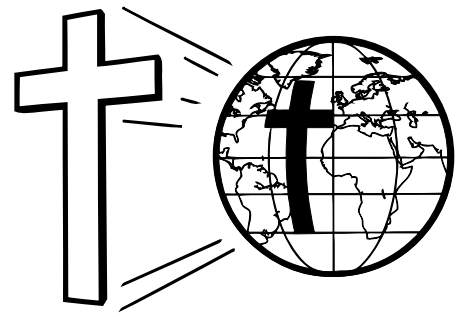


Foundation of Faith



Are You Ready to
Give thanks?

A Rich boy

What Does Not Belong
in the Offering Plate?

The Way to
Thankfulness

Unexplainable
Weight Gain

Don't grumble
Against One Another

Gratitude

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Editorial

Dear Reader:

We are able to celebrate Thanksgiving once again this year. How much diligence and hard work for the farmer until he is finally able to bring in the harvest: plowing the field, planting the seeds, and the continuous cultivation and upkeep. How much effort and energy was involved until he could reap the fruits of his hard labor. And yet we are well aware that without the blessing of God there is neither growth nor success. Without water even the most fertile soil would never produce a harvest and would soon turn into a desert.

God also has a spiritual harvest field in need of laborers. In Luke 19, Christ tells the parable of a certain nobleman who went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them "Do business till I come" (Luke 19:13).

God calls us to labor in His immense harvest field. We have been given excellent resources to build and expand God's Kingdom. Jesus expects us to use the talents that He has entrusted to us so that they multiply and the kingdom grows until His second coming.

As God blesses us with rain and sunshine in the natural world, he likewise blesses our work in the Lord when we diligently fulfill our duties.

Let us therefore be diligent servants of God, willing to work hard and do our best so that we do not one day appear empty-handed before our Master and King when He returns. Oh that we may hear the Lord say: "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things. Enter into the joy of your Lord!" (Matthew 25:21)

H.D. Nimz

Unexplainable Weight Gain

All the doctors were astonished! No one could explain it until the prison chaplain provided the missing information.

It took place in a jail. Many were sentenced to lifelong imprisonment. Naturally, everyone received the same food in the jail, not much, but sufficient to live. Every year, the prisoners were given a health check. Their weight was also precisely recorded. What did the doctors discover one day? All the prisoners except one had lost weight, and this man had actually gained weight! He had received the same, simple diet. He also hadn't received any packages from relatives or others. The doctors had a mystery on their hands.

The chaplain heard about this and soon explained the surprising answer: This prisoner had recently placed his faith in Jesus Christ. He was one of the few who had accepted the Word of God, and now went on his way rejoicing. He now received all of the food with thankfulness and enjoyed it, while the others typically grumbled and complained. So what was the deeper reason behind his weight gain? The thankfulness with which this prisoner had taken all of the gifts from God's hands, and the victory he had over wallowing in self-pity.

Thankfulness not only makes our life easier, it makes our whole person and our inward life healthier. "It is good to give thanks to the LORD" (Psalm 92:1).

EP

Thankful for Unreceived Gifts

We have read of someone who prayed: "Lord, make me truly thankful for that which I have not received." An odd prayer, don't you think? And yet it is a prayer to which we should all say a hearty "amen" to.

When we reflect on our past, many things come to mind that we had wished for, that we had hoped for, that we had prayed for, and yet did not receive. And now we understand that it was for the best that we never did receive them.

Should our hearts not be filled with gratitude towards our heavenly Father, that He withheld what

was not good for us? And that in His love and wisdom He only gave what was best for us?

We do not know ourselves as well as God does. We also do not know our true needs like He does. God does not give us, His beloved children, something that is not good for us. And much of what we have prayed for was not good for us. When we offer our prayers of thanksgiving up to God, let us not neglect to thank Him for what He withheld from us in His wisdom and love.



I Thank You

*I thank you, Lord, for every ray of sunshine
That warms the cup of sweetness in my hand.
I thank you for each star I see in heaven
For every fountain in the desert sand.*

*I thank you, Lord, for love that seals and
strengthens
The bond of friendship here on earth below,
The love that knits our hearts and minds together
As on the path to heaven, we as saints, do go.*

*I thank you, Lord, for thorns and for each thistle
That you have planted in my path below.
I thank you for the stress and for the worries
That I can bring to you in prayer as I go.*

*I thank you, Lord, for all that you have given,
For all that you have taken in my life.
I thank you for the good times and the bad times
The times of pleasure and the times of strife.*

*I thank you, Lord, o let my heart be thankful
For all that comes, whatever is in store.
Until at last I'm home in heaven singing
With thankful heart your praises evermore.*

A.W.

The Road to Thankfulness

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

We all know the expression “No pain, no gain!”—Whoever is diligent in school or work will advance. All who apply themselves and try their best will be appreciated at their workplaces and will receive recognition and pay raises. Wisdom, good planning, and insight is also expected of a boss or business owner in the management of a business. If we expect diligence and competency in our physical lives, how much more essential in the spiritual realm, where we are dealing with an eternal goal and the well-being of our immortal soul.

What is the road to thankfulness? First, we read “whoever offers praise.” Whoever praises the Creator of heaven and earth, whoever takes time to pray, whoever is ready to testify of the good that God has given and has offered out of grace—he has paved the way to thankfulness. Becoming more thankful is not a stressful or difficult task. Indeed, people are generally more inclined to complain, grumble, and be unthankful, but God’s Word shows us the road to thankfulness.

We need the peace of God in our hearts

We need forgiveness of our sins. Whoever hurries to the Savior and confesses the debt of sin in sorrow and repentance will receive salvation through Jesus’ blood. Peace will then enter in. Peace in our hearts makes us still, reflective, and stirs us to thankfulness. We are thankful because the Son of God has reconciled us with the Father. Jesus took the record of debt that was against us and nailed it to the cross (Colossians 2:14 ESV). He gave us salvation through grace. We are therefore able to praise God.

The Apostle Paul writes us, “And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one

body; and be thankful” (Colossians 3:15). We see that thankfulness and the peace of God are closely connected. Where the peace of God rules, gratitude flows from the heart. Indeed, divine peace is the way to gratitude for all.

The presence of the Lord

When the children of Israel moved out of Egypt, God gave them His presence throughout their journey: a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. And when the Lord led them miraculously through the Red Sea and their enemies drowned, “then Moses and the children of Israel sang this song to the Lord, and spoke, saying: ‘I will sing to the Lord, for He has triumphed gloriously! The horse and its rider He has thrown into the sea! The Lord is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation; He is my God, and I will praise Him; my father’s God, and I will exalt Him’” (Exodus 15:1 and 2).

Even when danger threatens us, we can also be assured that our faithful God will help us if we walk with Him and follow Him faithfully. The Lord always guides us on the road to thankfulness. We too should praise our God.

One in faith and prayer

Of the morning church, we read that they continued “daily with one accord in the temple . . . praising God and having favor with all the people” (Acts 2:46–47). Where there is unity, gratitude will also not be absent. We read of the church at Antioch, “When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord” (Acts 11:23).

Where people live in grace and serve God in unity, joy is present and produces thankfulness in the hearts of believers. Wherever the children of God are united in serving Him wholeheartedly, the Lord will also reveal Himself in wonderful ways today.

Our personal devotion

True thankfulness and genuine contentment can only be known if we have dedicated ourselves completely to God and surrendered to His will. Personal desires and ungodly ways and wishes bring only need and discontentment, but if we serve God with our whole heart and stand in accor-

dance with His will, we can experience God's blessing and His pleasure. God's grace, goodness, and mercy help us in all difficulties and needs. Even when life is often dark and we must go through difficult times, we can still place our trust firmly on God's promises.

We must each personally search for and experience the road to thankfulness. God promises, "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God."

David Goertzen,
Toronto, ON

Give God the Glory!

"Were there not any found who returned to give glory to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:18)

The story pertaining to the passage above is a familiar one. The Lord Jesus healed ten leprosy men, but only one deemed it necessary to give thanks to the Lord. This man was a Samaritan. This was expressly stated to bring attention to the fact that he did not belong to the Jewish people, but rather to those the Jews despised. In other words, he belonged to those who were not considered to be in good standing with God. Yet this man was so overwhelmed by what Jesus had done for him that he returned and expressed his gratitude. Why did the other nine not return as well? They too sought healing. All had shouted: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" (Luke 17:13). They had also experienced His healing touch. But they forgot to give thanks. They only thought to ask for help. When their time of need was past, they thought only of themselves and not of their Helper.

Is giving thanks really that difficult? "Ingratitude is the world's reward," as a common proverb puts it. But the shocking part of this story is that it was not just anyone who had forgotten to be grateful. It was those who claimed to belong to God's people who had forgotten to thank. Only the foreigner gave praise and glory to the Lord. So, ingratitude can be found among those who should know of God's help and mercy.

It is easy to look down on the nine ungrateful men. But what about us? If we look into the mirror of God's

Word, have we perhaps also forgotten to give thanks? I am referring to our thanksgiving towards God. We take it for granted that God cares for us like a father, forgives our sins, and allows us to enjoy His goodness. Do we often act as though we are entitled to it? Yet we would be nothing without God's gifts. We would not have life, if He did not provide for and sustain us. Our table would not be laden with food if He did not allow the sun to shine and the rain to fall. We could not enjoy life if His grace did not surround us. Everything comes from Him. We are not entitled to anything. We have no right to make demands of Him. We can only accept His gifts. What an incredible thought! Therefore, let us offer Him our gratitude by accepting His Word and serving the people around us. When we forget to thank God, we forget to thank others around us. We get annoyed when someone takes something from us and is not grateful. But what about us? Can we count the times where we did not find it necessary to express our gratitude?

Sometimes even when we expressed thanks with our words, our attitude caused others to be hurt. We would be much happier if we were more thankful. Our own life and those of others around us would be more joyful. Remember that time is short; we will not always be able to say, "Thank you." Let us ask God to give us a grateful heart!

What Does Not Belong in the Offering Plate?

Money and greed are important and timely topics! Many have learned through experience that money and possessions do not bring joy. And yet, many still spend so much of their time and energy striving after wealth, even among those who call themselves Christians.

Many of us have likely participated in a special Thanksgiving collection in our local churches. In doing so, one can have very different experiences. It is unfortunate that few are comfortable with this, even those who have to preach about it as well as those who should be giving a donation.

In his days as a young minister, Schleiermacher, a well known theology professor, was a tutor for the very wealthy Count Dohna-Schlobitten of East Prussia, who was well known for his thriftiness. Schleiermacher also held regular worship services in the little village church. One day, the countess paid him a visit. On a little table was a little dish with all kinds of coins and a large button on top. The countess' eye fell on this dish. She reached for the button and said: "This looks exactly like the button my husband lost off of his winter coat that I've been looking for in the last few days!" Schleiermacher politely answered: "You can gladly take it with you. It does not belong to me. I found it yesterday in the offering plate."

Should we laugh or cry over the Count's miserly button offering? Perhaps we say to ourselves that we would never do such a thing, and even in our church no one would be so greedy! There have always been greedy people. They were present in the early Christian church, and unfortunately still exist today.

Certainly no one wants to be greedy or even give the appearance of being greedy. Greedy people will try to hide their stinginess from others, or at least give good reasons for being so attached to their money and possessions.

There are also people in the Christian community who feign generosity in certain circumstances. The Count's coat button among the coins in the offering plate could be a symbol of that. The Count was reluctant to let go of his money, but did not want the offering plate to pass by without putting something in it. Although he did not need to answer to anyone, he did not want to appear as the greedy person for which he was already known. Peter once told Ananias: "While it [the land] remained, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was it not in your own control?" (Acts 5:4). But Ananias and Sapphira believed that they could fool the Apostles and the church, and even God and His Holy Spirit. They must have been so bound to their money that they never anticipated the frightening consequences that resulted from their lie. They had no idea that their behavior was a test of the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:4,9).

I believe it is satan who has blinded the greedy, because a greedy person, even with all his wealth, cannot inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10). That is what the evil one has planned. If our heart clings to



money, we are allowing satan access to our more vulnerable areas.

Yet I fear that greed is a difficult thing to recognize in oneself. The Holy Spirit must move the heart. And it must come to the point where the Holy Spirit also has control of our wallet.

I can only repeat that money and greed are interconnected in our life and, like a barometer, show how we truly stand. In no way do I want to be misunderstood that the issue of greed has something to do with the amount we contribute to God's kingdom. That idea also belongs to satan's illusions. The size of the offering has never determined whether it was pleasing to God, only the inner state of the heart and the attitude out of which it was offered.

When we are in true fellowship with God, the Father, through Jesus Christ, then not much about money and tithing needs to be preached. Yet we must be reminded of it often. As we read in the Gospels, the Lord Jesus often spoke about money and all that is connected to it. He would surely not have done so if it were unnecessary. How often did

He clearly indicate what a hindrance money can be in regard to our eternal salvation, but also what potential exists when we have the right attitude towards it and use it wisely.

Jesus was realistic enough not to give His disciples mere pious consolations. He could freely ask them: "Did you lack anything?" They answered: "Nothing!" (Luke 22:35). The disciples asked their Master what their reward for following Him was. Jesus not only gave them the wonderful view of God's completed Kingdom, but also provided concrete promises for this age (Matthew 19:27-30).

Jesus said to His disciples: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses" (Luke 12:15). He further stated: "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48).

EP

Praising God is Our Duty

“Praise Him for His mighty acts; praise Him according to His excellent greatness! Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet; praise Him with the lute and harp!” (Psalm 150: 2-3)

Several years ago I took part in a brass players’ day in Frankfurt. What an uplifting feeling it was to play along with a band of approximately 120 players! Powerful sounds filled the Katarienkirche (church) proclaiming God’s praise in multiple ways. But many hours, days, weeks, and months of thorough practicing preceded this one hour of praise. How often did a single player place his instrument to his lips to practice a difficult part over and over again?

The praise of God must be practiced!

When I received my first instrument, I proudly placed it on my lips, blew so hard that my cheeks puffed out, but failed to produce any sound. I would have gladly thrown the instrument into the corner. Years have passed and I am still not yet finished practicing.

On Sunday we sing with full conviction, “Holy God, we praise you!” and find no words during the regular week to praise Him. The praise of God must be practiced, again and again! We must practice praising not just when we have completed a successful business venture, not just after a joyful wedding, not just when we go on holidays and the sun is shining. No, we must do it on the rainy days, when we stand at the graveside of a loved one, when something has gone wrong, or when we’re on our way to work on Monday morning.

Is there a situation in your life where you are unable to praise? Then you have not finished learning. Especially those “tricky parts” need to be practiced over and over again.

The “position” matters!

When we see pictures of trumpet players, they generally pose holding the instrument straight out. They give the impression of being completely engaged in their performance. Every expert, however, will immediately recognize that there is something wrong with the trumpet player’s stance. No brass player would hold his instrument that high. That is not natural. The pictures simply show a player who is posing.

How quickly we face this danger when it comes to our praise. Not just the Pharisee posed in an elevated position before the tax collector and God. This can be the case for you and me as well. We stand with our heads lifted high

proclaiming God’s praise to the world, but do not realize that they won’t accept this praise because our attitude is wrong! God allows the humble to succeed, even in praise. That does not mean hypocrisy. But genuine humility recognizes and acknowledges the great works of God and therefore finds new reasons to praise God again. Our praise is simply a proclamation of that which God has done for us.

The attitude matters!

That is the case in playing together. The theologian Bormann once stated the following: “There are brothers who can only serve in leadership positions.” Doesn’t this danger exist where our praise is concerned?

If a brass choir wants to accomplish something, the players must blend with each other. It doesn’t work if someone “sticks out.” We must listen to each other. Sometimes that is the very reason why our praise sounds wrong, because everyone wants to play the part of the “first violin.” If we all want to be soloists we will never play in harmony. Old together with young, rich together with poor, talented together with untalented are to praise the name of the Lord.

I know a young music teacher who for many years tried out all the instruments he possibly could. Finally, he found “his” instrument: the organ. Only then could his true talent really unfold. God gave us many opportunities and abilities. And yet He lent each individual special gifts that we are to use for the purpose of praising Him.

After the death of one dear member of our congregation I discovered that there was not a single sick person in our congregation that he had not visited and encouraged during his lifetime. In our home church we had a caretaker who greeted everyone warmly on Sunday mornings. When he wasn’t present one day, something was missing from the service. Both brothers had found “their instrument” and played along in praising God. Which is your instrument?

It needs a director!

Some choirs complain that they will never amount to anything because they don’t have a director who is skilled in the area of music. It is much more important that we have the right “choir director” for our song of praise to

God. We have the privilege of standing under the direction of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Master and Lord of all lords. He helps us in practicing our instruments. He ensures that the impure sounds are refined. He leads us

in proper harmony and unity. Under His direction our entire life will be a song of praise to God.

Wilhelm Busch (1897-1966)

Thanksgiving

God laments the ingratitude of people.

In Romans 1:21, the apostle Paul writes: “Although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.” The context of this Scripture shows that ingratitude is an attribute of paganism, or rather, one of the reasons why people lapse into paganism.

From His heavenly throne, our gracious God pours His blessings down on us: sunshine and rain, harvests of grain, flowers, fruit, friends, and much more. Rightfully so, He awaits an expression of gratitude that should arise from our hearts. But all too often, He hears no thanks or praise. Why?—Because we are not thankful. We grieve God with our unthankful attitude, although we richly experience His love and goodness daily. In Colossians 3:15, we find the command: “Be thankful!” Is it not odd that God has to prompt us to be thankful?

Perhaps it helps to remember that we have to teach our children to say thank you for things that are given to them. We teach them this obligation as soon as they begin to talk. And later, we continually need to remind them to do so. Yes, we absolutely expect thankfulness from our children.

So, too, must the children of God be reminded to thank God. Do we not have many reasons to give thanks? In Ephesians 5:20, we are told to be thankful for everything, whether it be sunshine or darkness, joy or sorrow, the present or the future. Thankfulness should be our attitude because God holds His hand over all of our affairs.

Even when God withholds something from us, we should thank Him, for even then He has a loving intention. We can thank Him for what He has withheld from us just as much as for what we have received. For His care and protection, as well as the dangers and storms that may encircle us. Be thankful for everything!

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, we are again commanded to show God our thankfulness. Here it states, similar to the verse in Ephesians: “In everything give thanks.” Yes, in every situation in life it should be our inner obligation to thank God for everything.

If it is in the raging river—His waters will not engulf us. If it is in the midst of fire—it will not burn us. Or if storms may come—we will not be ruined. If in riches or in poverty, in health or sickness, in the light of the sun or the darkness of the shadows—in all circumstances we can thank God for His faithfulness, presence, promises, and tireless care.

“But now, thus says the LORD, who created you, O Jacob, And He who formed you, O Israel: ‘Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; And through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, Nor shall the flame scorch you’” (Isaiah 43:1-2). Reason to be thankful? Most definitely!

In Psalm 6:5 we find a peculiar question: “In the grave who will give You thanks?” Dear friends, we know well that all those who lie in the graves are silent. No praise song to God’s glory will ever arise from these abandoned, lonely graves. It is barren and silent there. Certainly we who are in the prime of our lives now would not wish to be as cold and dead towards God as those who are resting in the graves. It is the duty of the living to praise their God. For this reason, the psalmist appeals: “Let everything that has breath praise the LORD. Praise the LORD!” (Psalm 150:6)

Therefore, I ask you too, dear friend: Can God accept the thankfulness and praise from your lips and heart that is due Him and for which He longs?

EP

Three Tests of Love

Love is capable of demonstration. Where it really exists, it will manifest itself. It need not be made known by mere assertion. We are told to love not in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John 3:18). In these days there are many who, like some of old, show much love with their mouths while their hearts are far from God. The test of our love is not how much we talk about it, but how much we show it in our lives. There are three tests of love, which never fail to show exactly just how much we love. Let us consider them in order.

1. How Much We Serve

We are told in Genesis 29:20 that Jacob loved Rachel so much that he served seven years for her, and that those years seemed to him as only a few days. How great our love to God is, is proved by our willingness to serve Him. If there is in us a tendency to do only what we like to do, and if we can, to disregard any of the known will of God, it is clear evidence that we do not love Him. No matter what we profess, if we are not willing to put obedience to God's will above everything else, our love is lacking.

Love makes people willing-hearted. There are many things to do, there are many ways to serve, and love prompts us to serve wherever possible. If the work of God stands first in our love, our hands will always be ready for service. I have attended many camp-meetings where I have noticed those who shouldered the majority of the work involved with the meetings. Everybody was willing to sit in the meeting, enjoy the good sermons, and take all the blessings they could get, but when it came to the labor and responsibility connected with the meeting, willingness suddenly disappeared, and a greater part of the burden fell upon the ministers and a few consecrated brothers and sisters who loved God and the people enough to go to work. I have often needed to call for volunteers for service, and have found many times that people who can say "Amen" and "Praise the Lord," and perhaps shout in meeting, become strangely silent when it comes to volunteering for work. The test of their love proves that love is lacking.

In a certain camp-meeting there was a young man who professed to be saved, and was saved, so far as I know. I noticed, however, that when others were busy at work in some necessary service, he was always standing back a mere onlooker. One day during the meeting this young man came to the altar, and when asked what the trouble was, he said that he had backslidden. Being asked what he had done, he said that he did not know. I said to him: "I think I know your trouble. Whenever there has been a meeting, you have been ready to go and enjoy all you could of it; whenever a meal is ready, you are always ready for it; but when there is any work to be done, you are never ready. Now," I continued, "when there is need of water at the boarding-house, you take a bucket and go for it; when there is wood needed, get an ax and use it, or when there is anything to do in which you can help, be ready for it and do your part." He took my advice, and from that time on he seemed to be a different man. The reason many people receive so few blessings is because they do not love enough to serve.

There are duties for all. There are opportunities everywhere. Every one of them is a test of love. Brother, sister, how does your love stand the test? Love will not grumble, it will not complain, it will not shirk from service. Do you love as fervently as you should?

2. How Much We Sacrifice

The mother who loves her child thinks no sacrifice too great for it. Even her life will she give for it, if need be. The man who loves his country will, if the need should arise, count no sacrifice too great. He who loves God as truly as the mother loves her child or the patriot loves his country is willing to sacrifice for God. Abraham proved his love by not withholding his son. He offered him freely in obedience to God's command. Paul loved, and as a result he did not count his life dear to himself so that he might do the work of God. Christ so loved the world that He sacrificed everything for our salvation.

We say that we love this glorious gospel, we say we desire to see it spread to the ends of the earth, but how much



*“So show them your love, and prove to all the churches that our boasting about you is justified.”
(2 Corinthians 8:24 NLT)*

do we love it compared with our love of self? Do we love it more than self, equal with self, or far less than self? Many people spend willingly and even lavishly for themselves but give sparingly and reluctantly to God. They spend more for their pleasures than they give. In fact, some spend so much on their own selfish desires that when a need of God’s work is presented they can truly say, “I cannot give much.” They might feel inclined to give if they had anything to give, but are they willing to deny themselves of some self-gratification in order to have something to give? There is the test of love that proves its real direction—whether it runs self-ward or God-ward. If we love God and souls as much as we love ourselves, we can spend money for them just as willingly and with as little reluctance or regret to see it go as if it were being spent for ourselves. If we cannot spend for God and His work more willingly than for ourselves, it is because we do not love Him more than ourselves. If we do not get more pleasure out of giving than we do out of consuming, we may well question both the amount and quality of our love and its direction. Often the work of God must go on crutches because there are not enough resources, while professors of Christianity live in luxury.

There is no way to avoid the issue. There is plenty of money so that all the work of the church could be properly financed and no undue burden rest upon any. The fact is, that there are too many whose love is wanting in that quality which draws out their hearts into the work of God until they are willing to sacrifice for it. It is true that there are many who do love and who prove it by their sacrifices. But it is just as true that there are many others who do not deny themselves, and will not do so even from a sense of duty, to say nothing of making willing sacrifices through the prompting of love.

It is time that we heard more of the practical side of love preached from the pulpit and that people who profess salvation and at the same time manifest an indifference toward the salvation of souls and the work of the church in general should not be left to drift along in coldness and be lost at last. A sacrificing person or a sacrificing church will

be spiritual if the sacrifice is prompted by love. People who are willing to serve and sacrifice rarely backslide.

3. How Much We Endure

Christ proved His love by enduring the scoffing and ill-treatment of the people and the shame and suffering of the cross. By this He proved His love to be real. If our love is genuine, as was that of the saints of old, we can rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer for His name. Paul endured all things for the elect’s sake, that they might be saved. If we can not endure the little persecutions, the unkind words, the sneering smiles, the scoffs and jeers of the unbelieving world, is it not because our love lacks fervency? The early church took joyfully the spoiling of their goods because they loved their Lord far more than they loved their goods. God’s ministers in all ages have endured hardships and perils and have suffered in a thousand ways without faltering, because they loved souls as God loves them.

Sometimes people quote the text, “We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14), but if these same brethren do something that does not please them, they are offended and grieved and are full of complaint and grumbling, and it is hard for them to be reconciled to their brethren. Is the love of such people genuine? Does it really prove that they have passed from death to life? Many think that the preacher ought to be willing to endure almost anything for the cause (and so he should), but they do not consider that the same love in them will give them the same spirit of endurance and willingness to suffer as it gives to the minister. Love that can not endure hardness, misrepresentation, neglect, and such things, and still be sweet and strong, needs to be increased.

Love makes service sweet, sacrifice easy, and meek endurance possible. Love enriches, ennobles, and blesses. It sweetens the bitter cup; it lightens the heavy load. It strengthens the faltering soul. Let us, therefore, see that we have fervent love toward God, toward each other, and toward the lost world.

Pay Attention to Your Thoughts

There are not so many hours in a year as there may be thoughts in an hour. Thoughts fly in flocks, like starlings, and swarm like bees. Like the leaves in autumn, there is no counting them, and like the links in a chain, one draws on another. What a restless being man is! His thoughts dance up and down like midges in a summer's evening. Like a clock full of wheels with a pendulum in full swing, his mind moves as fast as time flies. This makes thinking such an important business. Many little thoughts make a great weight of sin. A grain of sand is light enough, but a heap of sand is heavy. Where there are so many children, the mother needs to look after them well. We ought to pay attention to our thoughts, and if they turn to be our enemies, they will be too many for us, and will drag us down to ruin. Thoughts from heaven, like birds in spring, will fill our soul with music, but thoughts of evil will sting us like vipers.

It has been said that thought is free, but I remember reading that although thoughts are toll-free, they are not hell-free, and that saying quite agrees with the good old Book. We cannot be summoned before an earthly court for thinking, but we shall have to be tried for it on the Day of Judgment. Evil thoughts are the marrow of sin, the malt that sin is brewed from, the tinder which catches the sparks of the devil's temptations, the churn in which the milk of imagination is churned into purpose and plan, the nest in which all evil birds lay their eggs. Be certain, then, that as sure as fire burns brushwood as well as logs, God will punish thoughts of sin as well as deeds of sin.

Let no one suppose that thoughts are not known to the Lord, for He has a window into the closest closet of the soul, a window to which there are no shutters. As we watch bees in a glass hive, so does the eye of the

Lord see us. The Bible says, "Hell and Destruction are before the Lord; so how much more the hearts of the sons of men" (Proverbs 15:11). Man is all outside to God. With heaven there are no secrets. That which is done in the private chamber of the heart is as public as the streets before the all-seeing eye.

But some will say that they cannot help having bad thoughts. That may be, but the question is, do they hate them or not? We cannot keep thieves from looking in at our windows, but if we open our doors to them and receive them joyfully, we are as bad as they. We cannot help the birds flying over our heads, but we may keep them from building their nests in our hair. Vain thoughts will knock at the door, but we must not open to them. Though sinful thoughts rise, they must not reign. He who turns a morsel over and over in his mouth, does so because he likes the flavor, and he who meditates upon evil, loves it, and is ripe to commit it. Think of the devil, and he will appear; turn your thoughts toward sin, and your hand will soon follow. Snails leave their slime behind them, and so do vain thoughts. An arrow may fly through the air and leave no trace, but an ill thought always leaves a trail like a serpent. Where there is much traffic of bad thinking, there will be much mire and dirt. Every wave of wicked thought adds something to the corruption which rots upon the shore of life. It is dreadful to think that a vile imagination once indulged gets the key of our minds, and can get in again very easily whether we want it or not, and can so return as to bring seven other spirits with it more wicked than itself, and what may follow, no one knows. Nurse sin on the knees of thought, and it will grow into a giant.

Charles Spurgeon

Do not grumble against **one another!**

Question: *“Do not grumble against one another . . .” (James 5:9). What does this mean? How are we to speak with our brothers and sisters in the Lord? How should we behave when we are worried about our fellow believer? Is “grumbling” about them wrong?*

Answer: The context of this warning from James is about patience in regard to Christ’s return. Twice, in verses 7 and 8, we are called to be patient. In our life of faith we encounter diverse challenges: times of testing, temptation, and suffering, and times of success and prosperity—particularly in the Western world. In all circumstances we need to learn how to live in anticipation of His return. This is a practice in patience as well.

In verse 9 it says, “Do not grumble against one another . . .” With this statement, James warns us not to lose patience with our neighbor—especially our brothers and sisters in Christ. We should not allow ourselves to become upset by our neighbor, so that we complain about him and become angry. Otherwise we are at greater risk to speak ill of him, condemn him and build up mutual resentment in our relationship. James wants to tell us: have patience with one another, and do not grumble about your brethren. We must not make ourselves judges over one another, because the Judge—Jesus Christ—is coming. Jesus Himself said: “Judge not, that you be not judged” (Matthew 7:1).

But what about talking about our brethren? Do we not frequently catch ourselves talking about others? Certainly, this will recur. We live together with people, and situations will continue to arise where we speak about others. This will occur in our families and in our churches. The crucial question is this: what is our motivation in doing so? In what light do we represent those we speak of? How will the person I am speaking with think of my brother or sister after our conversation? Are we helping the absent person, or are we using their behavior as an undesirable example and representing them in a negative light? Do we present the facts in a neutral way, or do we try to portray a certain image by omitting facts or exaggerating them? We need to be really careful in this! If our conscience is telling us to remain quiet then we should not speak. If we did say

something and realize later it was harmful, we need to fix it! A good way to test our motives is to ask: how would I feel if someone were saying these things about me? Would I like it? Or we could ask: would I be willing to say those things in front of that person? If the answer is no, we should keep silent. Otherwise we enter dangerous waters. That is why James warns, “do not grumble against one another!”

But what if we are truly worried about our brother or sister? What does the Bible tell us about worrying? In Philippians 4:6 we read: “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.” It is clear: we ought to pray for our brother. It is also important to ask God to give us wisdom in dealing with this situation. We have an example in the Bible of how Paul dealt with his concern regarding Peter. He spoke directly with him about the issue (Galatians 2:11-21). In most cases, this is probably the best way—to seek a direct, loving, sincere, and helpful conversation with our fellow believer. It may not always be harmonious or consensual—but it can be honest and sincere (Acts 15:39). Certainly, it can sometimes be helpful to ask someone else for advice. However, that does not mean we necessarily have to mention the name of the person concerned. Yet, there might be times where it is helpful to share the name. If my intention is to seek guidance so that I can be helpful, and my intentions and motivations are truly pure, then I am doing no wrong.

May God give us love, wisdom, and sincerity in dealing with our fellow believers, so that we do not grumble against one another.

Niko Ernst,
Herford, DE

Are You Ready to Give Thanks?

“Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ephesians 5:20)

Are you ready to give thanks? That is an odd question to be asking at Thanksgiving, isn't it? And yet, perhaps it needs to be asked. For many years, the grocery stores in our cities have overflowed with the bounty and variety of produce that grows not only in our vicinity, but also around the world. The economy has flourished in a way that our forefathers would not have anticipated. There are fewer and fewer people in the western world living in such poverty that they do not earn enough to buy food. Surely there is reason to celebrate Thanksgiving!

However, are we truly willing to thank God the Father for everything at all times? That involves slightly more than a good harvest and a flourishing economy. It also requires more than money in our pocket and full refrigerators. The only people who can truly give thanks are those who are fully aware that everything they have is due to God's goodness and generosity, given freely to us even though we could never earn it or deserve it.

God's benevolence is something many people do not wish to acknowledge. And should they acknowledge it, they forget it quickly and easily. Thanksgiving is about the Giver. To celebrate Thanksgiving means to acknowledge Him as our Giver while we give thanks.

How can we come to the point of proper humility and healing from the sad state of our spiritual blindness and forgetfulness toward God? Luther said: “We pray that He may let us understand and receive our daily bread with a thankful heart.” Every Thanksgiving must begin with this prayer, so that we don't demean God to a benevolent helper to whom we casually express a few friendly words, but that we honor Him as the One, without Whom we are and have nothing.

We truly are in need of receiving the gift of understanding so that we are equipped for true thanksgiving. Certainly it is not wrong to be happy about a job successfully completed, nor is it wrong to plan and to strive for better ways to grow crops and provide sustenance for a growing population. God intended for us to rule over the earth, and we have not been released from that task yet.

Without a doubt, even in western countries, there would have been hunger and poverty if it had not been for new growing methods that have increased yield, and discoveries that have prevented crop diseases. But is this a human success to be taken for granted, or must we not acknowledge that even discoveries made in laboratories and research may flow through our hands, but ultimately come from God?

The correct answer to this question does not come from our knowledge, nor is it a product of our piety. God Himself gives us proper understanding, because He has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ in power and goodness. That is why our thanksgiving can only truly be expressed in the Name of Jesus. We thank Him that God is our Father on whom we can call. It is Jesus who earned for us the right to be called children of God. Through Him we are able to thank God at all times for all things. Our thanksgiving is only genuine when Jesus is a part of that song of jubilation that praises God the Father for the blessings He bestows upon us.

Are we prepared for thanksgiving that is lifted up to God on a daily basis? That includes saying grace before every meal, something that has disappeared from many a home today. We should re-learn this habit: We live out of the giving hands of God. Therefore, thank Him. Thank Him and put your hope in Him.

Eduard Wörmann

A Rich Boy

"Oh my!" said Ben, "I wish I was rich and could have things like some of the boys that go to our school."

"I say, Ben," said his father, turning around quickly. "How much will you take for your legs?"

"For my legs?" said Ben in surprise. "Why, I run and jump and play ball, and, oh, everything."

"That's so" said father. "You wouldn't take \$100,000 for them, would you?"—"No indeed!"

"And your arms—I guess you wouldn't take \$100,000 for them, would you?"—"No!"

"And your voice. They tell me you sing quite well, and I know you talk a little bit. You wouldn't part with that for \$100,000, would you?"—"No!"

"Nor your good health?"—"No!"

"Your hearing and your sense of taste are better than \$50,000 apiece at the very best, don't you think so?"—"Yes."

"Your eyes now. How would you like to have \$500,000 and be blind the rest of your life?"—"I wouldn't like it at all."

"Think a moment, Ben; \$500,000 is a lot of money. Are you very sure you wouldn't sell them for that much?"—"Yes."

"Then they are worth that much, at least. Let's see now," his father went on figuring on a sheet of paper:

Legs	\$ 100,000
Arms	\$ 100,000
Voice	\$ 100,000
Hearing	\$ 50,000
Taste	\$ 50,000
Good health	\$ 100,000
Eyes	\$ 500,000
	\$1,000,000

"You are worth \$1,000,000 at the very lowest figures, my boy. Now run and play, jump, throw your ball, laugh and hear your playmates laugh, too. Look with those \$500,000 eyes at the beautiful things about you, and come home with your usual appetite for dinner, and think now and then how rich you really are."

It was a lesson that Ben never forgot, and since that day he thinks about how many things he has to make him contented and thankful!

Adapted from "The Beautiful Way"



Standing United: Young and Old

It is only natural and self-evident that there must be cooperation between generations. The young must honor their elders, and the older generation should not look down on the efforts of the younger generation.

The Bible teaches

- “Show respect for the elderly” (Leviticus 19:32).
- “The splendor of old men is their gray head” (Proverbs 20:29).
- “The silver-haired head is a crown of glory” (Proverbs 16:31).
- “You shall rise before the gray headed” (Leviticus 19:32).

Gray hair is not the older generation's only adornment. According to Job 12:12, “Wisdom is with aged men, and with length of days, understanding.”

Dear older brothers and sisters, do not make the mistake of thinking that wisdom and understanding belong only to the aged. God's Word says, “Better a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more” (Ecclesiastes 4:13). God does not reserve His grace for the elderly alone. While they were still young, God called Samuel, Solomon, Jeremiah, and others to do His work. Therefore, do not look down on the younger generation's efforts. While they use their youthful energy, your energy is running low. They sing and play; you can visit the old, sick, etc. Pray for them so that God can use them to do His will. Let us unite and work together in the right spirit. God needs both the young and the old, and in the church, we need each other.

Consider the following attitude: “And this is the youth nowadays.” Naturally, people who speak in this way have had bad experiences with young people. It is true that the youth of today is worse than the youth of yesterday, but does this statement only apply to young people? Are not people in general, including the older generation,

straying further and further from God? Where can we find the proper fear of God today? Certainly, young people let go of tradition more easily than the older generation, but it is not only the younger generation that has strayed. Rather, it is the entire population.

The following question is most important: “Who is to blame?” The blame certainly does not lie with the younger generation alone. On the contrary, the blame primarily belongs to the older generation. The younger generation's education and godless parents are surely to blame. And when today's young people have children, how will they raise them? Unless there is a revival, society will drift further and further away from God, and they will move closer and closer to the Final Judgment Day.

Didn't previous generations also say, “This is the youth nowadays”? I have a book written by Woltersdorf in 1750, and in this book, Woltersdorf writes about the “bad” youth. He recognizes, however, that the parents and teachers are at fault.

We parents have a grave responsibility. We are, perhaps not always, but often at fault if our children do not attend church services when they move away from home.

On the other hand, there are still young people who serve God, who give their best to Him, and I am thankful for these young people. Let us, therefore, both young and old, stand together. God needs all of us, and we need each other today, and we will continue to need each other in the future. Let us therefore serve God side by side. If you are young, then do not think less of others because they are old, as you will be old one day as well. On the other hand, consider the words that Paul wrote to Timothy: “Let no one despise your youth” (1 Timothy 4:12). We cannot succeed without the older generation, nor can we succeed in the absence of youth. Both young and old, we want to encourage each other to do good works.

Otto Sommerfeld (1922-2008)

Growing Gratitude

The first congregation I was allowed to serve as a young preacher was close to Königsberg, in the former East Prussia, and included several wealthy farmers. It was for them a labor of love to prepare a richly laden Thanksgiving table for our Thanksgiving celebration. Every year, in the center, in front of the harvest display table, glowed a large pumpkin, round and beautiful, framed by two sheaves of corn. But the special thing about it was that it bore the inscription “Give thanks to the Lord.”

This Thanksgiving pumpkin had its story. When the pumpkins in the fields started to grow and get round, the nicest one was sought out. Then the farmer carved the inscription with a knife. The letters scarred. Now the pumpkin grew, and with it grew the inscription “Give thanks to the Lord.” Usually there were several farmers who prepared such a Thanksgiving pumpkin. The most beautiful was then selected to take the place of honor in the house of God.

This Thanksgiving pumpkin became for me a parable for “growing thanks” in the life of man. Proper aging is growing and maturing. And with increasing age, our gratitude should grow as the tribute shown in the Thanksgiving pumpkin.

There is however the danger that one becomes more and more selfish and ungrateful with increasing age. Where does this come from? The horizon becomes narrower. You get out of the house less and less. That’s why it’s all about you: your appetite, your forgetfulness, your insomnia If two seniors meet on a park bench, they bemoan their diseases to one another. The waiting room of many doctors’ offices becomes an elder’s meeting where retirees sing the same lament in harmony.

Thus complaints, ingratitude, and resentment grow. People forget God’s favors, but they do not forget the unfriendly word of a neighbor. Therefore it is imperative that you return with your thoughts to that Thanksgiving Pumpkin and embrace its message: Praise the Lord! Growing Thanks!

If one reads the 150 Psalms in succession, one makes an important observation. The closer you come to the end

of the Book of Psalms, the more silent the complaints and petitions of the psalmist. But the praise of God is getting louder and more comprehensive. Trumpets and harps cheer along until everything flows into the vast ocean of thankfulness and praise: “Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise the Lord!” (Psalm 150:6).

Growing thanks! Somebody once put what he wished for his aging this way: “Every day one lamentation less and one song of praise more!” And a mature father in Christ once said: “Christians live at 1 Thankful Street.”

God wants to open our eyes to show us what we have to be thankful for: The fact that we have forgiveness of sins, that the Lord heals all our infirmities, that an eternal home awaits us! Are these not reasons for thanks? Yes, is not every day that we get to experience in old age a gift from God? Certainly, your eyesight declines. But have you already thanked God for your glasses and that you’re not blind?

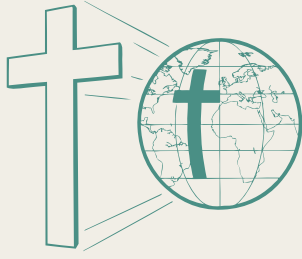
Certainly, you cannot hear as well anymore. That burdens you. But do you not have a hearing aid? Of course, you must not leave it in your dresser out of convenience, or even out of vanity. Use it and be grateful! And instead of complaining on vacation that you can no longer manage to ascend the steep path, go gratefully on the level path through the park and rejoice at flowers and birds!

Remember the serious illness, from which you have recovered. Forget not all His benefits! Think of the difficulties in which your children were. How earnestly you prayed during sleepless nights for them, and God answered your prayers. Forget not all His benefits!

Take a quiet hour to reflect on the thanks you owe God. Write the reasons on a sheet of paper and place it as a bookmark in your Bible at Psalm 103.

How unbearable are ungrateful and dissatisfied people. But how pleasant it is to meet old people who radiate kindness and gratitude. People in whose lives that wonderful mystery of the Thanksgiving Pumpkin became a reality: They matured with growing thanks!

EP



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Commitment to God's Way and Work


October brings to remembrance the dawning of the 16th century reformation. Church history informs us how Dr. Martin Luther recognized the spiritual crisis in the church. In order to expose spiritual darkness and bring about necessary change, he nailed his 95 theses to the door of the "Castle Church" in Wittenberg on October 31, 1517. This brought about an explosive reaction.

On the one hand, Europe experienced great excitement, and on the other, a long-awaited refreshing change. Important to note is that a development like this only happens when people are bound and determined to take a stand. Their task is not easy and requires total commitment! God chooses people for a specific purpose and equips them to carry out His work. These are people who have felt the divine call and are willing to follow His path. In Acts we read about Peter and John, who exhibited a firm heart and a fierce determination. Jesus had often spoken to them about the "promise" that was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. It was an extraordinary demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. Jerusalem experienced a great revival. Jesus had hoped for such a breakthrough and could only weep at the persistent rejection of some. The powerful and inspiring work of the Holy Spirit began on the day of Pentecost. Thousands of people repented and accepted the gift of salvation by faith. At the same time a persecution began, fueled by the priests, elders, and scribes. Peter and John were arrested and strictly warned not to preach Jesus, but they were determined to continue in God's will and work. In Acts 4:20 they state their clear position: "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." They had experienced the

filling of the Holy Spirit as had the multitude of believers. They deliberately engaged in this necessary, reformatory work.

The case with Paul was a little different. He had a large mission field, and Luke writes how Paul was determined to spend Pentecost in Jerusalem. It was a known fact that many dangers awaited him there. His fellow believers wanted to hold him back. One has to marvel at the position he took: "What do you mean by weeping and breaking my heart? For I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 21:13). This showed his firm determination to walk God's path! He did not allow himself to be dissuaded, and so all said: "The will of the Lord be done" (Acts 21:14). Here we see this man of God pursuing God's work and path with complete decisiveness. His letter to the churches in Galatia demonstrates his authority to bring about reform and revival. He took a stand against the false teachers and their doctrines when he stated: "to whom we did not yield submission even for an hour, that the truth of the gospel might continue with you" (Galatians 2:5). The "ambassadors of Christ" were determined to counteract any looming grievances and spiritual decay in order to maintain Gospel truth in the Church.

A firm commitment in this sense can only come from a deep, spiritual conviction. And this conviction arises from divine truth. John testifies: "Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). The way to freedom is open to anyone who recognizes this truth. Whoever accepts it will walk in the light! Christ was an example of how to bring about reform. He came into the world as the Light but also to bring judgment. Mankind needed a clear



understanding of sin and God's justice. Jesus came to ignite a fire. God's Word speaks about "having their own conscience seared with a hot iron" (1 Timothy 4:2). His Word also speaks of the glow of His presence, the fire of the Holy Spirit and a spreading revival. This reviving fire was so important for the world and it is still vital today! This reviving power not only consumes the inner resistance, the enmity against God, and the corrupting influences, it also purifies, revives, and brings forth new life!

It was in this sense that Jesus worked among the people of His time. He broke down the barriers that kept people from having faith and a relationship with God. He took a reformatory position against abuses in the temple. All four evangelists report this incident. With a holy zeal and a whip in His hand, He drove out the moneychangers saying: "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16). Judgment had come to the "House of God." God's house should be a place where His Word is preached, where God speaks to us, where His Spirit can be active, and where the purpose is to praise and worship God. When the spirit of darkness is allowed to penetrate, faith dissipates, love grows cold, spiritual influences vanish, and spiritual life dies. Then it is time for a Spirit-led revival! These problems cannot be resolved in a cozy atmosphere around a coffee table. God needs determined individuals, with courage and a clear goal, to do His work and His will, while maintaining a deep, inner, godly peace! We thank God for such committed individuals and pray that He would raise up more of these people! Most of all let us pray that we would be one of them!

The Reformation of the Church of God

“The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former,’ says the Lord of hosts. ‘And in this place I will give peace,’ says the Lord of hosts.” (Haggai 2:9)

On the 31st of October, many reflect on the day of the Reformation that took place in the year 1517. As a result, we are reminded of the reformation within the church of God, or as we call it, “the last reformation.” It is yet another opportunity for reflection, thanksgiving, and introspection.

At a Faith Convention in Chicago in 1979, Dr. Falwell stated, “The second generation of every reformation movement attempts to return the movement back to its inception.” We certainly have to ask ourselves the question of whether this assessment also applies to the reformation movement of the church of God. The logical question that follows needs to be answered too: Do we have the right to bear the name, “church of God,” if we have abandoned the biblical foundation upon which the pioneers based their daily lives?

In his book, *The Last Reformation*, F.G. Smith writes, “The final reformation is on. ‘Final,’ I say, because it leaves nothing to be restored as regards either doctrine, practice, or spirit. . . . In short, it stands committed to the restoration of apostolic Christianity in its entirety—its doctrines, its ordinances, its personal regenerating and sanctifying experiences, its spiritual life, its holiness, its power, its purity, its gifts of the Spirit, its unity of believers, and its fruits. This reformation will continue until it becomes a great mountain and fills the whole earth. . . .”

He continues, “This reformation is the movement of God. It is not a humanly organized movement depending for its success on the ability of men to persuade people to leave other churches and join them. God himself is breaking down the barriers that divide, and in response to his call the redeemed are forsaking human sects and creeds, and their hearts are flowing together. The center of this movement is not a particular geographical loca-

tion, not is its nucleus a particular set of fallible men: the center and nucleus of this world-wide movement is OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, and its operative force is the SPIRIT OF THE LIVING GOD, which draws the faithful together in bonds of holy love and fellowship.” When we read the history of the reformation movement, when we verify the doctrines that the pioneers proclaimed in light of God’s Word, when we see the impact of the work in the lives of the people, we should contemplate the evidence. We need to earnestly protect ourselves from embracing and spreading so-called new, untested insights that others share with us. The apostle Paul warned his “honorable son, Titus,” when he wrote, “For there are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, . . . who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not” (Titus 1:10–11).

The biblical label, “church of God,” is certainly important. But may we not forget that the name alone does not convert anyone to faith in God, because it is written, “I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead” (Revelation 3:1). The congregation in Sardis had the right name, and was still dead.

How are we doing? What would the Lord have to say about us personally today? How would He evaluate our local church?

If we wish to remain the biblical church of God, then we must know the Word of God. Today, few “church members” systematically read through the Bible. Admittedly some preachers know a few Bible verses from memory, but unfortunately even they do not regularly read their Bibles. Let us purpose to read God’s Word faithfully, so we will not neglect the Way.

On the same level with God’s Word is prayer. The personal prayer life of God’s children is absolutely vital. If

Prophecy Fulfilled

*'Twas sung by the poets,
foreseen in the spirit,
A time of refreshing is near;
When creeds and divisions would fall to demerit,
And saints in sweet union appear.*

*We stand in the glory that Jesus has given,
The moon, as the dayspring doth shine;
The light of the sun is now equal to seven,
So bright is the glory divine.*

*Now filled with the Spirit and clad in the armor
Of light and omnipotent truth;
We'll testify ever, and Jesus we'll honor
And stand from sin Babel aloof.*

*The prophet's keen vision, transpiercing the ages,
Beheld us to Zion return;
We'll sing of our freedom, though Babylon rages,
We'll shout as her city doth burn.*

*The fig tree is budding, the "evening" is shining,
We welcome the wonderful light!
We look for the Savior, for time is declining,
Eternity's looming in sight!*

Refrain:

*Oh, glory to Jesus! we hail the bright day,
And high on our banner salvation display,
The mists of confusion are passing away.*

someone routinely prays in the morning and in the evening, simply out of habit, and even prays during Wednesday and Sunday church services, with little thought to what is being said, then we will hardly be able to say that this person leads an authentic prayer life. Some people claim that they cannot afford to use that much time for prayer. We should not allow ourselves to become discouraged by others' opinions. Let us approach the throne of grace in faith and truly linger there, so that the Lord will strengthen our faith, and that signs and wonders can happen once again.

The prophet Samuel revealed to King Saul a very important requirement for spirituality. He said, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams" (1 Samuel 15:22). The danger for Saul and for us is that we want to be able to choose which commandments we wish to obey, and which commandment is no longer valid today. Saul was ruined by his disobedience. Let us not forget this.

Experience teaches us through God's Word that His laws are there to protect us when we take care to obey them. The apostle Peter writes, "Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5-6). The arrogant seem to dominate our world. The slogan is: "The more I can be seen, the more impressions I can make." If the church of God is truly to be led by the Holy Spirit, if the Lord is to be glorified among us, then we cannot overlook these words from our Lord. If a person sets himself up to be king, he will have God as his opponent. What a horrible place to be! When we examine where most of our problems come from, we will very often find that humility was absent.

Through God's grace we can be in a world that is full of false doctrine and unbelief, and still walk in holiness. We need not be afraid, because Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). Then He gave us another important promise: "Do not fear, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Luke 12:32).

With God's help, we want to carry on the wonderful message, so that many can still emerge from darkness and confusion and be saved.

The Salt of the Earth

“You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matthew 5:13).

In the Beatitudes, Jesus describes the character of His followers and their relationship with the world. Following this discussion, Jesus outlines the influence His followers should have on the world around them. He uses a simple metaphor to explain His followers’ exalted and influential position and to illustrate their power and radiance. First, He calls them the “salt of the earth.” Although this picture is simple and easy to understand, it is also meaningful and far-reaching. Salt is essential for life. It is impossible to think of a household without salt. This image suggests that Jesus’ followers are necessary and indispensable to the world. With even a little salt, many things can be salted. Salt preserves food from spoiling as it penetrates into the food. Consequently, what Jesus says here is very important and rich in meaning.

It is impossible to separate Christianity from its followers. Christians exert a powerful influence and blessing on their surroundings. If Christians do not have this influence, then something is missing. Throughout the world, true Christianity has been a transformative power. The list would be too long if we tried to name the many blessings that Christianity has conferred upon the world. What would the world be like without the righteous, the children of God? If only ten righteous people had been found in Sodom, God would have saved the entire city!

God has given His people an important task, and they must answer to Him. Therefore, let us ask ourselves: “Are we ‘salty’ Christians?” Do we exert a positive influ-

ence on our environment? Salt works in silence; when it comes into contact with something that needs to be salted, it will flavor and preserve without interruption. We cannot shine as the light of the world if we are unsalted. When we are salted, our influence will make itself known even in the silence of our surroundings.

Jesus warns us about losing our flavor. Just as pure salt never loses its power, the pure Gospel is and remains the power of God. When it is mixed with foreign elements, salt becomes tasteless and worthless. When Christians accept foreign teachings, they too lose their flavor.

With what shall it be salted? “If the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?” If our ministry loses its power, how can the power of the Spirit work in our churches? Is today’s ministry not in danger of losing its power? According to Luther and others, the responsibility for being the salt of the earth falls to servants of the Gospel; therefore, all of God’s children are included in this command. Everyone who comes into contact with Christ is seasoned. When Christians lose their seasoning, they will be judged worthless. What is the purpose of salt if it has lost its saltiness? If our ministry becomes powerless, wherein lies its benefit? What good are nominal Christians—those who profess Christ, but do not obey His Word? Not only are they worthless, but they also hinder the work of God. “It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men” (Matthew 5:13). Revelation echoes this judgment in its denunciation of the church at Laodicea: “I will vomit you out of My mouth” (Revelation 3:16). If people who have once known the Lord and have shown others the way to Christ lose their own way, they will receive a terrible judgment. Those who have been seasoned with salt should see to it that they never lose their saltiness. It will



be better for those who remain unsalted than for those who lose their saltiness.

There are two ways to balance the difference between a hot and a cold object: either the one must be heated or the other will be cooled. If we do not heat the world around us, then the world will extinguish our flame. We all exert an influence on our surroundings, and in turn, we are influenced by our surroundings. If as a Christian, our influence is not stronger than the evil influence of the world, then our flame will be extinguished. Some-

one once said: "In this world a man must be either anvil or hammer. If a man does not deliver the blows, he will receive them." Unfortunately, many Christians would rather receive the blows of the world than share the good news that they have experienced. Another proverb states: "The children of God are called the salt of the earth; they must either salt the world, or the world will rob them of what they have so that they too will perish with the world." Let us be the salt the world so desperately needs!

Experiences with God

"And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called the Place of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha" (John 19:17).

The Lord Jesus endured the cross, despising the shame! There on the cross He created peace through His blood, reconciling us to God. On the cross of Calvary, Jesus paid for the guilt and sin of the entire world. He took the punishment and curse of God upon Himself so that we could be redeemed and have eternal life.

That is why I love the cross where my Savior cried: "It is finished!" Yes, I thank God's Son that He also found me on the cross. I sought Him and He let Himself be found. In fact, He sought me first! He began His work in me and called me to Him.

I am so thankful to God that He has always had servants and messengers ready to proclaim His Word

and preach to all peoples and nations of His love. That is why I also praise my Savior for finding brothers in the Lord who were willing to come to Mexico. Through their message I discovered the truth and received salvation for my soul. These brothers made sacrifices with their families. They were willing to obey their Lord and step out in faith. I thank God for their faithfulness and will always remember it! May the Lord continue to make His servants a blessing.

It is my prayer that we would all have a greater burden for lost souls. May we be a light wherever and however God leads us, that we would be ambassadors of the cross with our life and our words. May we be a reflection of Jesus.

Your sister in the Lord,

Annie Schachtschneider
Hamilton, ON

Thankfulness to God

Of all the holidays on the church calendar, besides Christmas, Easter, and Pentecost, there is perhaps seldom a day that has deeper significance than Thanksgiving Day. It is a day in which one does not remember victorious battles or the lives of great men and women. Rather it is a day to simply stop and remember God's goodness, to contemplate, reflect, and give one's heart to God in deep thankfulness, rededicating oneself to Him. There is much to give thanks for: God's grace, love, faithfulness, and many diverse rich blessings. It is good to always remember the goodness of God, which He lavishes on us so richly. Yes, let us be thankful that God is still in control and is the same, yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).

To the Philippians, Paul wrote: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

Let us make Thanksgiving Day a time when we look back and meditate on both the personal and universal gifts that God continually bestows upon us.

History tells us that the first settlers of America had the tradition of remembering their first hard winter in the New World by placing five kernels of corn on each plate on the table. The times were so tough that rationing only allowed each person to have five kernels of corn. The Pilgrim fathers wanted their descendants to remember the sacrifices, difficulties, and hardships that they had experienced. Nevertheless they remained true to God and acted in accordance with their conscience. They wanted their children and their children's children to know about those terrible 63 days on the ship from Europe to America. They also felt that the unwelcoming foreign shore and the first difficult winter should not be forgotten. Their descendants should know that from their rations they only had enough for five kernels for each person. There were only seven healthy persons left in the new colony to take care of those that were sick. Also many had died and

lay buried in the new, windswept cemetery. They wanted their descendants to know that the ship in which they had arrived had sailed back to England the following spring, manned only with the ship's crew. Despite the difficulties they had encountered, all the immigrants had decided to stay in the New World. The five kernels were symbolic of their heroic past. These symbols are meant to remind us of God's blessings upon us.

On Thanksgiving Day let us especially give thanks to God for all His faithfulness and not forget to be grateful unto Him. Every day, every week, every year God lavishes His gifts and love upon us. Sunshine and rain, fruitfulness and harvest are blessings from the hand of God.

Let us also give thanks to God for the "great cloud of witnesses" that went before us (Hebrews 12:1). We can gather strength and inspiration from those who lived before us, who fought the good fight and kept the faith. Today we can enjoy many blessings that our forefathers have fought for and won through much sacrifice and effort.

We should also be thankful to God for something else—for the work and the tasks that still lie before us. Let us be thankful for that which we can still do for the Lord. This may sound a bit strange, but it is indeed a great privilege to be God's co-workers. No doubt God could have His directions fulfilled by commissioning angels. Nevertheless, it is God's will to use people like you and me to fulfill His mission. He has chosen us to help build and further His Kingdom. God had in mind a better world than the one we are living in today. He wants a world with a healthy social environment. He wants people now living in poverty and hunger and in underdeveloped nations to share the treasures and the surpluses of this good earth. No doubt God would be pleased to have disease, poverty, suffering, racism, and prejudice eradicated.

The Bible teaches us that God's ideal for the church is that it be "a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27). We must acknowledge the fact that our social order, the church, and the world we live in

shapes our world-view. We are fallible. We make mistakes. It takes tears, prayer, and much work and effort to bring God's ideal for the church to realization. Let us thank God that He has considered us worthy to partner with Him to work for this ideal.

Let us thank God for our friends and for the brothers and sisters we have both naturally and spiritually. Let us thank God for the people that have played a significant part in our lives. Looking back we can see that many people have given us words of comfort, have made intercession for us, and have encouraged us. Let us be thankful that our lives were enriched and that we have had a foretaste of heaven because of the friends and people with whom we have been able to associate.

Finally, let us not forget to thank God for what He means to us. We cannot fully comprehend our transcendent and indescribable God with our limited understanding. Yet we can experience Him and in our hearts we can know the meaning of the proclamation: "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth" (Exodus 34:7). In-

deed God is great and almighty. He is omnipresent in His might. Nevertheless much of His power and greatness will remain hidden to us as long as we remain pilgrims in this world below.

God is love. And though we are weak, we can nevertheless sense what love is. We have experienced some of this love in our own hearts. We have seen love in the eyes of a mother taking care of her infant. We have had a glimpse of this love as we looked into the joyful face of someone whose soul was filled with the presence of God.

Let us remain thankful despite the turbulent times in which we live. There is still much good in our world. Let us praise God that He is still in control and that He rules. Let us give thanks that "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

For all these blessings—and many more could be added—let us lift our voices in praise to our almighty powerful God and sing with all our hearts: "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

Special Services 2015 in Canada und Argentina

Special Services in J. L. Suarez - Buenos Aires

OCTOBER 6-11, 2015

Special Services in Oberá - Misiones

OCTOBER 14-18, 2015

Special Services in Edmonton

OCTOBER 10-12, 2015

Thank You, Lord

*O Lord, you blessed this land of ours
With sunshine and with rain,
So wheat could grow and we have flour
To bake fresh bread again.
Lord, all our needs, you did supply,
On your abundance we rely;
We praise you for your goodness.*

*Your gentle hand has once again
Supplied us with a harvest.
Our labor, it was not in vain -
The increase, it was marvelous.
Your word is true, there has not ceased
Seed time and harvest, cold and heat,
As long as earth keeps turning.*

*We thank you Lord, as we begin
To praise you for your kindness.
You have forgiven us our sins,
The love of Christ did find us.
O let our hearts be like good soil
That yields good fruit that will not spoil,
Where weeds and thorns are banished.*