for the conflict, came up during the retreat. Napoleon said to him, “We have lost the battle.” “It seems so, sire,” was the reply, “but there is still time to fight another.” Encouraged by the words of his marshal, Napoleon rallied his troops, attacked the enemy, and won a great victory.

If defeated, never count that defeat final. Attack the foe again and keep at it till you win. Bravery is a quality of mind and soul. You may be weak in body; you may be timid and shrinking, but if you will, your soul may rise above all this, and grow strong in God. Courage is the basis of your strength. It will bring strength from God. But should He give you ever so much strength, only through courage can you make use of it.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)



God Speaks

A 68 year old captain was asked many years ago how he came to the point of surrendering himself to the Lord Jesus. He answered: "I am ashamed to say that I only came to the Lord Jesus and surrendered myself eight years ago. I was on an island near Malmö and in the unpleasant position of having to wait two hours in a waiting room. I had soon thoroughly read all the newspapers on display and was bored. When I was finished with those, my gaze fell on a Bible that is displayed in waiting rooms in Sweden. I hesitantly reached for it.

As I was opening it, I heard an old man nearby loudly pray for me: "See Lord Jesus, someone is reaching for Your Word. Give light that he may find You in it!" When I heard this, I threw the Bible away from me and stormed out the door, because a restlessness seized me that would not let go. I traveled home, but found no peace. What could the old man have meant?

I had a godly friend in my hometown. I went to him with my restlessness and he proclaimed to me Jesus Christ as Savior and Deliverer. I then, with God's grace, surrendered myself."

May all our readers that have not yet taken this step, allow themselves to be drawn to Jesus in the same way! God has given us His Word and in it He shows us the Way of Salvation through the acceptance of the crucified and resurrected Lord.

Can You Pray?

Many years ago, Doctor R., a well educated man, lived in Berlin. He did not believe in God, but wanted to learn whether other people really knew something about a God. So one day, he looked up a preacher who had been described to him as a godly man. The two men spoke awhile with each other and then the preacher prayed. "Doctor", he then said, "now it is your turn to pray!" The doctor tried to pray, but was unable to. The preacher looked up astonished and said: "How strange: A small child can do what the great and well-educated Doctor R. cannot manage."

The doctor returned home from his visit in great thought. On the way, he met a little schoolgirl. It crossed his mind: "Is it true that even a small child can pray?" He walked up to the child and directly asked: "Can

His Strength for Your Days

*Christ knows your needs; He'll give you strength
For all your days, since He knows their length.
His grace will be given unto you,
So rest in Him; He will see you through.*

*Keep out the noise of the world by choice,
So that you can hear that inner voice.
O, let it guide you as you prepare
To let your heart be a house of prayer.*

*And when God speaks, then do as He wills,
For in His presence you can be still.
His love compels you to do and stand,
With joy and courage as He commands.*

*You days will be full of sun and cheer;
You'll know what has most priority.
For Jesus Christ, He will give you strength
For all your days, for He knows their length!*

you pray?" The little girl seemed to be visibly shocked at this unexpected question. She had never before been approached like this in the street, but she still answered with a clear "Yes". "Then pray now," commanded the doctor and the child trustingly said a short prayer to the Lord Jesus.

Doctor R. listened and then continued on his way, more serious than ever. Not long after this, he also learned how to pray, for the prayer of the little school girl had led him into deep thought. He repented before God and became a faithful servant of God. Several years later, he went to India as a missionary. He devoted himself to the lepers and outcasts. When friends reproached him for working too much, he always replied: "I denied the Most High long enough, now I must serve the most insignificant."

Being Vigilant

WWJD. Surely you have encountered this sequence of letters. It stands for: What Would Jesus Do? It is a question we should ask ourselves much more often. What would Jesus do today, in our time, in our situation? Sometimes it will not be that easy to find an answer. At other times, the Bible gives very precise answers.

One of them is in 1 Peter 5:8: “Be sober, be vigilant!” Is it not remarkable how concretely God speaks to us here? This is a demand. We have no other choice! If you want to remain a child of God, you must be vigilant. This is exactly what Jesus would do. He Himself set the example.

And now? Are you vigilant now, after you read this passage again? If only it were that easy! Now it is just a question of how we apply this command in our everyday lives. How can we be vigilant?

It is crucial for us to be clear about why we need to watch. The second part of the above verse gives us the answer: “Because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

In January of this year, the media covered the 70th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz concentration camp. Survivor witnesses shared how, as children, they were cruelly separated from their mothers and in most cases never saw them again. Pause for a moment. Can you imagine being such a child – to have to experience something like this? How terrible that would be. But is that not exactly what the devil tries to do? He wants to separate you from your Father in heaven. He wants to snatch you from the scope of God’s protection. He will use any possible means. And he will try with all his might to bring sin into your life, because he knows that sin separates you from God. Therefore it says: “Be sober, be vigilant!”

It is very important that you know your own weaknesses. What are your biggest temptations? Where has

the devil perhaps managed to make you fall? Take some time again and think about it. Maybe it would be good for you to also write it down.

If you know your weaknesses, then try to avoid imminent danger. A proverb says, “Those who put themselves in danger, will be destroyed by it.” This has unfortunately been confirmed thousands of times. By no means be indifferent or flippant toward this, because that would only cause you to become careless and fall asleep. Avoiding imminent danger will require discipline and self-control from you again and again. What if you examine your daily routine? At which point are you exposed to great danger? For example, for King David the time of relaxation was a huge problem. Is that familiar to you? How can you avoid this? Ask God for wisdom. Perhaps it will also help you to talk to someone about it or to pray together with someone. But even if we know all our weak points, it will not prevent the devil from setting traps for us.

For Joseph, there was a time where he was tempted to enter into a sexual relationship with a married woman. How did he react? Joseph was wide awake. First of all, it was immediately clear: this leads to sin. And he knew that it would have consequences for his relationship with God. In other words, he immediately raised the alarm. We need to do the same. When temptation approaches you, take it a step further: What will the result be? Be aware of what it means to be separated from God, and sound the alarm.

God has given us a very good resource here, a red flag of sorts. It is our conscience. Have you ever noticed how your conscience attempted to prevent you from committing a sin? It seems as if there is a small voice prompting you: Leave it. Do not do it. Do something else. Do not say it, etc. At other times, you realize that your heart-rate even increases because inside you, a

fight has broken out – the struggle between good and evil, between action and inaction. Maybe you are just a step away from sin. It is now time to wake up.

The best thing you can do now is pray. Pray that God gives you the strength to resist temptation. I am convinced that Joseph did the same. Jesus even said to His disciples: Watch and pray! And when you pray,

rely on the Bible passage in 1 Corinthians 10:13, and believe it.

WWJD? In His struggles, He watched and prayed.

Niko Ernst
Herford, Germany

Question:

“For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.” Hebrews 6:4-6

When has someone fallen away? Is there a “point of no return,” a line from which, when it is crossed, there is no turning back to God?

Answer:

One single sin which we agree to in our lives, one sin over which we do not repent, means that we fall. And repentance means that I am sorry for my sin, that I turn away from it and ask God for forgiveness for that sin. The “fall” has two meanings in Scripture.

1. If we are disobedient to the truth and obey a false gospel. Please read Galatians 5:4-7.
2. When we give in to temptation and live in sin. See Luke 8:13.

How was that among the Hebrews? They had received every spiritual blessing in Jesus Christ (Hebrews 6:4-5), but they were in danger of becoming hardened and falling away from the living God by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12 – 13). The deceitfulness of sin was the underestimation of sin and the minimization of grace. Such thoughts as, “I can too sin! That is no problem, Christ died for that.” Thus living openly in sin with the confidence that God will surely forgive me for it. (Hebrews 10:26 – 29)

God draws no line from which there is no turning back. He wants to help all people. “He is long-suffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3.9). The problem is not a God who no longer wants to forgive.

The problem is us, if we no longer want to repent. If we stubbornly persist in our sin and not let the Spirit of God punish us and repent, then our heart is hard. And so this sin becomes “a sin unto death” (1 John 5:16-17). It becomes a sin that God does not forgive because we do not repent and turn from it.

Jesus said: “And anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven” (Luke 12:10). We cannot soften our hardened heart ourselves. We cannot acquire or develop a repentant heart. It is the Holy Spirit Who shows us our sinfulness and leads us to repentance. So if we oppose the Holy Spirit, if we despise Him, then there is no one who can lead us out of our unrepentant condition.

Effectively it means this for us: When we see our sin, if we are sorry for it, if we abhor it and want to get rid of the load, then grace is there for us. This is the state to which we are led by the Holy Spirit. That is the position in which God can forgive us. And then we can come to God with full assurance, ask Him for forgiveness, and accept salvation by faith.

Robert Witt
Gifhorn, Germany



The Traitor

Uncle Hans stopped his report on the arrest of Jesus, the treachery of Judas and Peter's denial of Jesus. He looked into the faces of his Sunday School children. They all seemed to be very upset. "Yes, it really is horrible to deny our dear Lord Jesus," their teacher said thoughtfully. "In that you are absolutely right. We often have to be ashamed that we are such cowards."

"We?!" Peter replied with a bewildered face. "What do you mean we," the other children asked?

"We are not cowards!" Jurgen said, looking offended.

Uncle Hans was silent for a moment. His voice was quieter than usual, and he spoke haltingly, as if he had to search for every word:

"Yes, boys and girls, I was once as shocked as you are now. I was ten years old when I heard the story of how Peter denied his Lord. I also thought: "How could you do that?" – but soon forgot the story. Four years later I was reminded of this story again.

It was shortly after the war ended. We often sat in school with empty stomachs. Our greatest joy was receiving a ladle of soup during our lunch break. The steaming soup was brought to the rear door of the school in a van. And we, as the oldest class of boys, would assign one of the boys to carry the buckets of soup to each class. Since there weren't enough teachers, we were never supervised while doing this, and we took full advantage of this situation.

There was soon a secret agreement among us. The

boy who was responsible for distributing the soup to the other classes had the duty to "organize" some of the soup for our class, as we liked to call it. We said it was a fair arrangement. Actually, it was stealing! We were taking from the little bit of food the younger children had been eagerly waiting for all morning. At the time, we did not concern ourselves with that fact.

Each one of us was determined to secretly take as much soup as possible from the other containers for our buddies. Freddy, a rather timid boy in our class, had not dared to take any soup from the other containers, and for that received the nickname "the coward."

That was the situation until a Tuesday in April when the duty fell to our new student, Gunther. He had only been in school a week and had not really been noticed by anyone. He seemed to be a decent fellow.

And then came the shocker! Gunther stood up that morning and said in a hoarse voice: "I just want you to know that I will not participate in taking soup for you. That is stealing, and I just can't do it." His face was very pale because he knew what was coming, and we did not disappoint him!

The class exploded, "You wimp, you coward! We will teach you. You're just a scaredy-cat! Traitor! If you don't come back with extra soup then you will see what will happen to you. There is a good place behind the school where we give traitors what they deserve!"

"I am not a traitor!" replied the new student, breathing heavily. "I just can't steal. That's all."



“You’re just too scared to do it,” another shouted at him. The boy left without saying another word. He returned without a single drop of extra soup.

I don’t remember exactly how it happened, but filled with rage at this “betrayal,” as we called it, we went after him like a pack of wolves. After school, in an open space behind a wall, we beat him until our anger subsided. Laughing and jeering we just left him there. “He got what he deserved.”

Without turning around, I was the last one to leave. But I can still hear the words that the beaten boy called after us. “And I am not a traitor,” he said with difficulty. “I just cannot steal. Is there not a single one of you who believes in Jesus and knows that He would not want us to steal either?”

I went home as if nothing had happened. But those words followed me, “Is there no one among you who believes in Jesus?” I ate lunch as usual. I visited my friends, laughed and talked. But wherever I went, those words followed: “Is there no one here who believes in Jesus?” Those words changed to: “There is no one here who believes in Jesus.” I, Hans, had betrayed and denied Him. That is when I identified with Peter. I went home and cried bitterly.

Then it was as if Jesus showed me: “This is not the first time you have denied me. You have done it a hundred times before. In a hundred different ways you have become both a traitor and a denier. That is why you failed this big test in particular.”

“When was it that I denied and betrayed you?” I asked desperately. “I have always believed in you!”

It seemed as if Jesus said to me: “Do you remember the time you went around the other corner so that Tommy from your class would not see you coming out of Sunday School? Do you remember when they asked you where you were on Sunday? What did you say? You said that you had gone on a trip because you didn’t dare say you had been traveling with your Sunday School class. You knew they would laugh at you. Remember the class work you cheated on. You stole apples with the others. Together with them you brought your poor teacher to despair. With others you read books you would have never wanted your mother to see. With others you bullied younger children that could not defend themselves. With the others you cheated, and were spiteful, even though you knew that would grieve Me. You could never bring up the courage to say: “I will not participate. I believe in Jesus and He would not want me to do that. So, each time you played along, you denied and betrayed Me, you coward, Hans!”

“That is how it was, children,” said the Sunday school teacher. He wanted to add, “Think carefully if you have ever been a traitor and denier.” - But it was no longer necessary. There was not a single child who was not horrified at the thought: “Is it possible that I might have betrayed you, dear Lord Jesus?”

With tears in his eyes, their Sunday School teacher said: “Let us ask our Lord and Savior to forgive us our cowardice and help us to begin a new life, just as He helped me. He will help! I have tried it.”

Forgetful, but Not Forgotten

We are all forgetful. This is a fact that none of us can get around. Even though we do not completely forget most of what is stored in our memory, we just have a hard time recalling it. Experts in this field recommend that our minds need exercise in order to stay fit. Here are some tips for an exercise that is of utmost importance.

When people start the familiar topic of what it means to get older, it doesn't take long for someone to mention memory loss. It seems that once we turn fifty we begin to realize that we too have become afflicted with this "disease"! What troubles us is that there doesn't seem to be anything we can do about it. We feel like we're the victim of forgetfulness. The things we could once remember effortlessly we now place in our memory bank with utmost care and deliberation. What can help us is writing things down. The only problem with that is that we end up forgetting where we put our reminder notes!

It amazes us how many things we begin to forget! Names, places, phone numbers, birthdays, appointments, etc. We find ourselves standing in front of the fridge with the door open, but we've forgotten what we needed. We take our pills, and later can't remember if we've taken them or not. It seems like we can easily recall only events that happened long ago. We are told that it's called short-term memory loss.

An elderly gentleman from our congregation called me with this request: "Please pray for me. I desperately want to remember what you preach! It seems that as soon as I leave the sanctuary after the worship service, I've already forgotten what your message was about."

There's a knock on the door to my office. I run down the stairs to open it. An older gentleman is standing there, dressed in his Sunday best. "Isn't there a service today?" he asks.

"Dear brother," I reply, "the service is tomorrow. Today is Saturday." Slowly he walks back home. He has forgotten which day of the week it is. I feel sorry for him. But many find themselves in a similar predicament. Maybe that includes you...

There are a number of things we can do to make life more manageable when our memory starts to go. We are informed about taking vitamins, making lists, learning to consciously repeat things, or playing various association games.

I would like to draw your attention to something else, however, in our conversation about forgetfulness. You are surely familiar with Psalm 103; perhaps you memorized the first lines of it many years ago. The psalm begins with an anthem of praise: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and all that is within me, bless His holy name." The second verse begins in exactly the same way, but ends differently: "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits." This tells me that it is possible for us to become forgetful spiritually. The psalmist then lists a number of spiritual blessings that we are not to forget.

It can happen to us. When we are under pressure, plagued with stress, or when we're gripped by a disease, or if we're worried about the times we live in, or whatever it may be, we become so involved in our situation that we no longer see the reality of the whole picture. Martin Luther, a former monk, married Katherine von Bora. The story is told that he once became so depressed in spirit that he did not know what to do with himself. His wife was unable to encourage him. Then she had an idea. She put on a black dress. When she entered his room, Luther was shocked and asked who had died. "God has died," she answered. "If you are no longer praying, speaking, or singing, then God is dead to you and has no power." A light dawned in Luther. In his sadness and depression, he had forgotten God, and his situation only worsened as a result.

May I suggest a few things that you and I should never forget? Let's just begin each of the following points with the words, Forget not...

1. ...that God is alive. Even though everything may darken around us, even though we can speak about the dire circumstances that we live in, or about the future that seems grim and bleak, let's remember that God is still alive and has not given up His control. He still sits on His throne. I was struck by a phrase I read in a book: "By the way, God is still here." I wrote it down, and today the phrase greets me from where it hangs on my office wall. When my life grinds to a halt and there seems to be no way out, I look at that sentence. When darkness seems to be winning, then don't forget: God is still alive.
2. ... that God has not forgotten you. This is an enduring fact. It may occasionally feel like He has forgotten you, but the fact remains that He has not. A songwriter puts it this way: "Though I feel nought of your might, yet You're on my journey, e'ven through the night."
3. ...that God neither sleeps nor slumbers. We read this in Psalm 121:3-4: "He will not allow your foot to be moved; He who keeps you will not slumber. Behold, He who keeps Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep." While we go to bed and our eyes give way to sleep, He keeps watch.
4. ...that God knows you. Just as you are, with your needs, trials, and burdens. He is familiar with every one of our difficulties, fears, anxieties, and He sees every tear that wells from our eyes. Jesus once stated that He knows us down to the very number of hairs that are on our head (Matthew 10:30).
5. ...that God knows what is best for us. We need to accept that there is a difference between what we desire for ourselves and what is for our best. In His great wisdom, God plans our future from a perspective that transcends time. He wants us to reach our destination. Trust Him therefore in His direction. If you keep with Him, you're in safe hands. He has never yet made a faulty decision.
6. ...that God will bring us through this time. A songwriter says: "How He will bring me through, I cannot know, but that He will bring me through, of this I'm sure." God is not just the Author of our faith; He is its Finisher. He will protect us, strengthen us, and give us victory until we enter the safe waters of our eternal harbor.
7. ...that God is capable of dealing with every difficulty. We are weak, but His power in us makes us strong. God knows no hopeless situation. You will never hear God say, "This one is too hard for me," or, "this is one I'm not equipped to handle." He is our Almighty God and our Abba; transcendent and immanent. This I never want to forget.
8. ...that God has not changed. He helped three men in a fiery furnace, Daniel in the den of lions, and Paul and Silas in a Philippian jail. He is the same today. He always has enough power to help in every situation.

As we become more forgetful with age, we have to find ways to cope. It's just part of life. It is good to know, however, that though we forget, we are not forgotten. Jesus tells us that God remembers even the sparrows. The little, insignificant sparrow finds a place in the heart of God: "Are not five sparrows sold for two copper coins? And not one of them is forgotten before God" (Luke 12:6). Jesus says, "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?" (Luke 6:26) And the prime example from Scripture? "Can a woman forget her nursing child, And not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, Yet I will not forget you."

Thank-you, Lord Jesus, that you do not forget us!

Harry Semenjuk
Edmonton, AB

Lifesaving Station or Clubhouse?

On a dangerous seacoast notorious for shipwrecks, there was a crude little lifesaving station. The building was just a hut, and there was only one boat, but a few devoted members kept a constant watch over the sea, and with no thought for themselves, they went out day or night tirelessly searching for the lost.

Because this little station saved so many lives, it soon became famous. Some of those who were saved, and various others from the surrounding areas, wanted to associate themselves with the station by giving of their time, money, and effort to support its work. New boats were bought and new crews were trained. The little lifesaving station grew.

Some of the new members of the lifesaving station were unhappy that the building was so crude and so poorly equipped. They felt that a more comfortable place should be provided as the first refuge for those saved from the sea.

So they replaced the emergency cots with beds and put better furniture in a bigger building. Now the lifesaving station became a popular gathering place for its members, and they redecorated it beautifully and furnished it as a sort of club.

Fewer members were now interested in going to sea on lifesaving missions, so they hired lifeboat crews to do this work. After all, the lifesaving station's coat of arms still adorned the clubhouse, and from the ceiling of the banquet hall, where the club celebrated the initiation of new members, hung a model of a large lifeboat.

About this time a large ship was wrecked off the coast, and the hired crews brought in boatloads of cold, wet, and

half-drowned people. They were dirty and sick. Some of them had black skin, and some spoke a strange language. The beautiful new club was considerably messed up. So the property committee immediately had a shower house built outside the club where victims of shipwrecks could be cleaned up before coming inside.

At the next meeting, there was a split in the club membership. Most of the members wanted to stop the club's lifesaving activities because they thought these activities were unpleasant and hindered the social activity at the club.

A few members insisted that lifesaving was their primary purpose and pointed out that they were still called a lifesaving station. But they were quickly overruled. The other members told them that if they wanted to save the lives of all the various kinds of people who were shipwrecked in those waters, they could begin their own lifesaving station down the coast.

And so they did. They started with a crude little building, but its reputation spread quickly. As the years went by, the new station experienced the same changes that had occurred at the old station. The new station evolved into a club, and yet another lifesaving station was founded.

If you visit the seacoast today you will find a number of exclusive clubs along that shore. Shipwrecks are still frequent in those waters, only now most of the people drown.

What about our churches today? Are they clubhouses for the spiritually elite? Or are they lifesaving stations for the lost?

He Lives!

*Praise be to God, that Jesus lives,
And rose up from the dead!
He's always with us and He gives
Us hope for what's ahead.*

*Rejoice, the grave could not conceal
The Savior; yes, He lives!
He brought the year of jubilee
For all those that are His.*

*Through Christ from curse and sin we're free,
And blessings now abound.
We glory in His victory,
Through Him we're heaven bound!*

*I live a life of victory,
Because of Christ my Lord;
A new life He has given me,
By trusting in His Word.*

*I do not fear the sting of death,
For Jesus lives in me;
And when I've breathed my final breath
In glory I will be.*

*For I will see in righteousness
My God, from face to face.
Christ's resurrection, I'll confess
And glory in His grace.*

Abide with Us!

Both of the disciples, traveling along the road to Emmaus, grieved deeply for their Master, their Adviser. He, whom they had loved, had been taken from them. But as the One they were mourning for joined them, laid out the Scriptures for them, and gave them new courage, their hearts began to burn. We can understand that when they arrived at their destination and He made as if He would continue on, they bade Him: "Abide with us, for it is toward evening" (Luke 24:29).

In our day, those who walk through life without Christ also have reason to be sad. Their outer happiness is fleeting, and in the end only emptiness and sorrow remains.

But for those of us who have Jesus as a constant companion it is a completely different case. Whatever we do not understand in life, we can bring to Jesus. Jesus is the answer for our most difficult situations, and will whisper: "Be not afraid, simply trust in Me. I will safely guide you."

If we are lonely, we can cling tightly to Jesus until all loneliness has disappeared, and continue on our way strengthened and comforted. If we are misunderstood, we can tell our Friend, who fills our hearts with mercy and love towards our neighbor. If we are faced with hardship, we can

turn to our Lord in child-like faith and pray: "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). If we are faced with illness we can turn to Jesus, for we know that everything the Master allows will work together for our good. If death comes and tears a beloved person from our side, we seek comfort in God and are never disappointed, for He is the God of Comfort.

Jesus is never far away. He hears our pleas and meets all our needs. Oh, how many blessings do you miss if you do not have Jesus in your life! He is ready to comfort you; He would gladly help, but you have not let Him in. He must stand outside. Jesus will gladly help you carry your burdens, and grant you comfort and peace in all of life's situations. He will never hesitate to enter your life when you sincerely ask Him to.

Dear friend, if you have accepted Christ, you do not need to be afraid, for nothing can harm you. He will not turn from you as long as you stay near Him and obey Him. He gladly listens when we speak with Him and bid Him: "Lord, abide with us!" There is pure light wherever Jesus abides. Wherever He is not, it not only turns to evening, but to darkest night.

Experiences with God

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.” (Psalm 103:2)

My thankfulness for what the Lord has done for me continues to grow. He has led and protected me so wonderfully through my entire life.

I would like to briefly share with you how God led us to the Church of God. We lived in Ukraine at the time that Russia joined the war in 1941. Before the battle reached our village, several German neighboring villages emigrated to Siberia or Kazakhstan. But our village remained behind.

When the Germans returned to power in the region, we were able to continue with church services again after many years. This caused great joy and a great revival occurred. Many souls were spoken to through God’s Word. I too was able to find the Lord at age 15 and was biblically baptized. I was very happy.

After two years, the fighting began again in our area and we had to leave house and farm behind and flee to the west. Unfortunately, we only made it to Poland.

After the war, we were brought to the city of Dushanbe in Tajikistan. Here we found a Russian church, but I did not feel comfortable there, as the Russian language was unfamiliar to me.

Through some wonderful circumstances, we were able to meet Sister Laura Schaak, who came from a small village of Tajikistan and belonged to the Church of God, but had no fellow believers in her village. This sister lived with my mother-in-law for a little while. My sister-in-law was very interested in the beliefs of the Church of God and wanted to hear more about it.

When Sister Schaak returned home, she wrote to us that they had found members of the Church of God about 1000 kilometers away in Kazakhstan, and that they wanted to move there. My sister-in-law was very disappointed, for she had hoped to experience more of the Church of God.

When my sister-in-law finally received time off after several years, she traveled to the believers in Kazakhstan and learned more about the Church of God. When she returned home, she told us of it. We searched in the Word of God, and the Lord showed us His church as revealed in Scripture.

But then there were many struggles. My mother and siblings believed it to be a false doctrine. Unfortunately, I could not say much to them, as I was myself young in the faith, but the Lord granted victory. We felt very connected to the members of the Church of God and they visited us occasionally. A brother admonished us that it was not good for our children to be so isolated from other believers, and that we should move.

Although it was not easy for us, we followed his advice. We sold our houses – which we had built with much effort and had not lived in for very long – and moved to Karatau, Kazakhstan, where the Schaaks also lived.

Despite all the effort, the move was worth it. The message in Luke 18:29-30 was fulfilled for us: “There is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

The children were happy there; they felt comfortable in the youth group at the church, and they turned to God. I am so thankful and blessed that they found the Church of God. I cannot thank God enough for His wonderful ways with us. My desire and prayer is that the Lord may preserve us to the end.

To the glory of God, I can also testify how the Lord has helped me recently. I was diagnosed with cataracts and both my eyes had to be operated on. Everything went well and I could see well again, for which I was very thankful to God.

But in 2011, my doctor discovered glaucoma. In the meantime, my right eye became blind and the left was affected as well. There was only 40% vision left. I earnestly called out to God and allowed myself to be anointed by the brothers according to James 5. I begged God to allow me to keep the eye. He heard my prayer in a wonderful way.

When the doctor tested my eye at my follow-up appointment, he said, “You can now see 80%.”

I am so thankful to God that He hears our prayers, even if He does not always answer immediately. I will thank and praise Him into all eternity!

H. Wall

“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits.”
(Psalm 103:2)

It has been on my heart for some time now to write a testimony to the glory of God. I too can say with the psalmist that I do not want to forget all the good that the Lord has done for me. How often He has helped me and carried me through difficult situations and problems. God thought it necessary to take my beloved wife home about four years ago and now I am alone at the advanced age of almost 90. I was especially able to sense God’s help and His nearness in the last year.

My heart has not been doing well for many years already, but in late summer of last year, my breathing and pain worsened considerably. I was admitted to the hospital, and while my situation did improve there, my right arm hemorrhaged severely two days before being discharged. Although an operation was needed, it was not advisable in my state.

I was still able to be discharged, but because of my great weakness, especially in my right arm, I was not able to be left alone. I am sincerely thankful that my daughter and son-in-law were willing to rotate being with me day and night. The

weakness in my arm was so severe that it actually “died off.” Again an operation would have been necessary, but once again it could not happen because of my general state of poor health. I know, however, that many brothers and sisters prayed for me, and I too pleaded with God that He might help in this situation.

I know that God does not always help us out of our suffering but instead helps us through it. He did not take mine all away immediately, but slowly there were improvements. My arm is still a darker color, but I can use it now and am able to take care of myself to some degree, even though I am still dependent on the help of my daughter and son-in-law.

Praise our faithful God and Savior with me! He deserves the honor. Even if my children and other people help me, it is He who gives them the needed strength and joy to do so, and I know that God in His great might is above all things.

May these words serve as a blessing to many. Please continue to think of us in your prayers! My desire is that we will all be united someday in heaven.

Theodor Hamp
Herford, Germany

Special Conferences Germany and Canada

Easter Conference

Hamm, Germany

APRIL 3 – 6, 2015

East Fest

Aylmer, Ontario

JUNE 27 – 28, 2015

May Fest

Winnipeg, Manitoba

MAY 16 – 18, 2015

65th Anniversary Fest

Kelowna Church of God

AUGUST 1 - 3, 2015

Pentecost Conference

Herford, Germany

MAY 23 – 25, 2015

Campmeeting

Blaubeuren, Germany

AUGUST 29 - SEPTEMBER 5, 2015

"I Know That My Redeemer Lives!"

You ask why I am happy all the day,
Why I am singing on my pilgrim way,
Why I can hope while others are complaining,
Why I can thank the Lord when life is draining,
My heart is joyful, why can I forgive?
Because I know that my Redeemer lives!

You ask why I embrace eternity,
And speak of glory that's prepared for me,
Why I don't fear the end of life and dying,
Why I don't look at days gone by with sighing,
Why I can gladly take what each day gives?
Because I know that my Redeemer lives!

I ask you: don't you want security?
And peace of mind, not doubt but surety?
O seek salvation, come to Jesus praying!
He died for you, and all your fears allaying.
When you confess your sins, the Lord forgives,
And you will know that your Redeemer lives!