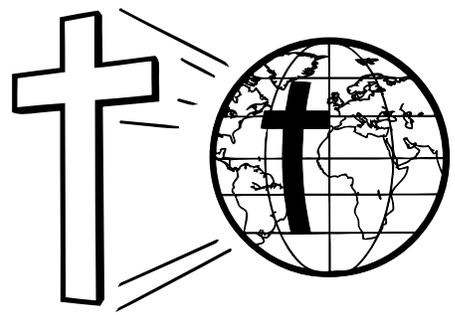


Foundation of Faith



ESTEEMING THE REPROACH OF CHRIST GREATER RICHES THAN THE TREASURES IN EGYPT

HE LOOKED TO THE REWARD

REMEMBER THAT
YOU HAVE A SOUL

MOSES' DECISION

IS A VISA REQUIRED?

THE FINAL JUDGMENT

THE PRAYER
THAT GOD DIDN'T ANSWER

PRAYER TOPICS 2016

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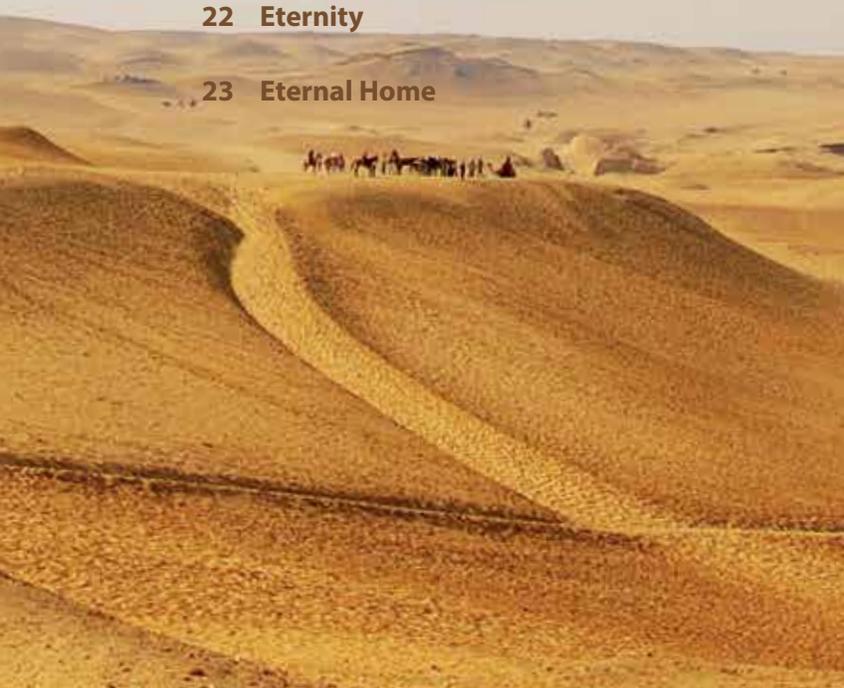
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Editorial

November! The year is drawing to a close. Autumn has arrived. The nights are long and the days gloomy. A cold wind blows the leaves from the trees. Soon all of nature comes to rest. The fruits have been gathered and the once beautiful flowers now lie on the ground. In many places, God has covered everything with a white blanket of snow.

November!—It is the time of year when death occurs in nature. Our thoughts, dear reader, should also be directed towards death and eternity.

What is our goal in life? Is it simply the pursuit of transient things that this world has to offer, materialism and wealth or an endeavor to gain honor and recognition? In Colossians 3:2, the apostle Paul urges us to “Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”

Let us strive to store up lasting treasures in heaven, an inheritance that is imperishable and undefiled. Let us strive after heaven and its glory! In Hebrews 11:26, we read the following about Moses: “esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.” Why did Moses act in such a manner? It was faith, faith in the eternal God! Faith that looks beyond the fleeting nature of the world’s value system to see the long range benefits and eternal values of God’s kingdom. He knew that before us lies eternity and the splendor of heaven.

Dear reader, have you also experienced what is written in the following song by D.S. Warner?

*I'll rise on faith's almighty wing,
And view the glorious scene;
Where all is sweet and blooming spring,
Adorned in living green.
While I drink the crystal streams of love,
That flow from heaven's throne
I journey to that land above,
My everlasting home.*

May God direct our vision towards the glory of heaven and the eternal reward.

H.D. Nimz

Where To?

I once rode in a bus in which a drunken man was sitting. He kept repeating the phrase, “This is where I get off!” Yet each time it was not the right bus stop for him after all. Most of the passengers laughed at him. They certainly didn’t express any compassion for the wretched condition of this man. “He doesn’t know where he needs to go, but at least he’s on the way.” “In reality,” countered another seriously, “this man is like a thousand others. They don’t know where they’re going, yet they’re on the way to eternity, without asking themselves what their final goal will be.” These words did not put the listening passengers in as good a mood as the foolishness of the drunken man. Many do not know whether they are on the path to heaven or on the path to hell. If you were to

ask them whether they are good enough to go to heaven, they would have to acknowledge, “I’m afraid not.” But if you were to pose the question of whether they are bad enough to go to hell, then they would say, “Oh, I’m not as bad as many others. I know many people who go to church and at the same time, do things I would never do.”—Too good for hell, but not good enough for heaven.

The question, “Where will I spend eternity?” is answered clearly by God in His Word. We read, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36). Only faith in God’s Son and in His fulfilled plan of salvation gives assurance of entry into heaven.

Remember That You Have a Soul

“For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16:26)

Many years ago, a pastor shared the following story:

“About 15 years ago, a young student from Cambridge took a little trip during the holidays. At a crowded railway station, he became separated from his travel companions and ended up in a car filled with young people. As the train began to move, an elderly gentleman came in and offered this student a tract. He was not a thoughtless man in religious matters, but he knew nothing of the grace to be had in Christ, and believed he had done enough if he went to church on Sunday, and as much as possible led a decent life.

What he detested more than most things was the distribution of tracts. “Why must these people flaunt their piety before others?” he wondered. So he rejected the tract and the gentleman offered it to his neighbor. But he also refused it.

The tract was then offered to each of the young people in the compartment, but none of them accepted it. Sighing, the gentleman turned to the door. When he had opened it, he voiced in a serious tone: “Just keep in mind, gentlemen, that you have a soul.” With that, he was gone.

These words sank into the heart of the young student like a stone in still water. At first he was angry, just as a stone produces ripples on the surface. He said to himself: “Why must he say that I have a soul? I know that just as well as he does!”

But it did not help. The words penetrated deeper and

deeper into his heart like a nail, on which the hammer falls again and again. Even the huffing of the locomotive seemed to call out the words: “Remember that you have a soul!” He could not get rid of them. When he returned to Cambridge, he met with a group of young people who were ridiculed for their Christian faith and earnestness. These explained the Word of God even more clearly to him.

He got to know himself and his Lord more and more, and while he previously did not know what career he should pursue, he now decided to commit himself to the ministry of the gospel.

“I was that young student,” said the pastor. “I do not know,” he continued, “if I will one day shake hands with the gentleman who spoke those tremendous words here on earth, but I hope to meet him again in glory and thank him through our Lord Jesus Christ for those words in the railway carriage. They awoke the desire in me to become right with God.”

We can never know what consequences our good and evil deeds can have. This will only be disclosed in eternity. The gentleman who tried unsuccessfully to give a tract to this student probably left the railroad car rather discouraged. He could not have guessed what wonderful fruit his faithful work would produce.

“A word fitly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11).

Pressing Toward the Goal

“For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18)

A group of travelers was crossing a desert. Although they had been traveling for hours, they knew that they would not reach their destination, the first town beyond the desert, before evening. Their journey became increasingly difficult. The sun blazed hotter, and the wind blew the sand with greater intensity. Under such conditions, it is not surprising that the group’s morale was waning and that their muttering and complaining was becoming louder and louder. Disgruntled, they continued on their journey. Only one young man did not allow the difficult journey to discourage him. Instead of joining the others in their grumbling, the young man reminded them how satisfying it would be when they reached the friendly town. He reminded them that they could take a night swim in the clear waters of the nearby lake and that a good meal was waiting for them there. He also drew to their attention how soothing it would be to rest their tired bodies in a comfortable bed after a long day’s ride. The promise of these comforts enabled him to forget about his present difficulties. Despite the heat, dust, and fatigue, he cheerfully journeyed on.

As Christians, we often experience deserts on life’s journey. We experience periods of difficulty and exhaustion, times of tribulation and great affliction. During these trials, it is difficult to hold on to our courage and joy. Our spirit becomes tired, weak, and depressed. When such troubles come, there is no better remedy than to follow the example of the young man traveling through the desert. We ought to think of how wonderful it will be when we come to our journey’s end, when we reach our blessed goal.

It is true that the bliss of eternal life is such that no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no heart has experienced (1 Corinthians 2:9). However, the promise of eternal life as described in Scripture is so wonderful, even to our limited understanding, that all Christians should be filled

with great joy and hope. Let us consider the words in Revelation 21:4, “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” When our pilgrimage here on earth is fraught with difficulties and pain, let us remember that there will come a day when sorrow, trouble, and pain will be no more. There will come a day, a never-ending day, when the heart, mind, and soul will not experience even the slightest trace of grief, sadness, worry, unrest, or pain. No more long hours! Heart and soul will be filled with such joy that nothing will be able to disturb it. Our entire being will be filled with everlasting rejoicing and jubilation!

If you remind yourself of this passage when you go through difficult times, can you remain discouraged or disheartened? Of course not! When your cross becomes heavy and your path becomes rough, focus on your goal, and join in the chorus:

How will it be, how will it be,
When I pull into Salem,
Into the city of golden streets!
O Lord my God, I cannot believe it,
O what gladness will be mine!

If you make this attitude your own, then you too will experience the truth of the apostle’s words: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

Try it, my dear friends! Follow this advice! You will not regret it!



HE LOOKED TO THE REWARD

Moses' Decision

Scripture says it was faith, otherwise some would insist upon it that it was the force of blood. “He was by birth an Israelite, and therefore,” say they, “the instincts of nature prevailed.” Our text assigns a very different reason. We know very well that the children of godly parents are not led to adore the true God by reason of their birth. Grace does not run in the blood; sin may, but righteousness does not. Who does not remember children of renowned lovers of the gospel, who have now left the faith? It was faith, not blood, which impelled Moses in the way of truth. Neither was it eccentricity which led him to espouse the side which was oppressed. We have sometimes found a man of pedigree and position who has associated with people of quite another rank and condition, simply because he never could act like anyone else, and must live after his own odd manner. It was not so with Moses. All his life through you cannot discover a trace of eccentricity in him: he was sober, steady, law abiding; what if I say he was a concentric man, for his center was in the right place, and he moved according to the dictates of prudence. Not thus can his decision be accounted for. Neither was he hurried on by some sudden excitement when there burned within his soul fierce patriotic fires which made him more fervent than prudent. No, there may have been some haste in his killing the Egyptian on the first occasion, but then he had 40 more years to think it over, and yet he never repented for his choice, but held on to the oppressed people of God, and still refused to think of himself as the son of Pharaoh’s daughter. It was faith then, faith alone, that enabled the prophet of Sinai to arrive at his decision, and to carry it out.

What faith did he have?

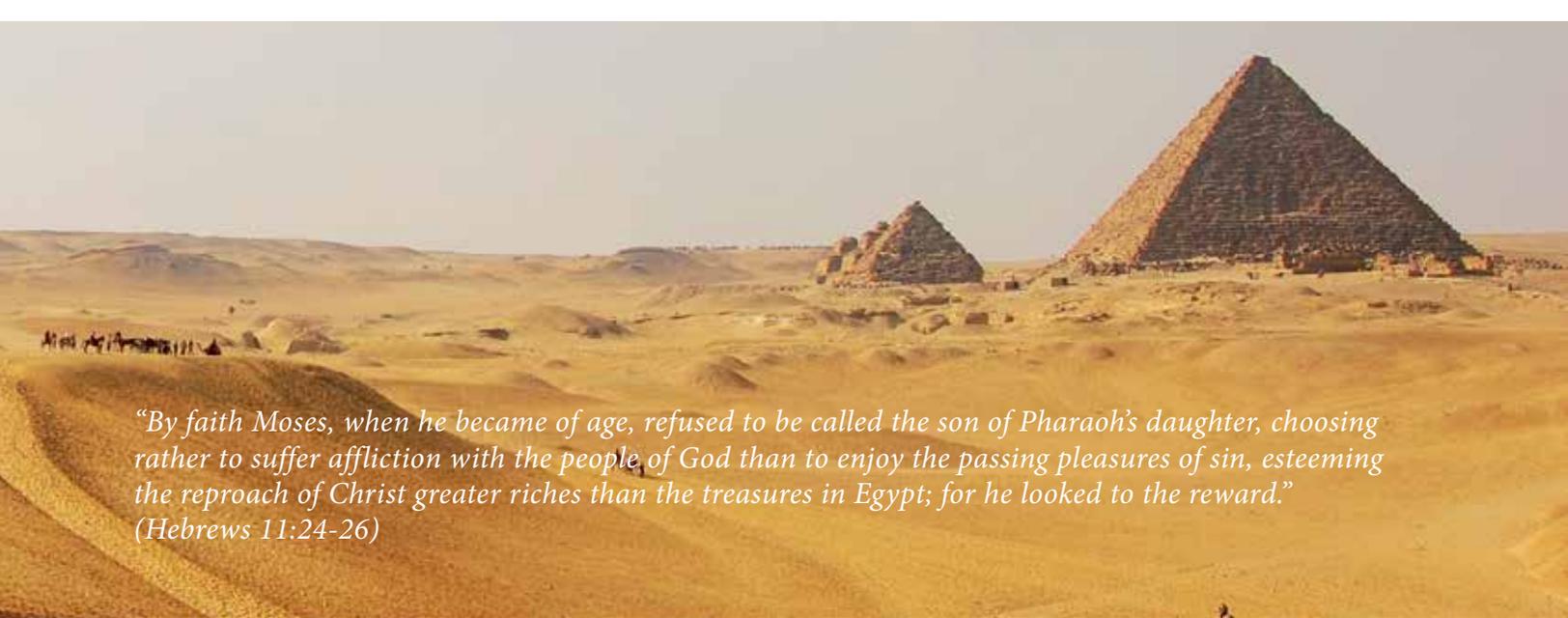
First, he had faith in Jehovah. It is possible that Moses had seen the various gods of Egypt, even as we see them

now in the drawings which have been copied from their temples and pyramids. We find there the sacred cat, the sacred ibis, the sacred crocodile, and all kinds of creatures which were revered as deities; and in addition there were hosts of strange idols, compounds of man, and beast, and bird, which stand in our museums to this day, and were once the objects of the idolatrous reverence of the Egyptians. Moses was weary of all this symbolism. He knew in his own heart that there was one God, only one God, and he would have nothing to do with Amun, Pthah, Maut, or other gods of Egypt.

Oh that brave and true hearts may be led to turn away from such idolatry, and abjure all association with it, and say, “No, I cannot, and dare not. There is one God who made heaven and earth, there is a pure Spirit who upholds all things by the power of His might. I will worship Him alone; and I will worship Him after His own law, without images or other symbols, for has He not forbidden them?” Has He not said, “You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God”? (Exodus 20:4-5). Oh that God would give to men faith to know there is only one God, and that the one God is not to be worshiped with man-ordained rites and ceremonies, for He is “Spirit and those who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth!” (John 4:24)

The faith of Moses also rested in Christ.

“Christ had not come,” one says. Indeed, but He was to come, and Moses looked to that Coming One. He cast his eye through the ages that were to intervene, and he saw before him the Shiloh of whom dying Jacob sang. He



*“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.”
(Hebrews 11:24-26)*

knew the ancient promise which had been given to the fathers, that in the seed of Abraham all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and he was willing, in order to share in the blessing, to take his part in the reproach.

Dear friends, we shall never have a thorough faith in God unless we also have faith in Jesus Christ. Men have tried long, and tried hard, to worship the Father apart from the Son, but there it stands, and it always will be so: “No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). You get away from the worship of the Father if you do not come through the mediation and atonement of the Son of God.

Now, though Moses did not know all that is now revealed to us concerning Christ, he still had faith in the coming Messiah, and that faith gave strength to his mind. Those are the men to suffer who have received Christ Jesus the Lord. If any man should ask me what made the Covenanters such heroes as they were, what made our Puritan forefathers fearless before their foes, what led the Reformers to protest and the martyrs to die, I would reply that it was faith in the Invisible God, coupled with faith in that dear Son of God who is God Incarnate. Believing in Him they felt such love within their hearts, that for love to Him they could have died a thousand deaths.

But then, in addition to this, Moses had faith in reference to God’s people. He knew that the Israelites were God’s chosen, that Jehovah had made a covenant with them, that despite all their faults, God would not break His covenant with His own people, and he knew, therefore, that their cause was God’s cause, and being God’s cause it was the cause of right, the cause of truth. Oh, it is a grand thing when a man has such faith that he says, “It is nothing to me what other people do, or think, or believe; I shall act as God would have me. If a course

is right and true, through floods and flames if Jesus leads me, I will pursue it.” That seems to me to be the right spirit, but where do you find it nowadays?

Once again, Moses had faith in “the reward.”

He said this within himself, “I must renounce much, and count on losing rank, position, and treasure; but I expect to be a gainer notwithstanding, for there will be a day when God shall judge the sons of men; I expect a judgment throne with its impartial balances, and I expect that those who serve God faithfully shall then turn out to have been the wise men and the right men, while those who truckled and bowed down to gain a present comfort, shall find that they missed eternity while they were snatching after time, and that they bartered heaven for a paltry mess of pottage.”

With this upon his mind, you could not persuade Moses that he ought to compromise, and must not be uncharitable, and ought not to judge other good people, but should be large minded, and remember Pharaoh’s daughter, and how kindly she had nurtured him, and consider what opportunities he had of doing good where he was, how he might befriend his poor brethren, what influence he might have over Pharaoh, how he might be the means of leading the princes and the people of Egypt in the right way, and perhaps God had raised him up on purpose to be there, who could tell, and so on, and so on. You have likely read or heard the plausible arguments of the deceivableness of unrighteousness, which in these last days teaches men to do evil so that good may come of it.

Moses cared for none of these things. He knew his duty, and did it, whatever the consequences might be. Every Christian man’s duty is to believe the truth, and follow the truth, and leave the results with God. Who dares to do that? The one who does is a king’s son.

C.H. Spurgeon

The Wage Issue

“Then Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?’” (Matthew 19:27)

In the secular world, the issue of wages is very important. Time and time again, we hear of people who go on strike because they want more money, better working conditions, or more vacation time. This situation is often comparable to a contagious disease which can bring the economy and civilian life to a halt. We are all well aware of the old proverb: “The more a man has, the more he wants.”

And yet, the wage issue can be justified, for we read the following in God’s word: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain, and, the laborer is worthy of his wages” (1 Timothy 5:18). Therefore a wage is an agreed upon or prearranged payment that a person receives for his work. Everybody who works should thus be rewarded.

When Peter asked, “See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?” Jesus replied: “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name’s sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life” (Matthew 19: 28-29).

As God’s children and laborers for His kingdom, we should not be focused only on an immediate reward. As Christians who emulate Christ and obediently serve Him on a daily basis despite having to endure suffering, hardship, and abuses, our true reward is God’s presence and power through the Holy Spirit. In this life and later in the hereafter we will be rewarded for our faithfulness and service.

As children of God, forgiveness of our sins, peace with God through the blood of Jesus Christ, and personal redemption should be what matters most in life. We have become disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ and share His convictions. We take up our cross daily. We trust in the Lord’s promises and help. We resist evil. Even in battle against the enemy and in enmity we find refuge and strength for all situations in life. Through the power

of the Holy Spirit we can be victorious by believing, persevering, remaining faithful, loving, forgiving, and living as one who follows Christ. Jesus taught: “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil” (Luke 6:35).

As indicated earlier, we will not only be rewarded in this life. The Lord Jesus explains: “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work” (Revelation 22:12). Also in Romans 2:7-11, the Apostle Paul writes: “eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor, and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.” Isn’t it of utmost importance that we faithfully serve the Lord in the present time of grace? “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

Thus, the currency of sin is death, damnation, and eternal torment. That is all you can expect or hope for in a life without God. Christ’s currency is eternal life, which is a free gift from God.

What choice have you made? Seek Jesus and His kingdom, all else is futile! In Isaiah 40:10, the Prophet Isaiah writes: “Behold, the Lord God shall come with a strong hand, and His arm shall rule for Him; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him.”

I would like to close with the following song:

It pays to serve Jesus whate’er may betide,
It pays to be true whate’er you may do;
Tis riches of mercy in Him to abide;
It pays to serve Jesus each day.

It pays to serve Jesus, it pays ev’ry day,
It pays ev’ry step of the way;
Tho’ the pathway to glory may sometimes be drear,
You’ll be happy each step of the way.

H.D. Nimz

Is a Visa Required?

After leaving a big-city station, the fully occupied train rolled into the sunny countryside. As the travelers tried to make themselves as comfortable as possible, conversations started. In my compartment, there was a group of friends, elderly ladies who, judging by their luggage and conversation, were planning to take a holiday in the country.

“Think about it,” one of the ladies exclaimed. “Yesterday, Mrs. S. suddenly died of a stroke. She wasn’t sick a day before she died. Isn’t that something wonderful—to leave this life without suffering?”

With a questioning glance, she peered straight at me. “Yes, certainly,” I replied, “it is good, provided that we are ready to leave this life without any warning.”

“Oh, yes,” continued the lady, “that must be wonderful. Just not being sick, not being sick at all.” Lost in her train of thought, the lady asked, “To die surely does not require a visa?”

This question touched me deeply. People who need to travel to foreign countries know how important a visa is. Travelers can be denied entry if they have a missing or counterfeit visa. As a result, travelers must pay close attention to the visa requirements of their destinations.

Naturally, people do not need a visa to die. All people cross over into eternity when they die. In the words of Schiller, “Ready or not, all people must stand before their Judge!” Experience teaches us the truth of Solomon’s words: “All go to one place: all are from the dust, and all return to dust” (Ecclesiastes 3:20). These observations, however, compel us to consider life after death.

Will our final resting place be the grave? Or is there life beyond the grave? Job concerned himself with these thoughts during his severe illness. Out of his desire to die and be freed from his suffering, he asked the question, “But a man dies and is laid low; he breathes his last and is no more. If someone dies, will they live again?” (Job 14:10,14 NIV). In chapter 19, we read that for Job, the matter was resolved: “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God” (Job 19:25-26).

In almost all religions and in the writings of many prominent men, the hope of an afterlife shines through. And this hope ends with the belief in a future home, a home filled with bliss and a better life. This hope becomes, to those of

us who believe in the gospel of Jesus Christ, a living and certain truth and reality. This hope became a reality to the apostle Peter when he saw Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration long after their bodies had decayed. With great joy and certainty, Peter pointed to a future in which the children of God experience eternal and indescribable joy (1 Peter 1:3-9).

The fact that our life here on earth is a journey is certain. That it will not last forever is also certain. If we focus our hope on the prospect of eternal life in heaven, then the following question is of great importance: “Is a visa required?”

No country on earth willingly welcomes rebels and enemies. It also makes sense that no one who does not willingly submit to the laws and authorities of heaven will enter it. All people, however, are born enemies of God’s commandments. All people are conceived and born according to the sinful nature. No matter how good people are, they will never be able to approach God in His holiness, for even the cherubim hide their faces before Him. Therefore, Christ said: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Government officials are responsible for making sure that they issue visas only to trustworthy people. Equipped with His Father’s authority and power, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came into the world, and through Him, people gain entry into the heavenly country when they become reconciled to God through Christ. The Holy Spirit functions as the chief secretary. He issues the visas and gives them the divine seal of approval: “The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:16-17).

Paul was overjoyed that the Ephesians were joint heirs with Christ and that the Spirit had assured them that they would receive their inheritance on the Day of Salvation (Ephesians 2:3-17).

Christ earnestly warns us that on the Day of Salvation many will come to Him and say, “Lord, Lord!” But He will answer them: “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!” (Matthew 7:23). He will reject them because they do not have a valid visa.

What about you, dear reader? Is heaven your goal? Have you received your entry permit?

HE LOOKED TO THE REWARD

The Final Judgment

There will come a time when God's final and irrevocable judgment will take place.

Everything will be revealed!

In this judgment, the dead will rise from their graves and stand before their judge: sinners, great and small, from every language and country—murderers, liars, sorcerers, idol worshipers, thieves, adulterers, atheists, blasphemers, skeptics, as well as those who visited a church regularly but never experienced salvation personally. They will rise from the graves on the great battlefields of the earth, from the depths of the oceans, from innumerable cemeteries that have long been forgotten. There will be millions upon millions. They will try to flee from the Judge, but will not be successful. They will call to the mountains to fall on them and protect them from the One who sits on the throne. But there will be no escape, no assistance. It is the day of their disastrous fate. The books, in which all their deeds are written, will be opened before their Judge. Every sin is recorded. Every trespass is entered. Deeds that have long been forgotten, things that are hidden from people's eyes. They will be revealed before the entire universe.

Finally the Book of Life will be opened. The Bible says: "And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15). In vain they will search for their name on the pages of this Book. Their last chance is lost. Their final hope of being saved is destroyed. This is the description of God's great judgment from Revelation 20. It is no human idea from the pen of John, but the thoughts of the eternal God.

My friend, you will be there! If you listen to the warning of the Holy Scriptures and come to Jesus, you need not be eternally lost!

Nothing is as certain as the judgment

We read in Acts 17:30–31: "But now [He] commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness." And in Hebrews 9:27 we read: "And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment." The judgment is definitely coming! For all those who have not accepted Christ, there will be no escape.

The judgment's purpose

This judgment is not to determine whether a person is guilty or not. Some believe that it is decided after death whether a person is saved or lost. Jesus says in John 3:18: "but he who does not believe is condemned already." It is similar to a criminal who is arrested and convicted and now sits on death row awaiting the execution of his sentence. The sentence for the condemned will be proclaimed before the entire universe.

The type of judgment

It will be a thorough judgment. Nothing is hidden from God's eyes. In Ecclesiastes 12:14 it says: "For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." The Lord says that we will have to give account for every idle word and deed (Matthew 12:36). The most secret thoughts of the heart will then be revealed. Some things you may not even tell your best friend. But on this day not only your friend, but the entire universe will know the deepest secrets of your heart.



It will be a just judgment

Some find it difficult to reconcile the judgment with God's love. They say: "If God is love, how can He then judge His own creation?" God is indeed love, but He demonstrated His love by creating a way in which we could escape judgment. He gave the best that He had: His only Son, who took the judgment for our sins upon Himself. But God is not only a God of love, He is also a righteous judge. He will judge the world in righteousness and will render a just verdict. No one will say on Judgment Day: "God, you are unjust! You are not a God of love!" Everyone will admit that God's judgment is merited and just.

It will be an unbiased judgment

With God, there is no respect of person. He says: "For there is no difference; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:22–23). Men and women who have achieved executive positions in their career, who were well-known in society and the business world, or who amassed great wealth will be judged just like those who were unknown to this world.

It will be an irrevocable judgment

On this earth, it is possible to appeal to a higher court. There is therefore the possibility of having the verdict struck down. Here it is different: "And as it is appointed for men to die once. But after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27). Judgment at the great white throne is the final and highest of all. There is no second chance, no further opportunity to be saved.

The basis for the judgment

God will not ask you how many sins you committed or whether you led a moral and religious life. The question will

be asked, "How is your relationship with Christ?" The Bible tells us: "He who believes in Him (Jesus) is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (John 3:18). The only deciding question there will be: "What have you done with Jesus?" It does not matter whether you led a good life or whether you were a faithful church member. It is about whether you accepted Christ as your personal Savior and He paid for your sins with His blood.

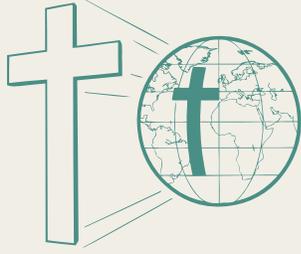
Who is the judge in this court?

No one other than the Lord Jesus, the simple man from Galilee, whom the people rejected and nailed to a cross. God's Word tells us: "For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son" (John 5:22).

A criminal was about to run in front of a car. A man risked his own life and pulled him back to safety. Later he appeared in court, charged with a criminal offense. His judge was the same man who, just days before, had saved him. Now the criminal hoped for his assistance once more. But the judge declared: "Then I was your savior. Today I am your judge."

Jesus came as Savior and gave His life in order to save us. But He will also be our Judge. Do you not want to accept Him as your Lord and Savior? On Judgment Day you will realize that Jesus is the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, for "at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:10–11).

EP



Radio Broadcast The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Facts about Eternity

Nowhere do we find the words “eternal” or “eternity” mentioned as frequently as in the Bible. These words have often been left out of famous reference books. By no means does this indicate that there is no eternity. Whether or not people want to believe, the reality of eternity cannot be disputed. Jesus speaks clearly about eternity in the sixth and tenth chapter of John. He unmistakably presents eternity as a fact. If we believe what Jesus believed, we will never go wrong. In the Bible we find other words that are synonymous with the word “eternity” such as: heaven, my Father’s house, City of God, the age to come, etc. Jesus said: “Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven” (Luke 6:23). He also said: “I am from above. . . . not of this world” (John 8:23). In Hebrews 6:5, we read of people, “who have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come.” God’s children state: “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:14). Paul wrote to the Corinthians: “If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19).

The previous Bible texts clearly reveal that eternity is an established truth! In their unbelief, many people deny this truth and theorize that when they die, everything is over. They choose to ignore the coming judgment of the world, as mentioned in Acts 17:31, and instead pursue a pleasure-seeking life. But where are those whose unbelief gave them a solid conviction and a sense of security? Many of the man-made theories are unreliable and those who depended on them were deceived and broken!

A tract with the heading: “The Final Words of Famous Men” reveals some shocking facts. This tract mentions men who realized too late that eternity is real. They had not believed in this truth. Their final words confirmed their error. Thomas Scott, who was once president of the British House of Lords, stated: “Up to this moment, I never believed there was a God or a hell. Now I know that both exist. I am at the mercy of the Almighty’s righteous judgment.” Charles IX of France cried out: “I am lost and clearly recognize this!” Heinrich Heine, the great mocker, repented. At the end of his life he wrote these words:

*Shattered is the old lyre
on the Rock, who is Christ.
The lyre, used for wicked works
moved by the evil spirit.
The lyre, which for riots sounded,
scoffed, chaffed and doubted,
O Lord, o Lord, before You I kneel,
forgive my songs is my appeal!*

Paul writes of these poor people: “Whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Later, Paul wrote: “so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith” (2 Timothy 3:8). Those who willfully resist and close themselves to the truth consider themselves unworthy of eternal life and become sacrifices to error and fallacies. We feel sorry



for these people because they are deceived by their unbelief and cannot be saved.

Jesus clearly speaks of a life in eternity: “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever” (John 6:51). He is the living bread for our inner, spiritual life. We have to be born into this new life. Jesus said: “You must be born again” (John 3:7). This can only happen through the power of God’s Word and His Spirit. The Holy Spirit produces this new life. It is experienced through faith and belief in Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross. Jesus explains: “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24). This new, hidden life has an eternal nature. Therefore Jesus could assure His disciples that they would have an eternal home in heaven. They would be where He was! There truly is life after death! Jesus’ victorious resurrection confirmed this. Paul wrote to the Ephesians: “But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Ephesians 2:4-6). John assures us: “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Each of us knows we have no lasting place on this earth. We all live to an end. Day and night continue. God

has ordained the end of time, when eternity will begin. Some significant facts will appear with the start of eternity. The period of grace will be over and salvation will no longer be possible. All opportunities to make things right with God will be over. No one will escape eternal death or be able to claim eternal life with God. Those who did not accept God’s love will not experience that blessed rest. Stephen, the first martyr, exclaimed full of faith in the face of death: “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” (Acts 7:56). It is a precious thing to see heaven open above us in life and in death.

A Christian was placed in prison for his faith. After spending some time there, he could still say with confidence: “Everything was taken from me. One thing that cannot be taken is heaven opened above me!” As Christians, we are just passing through this world until we transition to our eternal home. Everyone will experience the end of his or her life. D.S. Warner, a songwriter, asks this pertinent question:

*What is this life but a fleeting day?
Soon death will come with a stern decree;
Then one by one we must pass away,
And change from time to eternity.
Eternity, eternity!
Will you dwell with Christ in eternity?*

May God grant it to us out of His everlasting grace!

The Final Retrospect

If the Lord grants us mercy, we will one day be able to look back at our life and reflect on how we have lived. What would we want to find in our life in review? We only go through life once, so let us live in such a way that we will not regret it later.

There is a new grave in the cemetery today. An hour ago the sad-hearted mourners, with fast-falling tears, looked for the last time upon that familiar face. The light has gone out of the eye, and the sound of the voice is stilled forever. "Finished" has been written at the close of his life's story. He no longer is.

A few days ago he realized that the end was drawing near. Before that he had looked forward, and it seemed to him that his life might run on for years. But it was not so to be. The angel of death drew near, and he heard the sound of its coming wings. He then began to look backward, to see his life as a completed whole. He could now see life in its true light, for life does not appear the same when we look back upon it from the end as it does when our gaze is turned forward in the busy hurry of the days of health. When one is brought to the brink of the grave, life takes on a different aspect; it appears in its true perspective. We are usually so absorbed in the present that the past and the future have little place in our thoughts. Most lives are lived, not according to any plan or purpose, but according to the fleeting influence of the present moment.

Reader, you and I are on the path to the cemetery. Some day, and it may not be far off, we shall look back over our lives from the end. Day by day, often with but little thought, we are building the structure of our lives. Yesterday we laid the foundation of today and today we lay the foundation of tomorrow. Unless we lay a good foundation and build well on it, when we look back upon our lives at the last we shall find much to regret. The wood, hay, and stubble of selfish works and selfish purposes will be burned up in the fire that will try every man's work.

How much of the selfish element enters into most lives! The ambition, the labor, the planning, is for self. If self prospers, what else matters? If self has ease and comfort, what do others matter? If self is pleased, is not

that enough? Self seems to be the mainspring of most lives; is it so in our own? When we come to look back at the last, we shall find no pleasure in viewing our own selfishness or its fruits. We shall not desire to retain it in our memories. We shall see that whatever was done through selfish motives was time and energy lost. When we look back, shall we see bitter words, unkind deeds, and unfaithfulness to God and others? Shall we look back upon broken promises? On friends who trusted us and were disappointed? Shall we look back upon wrongs to our fellow men and sins toward God? It seems to me that the keenest regrets that ever come to a soul on earth are the regrets that come to him who during his last hours on earth has to view a misspent life.

How many have said, "Oh, if I could live my life over!" Alas! That cannot be. My brother, my sister, you can live this day but once. You will look back in time and eternity and see this day just as you lived it. Not only today, every day when it is today, holds the same momentous responsibility. Let us live today as faithful to God and man, as true, pure, just, and kind as we shall in the last day wish we had lived. Do not think that tomorrow you will live better, and be more kind and true and gentle. Today is your day; tomorrow is out of your reach.

There was one of old who looked back over his life and summed it all up in these words: "Vanity of vanities; all is vanity" (Ecclesiastes 1:2). He was rich and wise, he was a mighty king, and had great honors, but he lacked that good conscience that comes from a life well spent. He had not held back his heart from the enjoyment of any pleasure. He had given free rein to his desires. He had lived a life of ease and luxury. He had but to speak, and he was obeyed. But, alas! When he looked back, there was nothing in the scene to give him pleasure. It was only "vanity and vexation of spirit" (Ecclesiastes 1:14).





There was another man who looked back and who told us what he saw. His circumstances were very different from those of the other. He was a prisoner. In a little while the sword of the executioner would sever the frail bond of life. He knew the time was near, and these are his words: “For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:6-7). His words are a shout of triumph, the exaltation of final victory. There is no tinge of regret, there is no tear of sorrow. What mattered it if his way had been rugged and thorny? What mattered the thousand perils that had threatened him on every side? What mattered the shipwrecks, the scourgings, the stoning, the opposition of false brethren and of the heathen, the dungeons, the cold, the weariness, the sorrows? He looked back over them all; and his soul, glowing with joy, burst out in language of supreme satisfaction: “I have fought the good fight.”

Not once had he laid down his weapons. Not once had he faltered. Nor for a day had he ceased to be true to his Lord. Therefore he could say, “I have kept the faith.” Though many times he might have avoided trouble had he kept back the message of truth, yet how glad he was that in every instance he had been true!

Sometimes you will not find it easy to do right, sometimes you will have to sacrifice and endure, sometimes you will be reproached and mocked; but when you take that last retrospective view, the fact that you have been true will cause you to be glad, as was Paul of old. Then, be true today. Fill today with a full measure of faithful service. Think not of tomorrow, but do the right, in each today, and thus you may exclaim with Paul, “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day” (2 Timothy 4:8).

Moses chose

“By faith Moses [. . . chose] rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.” (Hebrews 11:24-25)

Moses’ entire significance on this earth and in eternity depended on this choice. Our conscious life of faith also begins with a choice. God makes the start by having provided full salvation and awakening us by His Spirit to accept it. This call is exactly what presents us with a choice. On the one hand is the world with its pleasures, on the other is Jesus on the cross with His glory.

Moses made a choice. Faith taught him not to value his princely honors too highly, and to prefer to share the lot of God’s people. Good for him! What was all the glory of Egypt compared to one minute in the presence of the living God as he experienced on Mount Horeb?

Dear friend, you also have to choose! Will Jesus be your Savior, your leader, and your bridegroom? Or, do you look to the world, which offers nothing more than “passing pleasures?” O believe what God’s word tells us about life and death without Jesus! By faith, choose Him and eternal life!

EP

Camp Meeting in 2015

Blaubeuren (Germany) August 29th to September 5th

“For everyone who asks receives . . .” (Matthew 7:8)

God gave us indescribable grace this year to enjoy heavenly glory and again confirmed His promise that He gives us what we ask.

We needed a time in the presence of God, a time to submerge ourselves in biblical truth and experience the power of the Holy Spirit, to be strengthened as a congregation and in our personal lives. And indeed we were able to participate in these services and experience the presence of the almighty God.

Every day began with a devotion and after that followed the morning service. The schedule for the afternoon services varied from day to day. On Monday and Thursday we had simultaneous services for specific age groups. Tuesday afternoon was free to use as everyone wished and on Wednesday we enjoyed more than two hours of singing and testimonies. Every day concluded with an evening service.

In the first service God gave us the words of welcome in the words of the Psalmist: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the LORD’” (Psalm 122:1). In the evening service we focused on the ques-

tion: “Are you truly happy?” The brother expanded on this thought with the questions: “Where do we look for joy? Where can we find real joy?”

On Saturday the Word of God led us through the topics, “The Power of the Holy Spirit,” “Serve the Lord with gladness,” and “God, who is mindful of man.”

Even though every day had an assigned main theme (“The Church,” “Sanctification,” “Practical Christianity,” “Healing,” and “The Great Commission”), we tried to give as much freedom to the Holy Spirit as possible while using as little human organization as possible. In doing that God gave us His grace, His Word, and His blessings.

We had the privilege of getting to know many new brothers and sisters, having fellowship with other children of God, exchanging experiences, and coming before the throne of God in prayer and praise. The Lord was merciful and we experienced an abundant measure of His blessings.

Patricia Günter
Germany



The overall group picture.

The Prayer That God Didn't Answer

One morning Gloria went to the library with her brother and cousin and they each checked out a book. They had planned to read that afternoon, but some of the girls in Gloria's class came by and the books had to be put aside. On Monday morning Gloria decided to take her library book to school with her. Mother asked her if she would have time to read it. "Oh, maybe I'll have a few minutes," Gloria replied as she kissed her mother good-bye.

In her heart Gloria was planning to get more than a few minutes to read the book which promised to be so interesting. "I'll read my book while the others are studying their geography," she thought. The geography text was a big book, so the library book was quite successfully hidden behind it. Gloria's seat was the last one in the row, and none of the other pupils could see what she was doing—unless it was her neighbors on both sides. But she knew they wouldn't even notice. "They're just plain dumb," she thought.

The period went all too quickly for Gloria. The book proved to be even more interesting than she had thought, and it was hard to put it aside for class recitation.

"I wish I could go on reading instead of having to listen to the others tell about the products of Brazil," she thought.

But there was no recitation. "Put your books away," Miss Miller said quietly. "We're going to have a surprise test in geography this morning on the material you studied today."

Gloria's heart sank. It was entirely a new chapter the class had studied that morning, and she didn't know one thing about it. She could almost see the big red zero mark on her paper, for she knew she could not hope to guess all the answers correctly.

Then she had a bright thought. "I know what. I'll pray

and ask the Lord to help me to guess right." She did pray, but when the test was given she had no more idea what to write than before she prayed. It was a true/false test, and the children exchanged their papers and graded them as the teacher read the correct answers. Gloria's face got red when Harry (the boy she had thought was so dumb) got a perfect grade, and she had to receive a zero on the paper he handed back to her. "What's the matter, Gloria? You're slipping, aren't you?"

That evening when Mother came to kiss her good-night, Gloria turned her tear-stained face from the wall and said, "Mother, doesn't God answer prayer anymore?"

"Surely He does, Gloria. What makes you think He doesn't?" "Well, I prayed today that He would help me to make at least a passing grade in our surprise geography test, and He didn't. I didn't get even one answer right."

"That's very strange," Mother replied. "You had studied, of course, and you always make such good grades. I don't understand it."

"I guess I ought to tell you I hadn't studied," Gloria said slowly. "I read my library book while the rest were studying. And Miss Miller gave us a surprise test."

"Oh," said Mother, "I see now why God didn't answer your prayer. If He had, He would have been helping you in something that was wrong. You would have thought you didn't have to study any more unless you wanted to. God will help you on your tests if you do your part in studying. But I'm sure He will not help you make good grades if you use your study time to read library books."

"I'm sorry, Mother," Gloria said. "I won't do it again. I'll be honest and study when I'm supposed to, and then I know God will help me to make good grades."

"That's right. He will," Mother whispered as she kissed her daughter goodnight.

D. B. M.

"The Beautiful Way"

And Then...?

It is a simple question that children ask, but it motivates serious meditation!

It is not unusual for parents to be bombarded with all kinds of questions from their children. The questions that these little ones pose aren't always easy to answer. Often the wise father or smart and well-spoken mother can be put in a rather awkward position by these questions.

For example, I read a little story somewhere that went something like this:

A boy who was not yet six years old had thought a great deal about his future. Because he could not deal with his many questions about the future on his own, he came to his mother for support.

"Mom, what will happen when I turn six?"—"You should know—that is when you will start school."—"And then?"—"Then you will go on to study for a prestigious, high-paying profession."—"And then?"—"Then you will be happily married like mom and dad are."—"And then?"—"Then a wonderful life will follow. You will earn much money and will become an esteemed, rich man."—"And then?"

The mother soon realized that she could not continue to engage in a lengthy conversation with the inquisitive youngster. She was uncomfortable with allowing the youngster to continue with his questions. But she still had one answer for him, "You will simply become old like all people do."—Shortly after this the little intellectual said, "And what then, Mom?"

Yes, what then?—The question is serious indeed, even if it comes from a young boy.

Many a father or mother might experience the same uncomfortable situation as this mother did. They are very knowledgeable about the things of this present time and can give detailed explanations about any number of topics. They know how to "master" their own life, how to manage their finances, and they can even educate others in these matters. Some may even have earned a number of awards and diplomas. But, can they really give an answer to the question posed by the young boy mentioned earlier? They have all kinds of goals and plans for themselves and for their children, and are committed to reach-

ing those goals. We must accept the fact that the hearts of many people, including those of the children of God, are burdened by cares of this world. Jesus gave earnest warnings against these cares. Similar to that young mother, many strive for a good education, for a comfortable life, for a large inheritance, for an enjoyable retirement and so on.—And then?

Jesus showed what great harm the cares of this world can bring to our spiritual life (Matthew 13:22). As a result we can completely fall into an earthly mindset and fail to prepare for eternity (read Luke 21:34). In Psalm 73 the writer describes the life of luxury of certain people and finally in verse 19 he states: "Oh, how they are brought to desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors."—How terrible! What then?

Let's also think about those people who once were committed to serving God, but either lost that dedication, or perhaps were never truly committed in the first place. Some are very eager. Their hands, their feet, their lips are actively involved, but where is their heart? The true spiritual, burning, God-consecrated heart?! Many are unaware of how little of the "good measure" they possess, and how much is indeed lacking within them. But they make no effort to gain it. They let year after year pass and when the end suddenly approaches, what then?

Now I think of the people who bury their "talent" and have lived with false hopes that they will be able to somehow reconcile their debt with the Lord. How surprisingly sad was the "reckoning" for the servant in Luke 19. We read that he was not given another opportunity to do what he had previously failed to accomplish. Dear reader, if the same happens to you, what then?

There are others that are indifferent in regards to their shortcomings and deliberate transgressions. They may have yielded to the temptation to stir up trouble, to give offence to others, or to cause strife. Very often people are unforgiving and allow unresolved issues to remain in their lives. What if God asks them to give account for this? Then what? We could apply this to other areas as

well. We are not dealing with a simple question from a child, but a serious question with eternal consequences.

We all must take a position in regard to this question. Therefore we would like to make this a personal soul-searching question, with which we come before God and ask with David: “Search me, o God” (Psalm 139). There is no guarantee that we will have a long life, as the mother believed in regard to her son. However, it is certain that sooner or later we will be at the end of our life. For some of us this may be sudden and unexpected. Then what?—Then the righteous will go into the joy of their Lord. The faithful will obtain the promised crown of life. The redeemed will receive their heavenly inheritance and will be with God forever. Will you be there?

Friedrich Krebs

Tax-free

A tax collector came to a poor minister one day in order to assess the value of his property and to determine the amount of his taxes. “I am a rich man,” said the minister.

The official quickly sharpened his pencil and asked intently, “Well, what do you own?” “I am the possessor of a Savior who earned everlasting life for me and who has prepared a place for me in the Eternal City.”

“What else?” “I have a brave, pious wife, and Solomon says, ‘Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies!’”

“What else?” “Healthy and obedient children.”

“What else?” “A merry heart which enables me to pass through life joyfully.”

“What else?” “That is all,” replied the minister.

The official closed his book, arose, took his hat and said, “You are indeed a rich man, sir, but your property is not subject to taxation.”



Faithful to the End

(An account from the 19th century)

A missionary preached the gospel for many years in a large village of Madagascar. His work was not done in vain as many came to confess their belief in Jesus.

A farmer and his wife, who ran a profitable farm, belonged to those who regularly came to listen to God's Word. They only had one son and his name was Ramanabona. The little boy was a bright child. His parents often took him to the gathering of the Christians and let him attend the mission school, where he learned to read and write from the stories of the Bible. After a while, Ramanabona gained a special place among the village youth. One day he would tell the boys what he had read in the Bible, and the next time he would tell them one of his country's fairy tales. But the longer he attended the mission school, the less the fairy tales held his interest. He learned to love the Bible above all else as "the Book from the Savior."

For many years, the Gospel was preached unchallenged on the island. Then a new queen came to power who was hostile to the teachings of Christ. She feared that these teachings would make her subjects incapable and powerless to defend themselves against European trespassers. She wanted to protect the independence of her country and people at any cost. In the beginning, she did not dare to act openly against Christianity for fear that the European powers would then stand against her, so she attempted to work against the spreading of the Christian faith through more discreet measures. A Madagascar citizen who was a Christian could no longer hold a government position. Christians now also had to pay extraordinarily high taxes.

Even Ramanabona's parents were required to pay so many taxes that their business was no longer able to provide for their needs. When the father complained to an official, he replied, "Let go of your Christian faith and

things will go better for you."

The parents considered their situation carefully. They saw the time coming where they would have to sell what little they had. Then they and their son would be forced into slavery. This they could not bear. Should Ramanabona, for whom they had worked and saved, live his life as a slave? No. This could not happen. They spoke with him about it, but Ramanabona declared:

"I would rather be a slave and follow Jesus than to be a free man and become unfaithful to Him."

The parents felt their son was still too young to be able to realize the weight of his words, and in the hope their example would change his mind, they began to avoid the Christian gatherings more and more.

The queen gradually let her hatred for Christianity come more to light. Preaching the Gospel was now forbidden, and violations were strictly punished. In order to not arouse suspicion on themselves, most parents forbade their children to associate with Ramanabona, who testified of his Savior just as enthusiastically as before.

After public sermons were no longer allowed to take place, the Christians of the area gathered secretly in a place in the woods far from Ramanabona's home, because no one in his village attended anymore. All in his village, even Ramanabona's parents, had given up their faith in Christ. This depressed the young man so much that it was no longer possible for him to do his field work with interest. As the mission school had closed and no one was there with whom he could speak of what he was going through, he more frequently sought time alone for prayer. Several times he stayed away from his house for hours until his parents finally noticed.

"You were gone a long time again yesterday, Ramanabona," said his mother to him one morning. "Go to the

field right now, and see to it that you become a capable farmer. Renounce the Christian faith! Can you not see that there is no point in rebelling against the command of the queen?"

The young man stared silently in front of him. Until now, he had always been submissive to his parents. Must he turn against them from now on? When his mother impatiently repeated her words, he replied, "Today—I must go to the woods, Mother."—"And why is that? Perhaps to gather with the Christians?" the mother angrily cried.

His father, who had heard the last words, joined the conversation and said, "Be sensible, boy. Do like us. Give up Christianity! Otherwise it will cost you your life."

Ramanabona looked his father directly in the eyes. "Is it right, Father, to deny the Savior for earthly gain? Did He not die for you and for me?"

The man looked shamefacedly at the ground for a moment. Then he threw his head back and said defiantly, "If the God of the Christians is the Lord of all lords, why does He allow so much unrighteousness and not show His power?"

"He will show it one day and be the Victor over all," replied Ramanabona. "Father, I can do nothing else. Even if I should have to die for Him, I will remain faithful to the Lord Jesus."

The father had nothing more to say after his son's courageous avowal. Even his mother held her peace, and Ramanabona was able to carry out his plan without further opposition. After a rather lengthy hike through the woods and brush, he arrived at his destination. At a clearing in the woods, he found many gathered under a wooden shelter. The minister was familiar to him. He was a native of the area who had taught him at the mission school. He spoke of the sin of Peter who had denied his Lord, but also of the goodness and compassion of Jesus, who restored His disciples and called them into His ministry once more. He closed with the words, "God expects faithfulness from us. Therefore I want to remind you of the words of our Lord Jesus: 'Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven'" (Matthew 10:32).

Following this, everyone stood up to pray. At that moment, a loud shout rang out. Warriors pushed out of the brush and surrounded those gathered. Several moved to flee, but the minister held them back: "Do not run! Remember: Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow."

The leader of the royal troop declared them all to be under arrest. They were bound two by two and led painfully on a path through the woods. Ramanabona, who

was bound to an elderly man, supported him as well as he could. The march went to the capitol city. It was a long journey. When they finally arrived in Tananarivo, many of the captives were near collapsing.

This time the queen led the judicial trial herself. Several captives, discouraged from the trials of the previous days and the fear of what would come, renounced their faith. As the youngest, Ramanabona had to appear last before the ruler. He had often wished to see his queen or even be accepted as one of her bodyguards, but now he had to resist the words, "Recant your Christian faith! It will not help you in your hour of danger. Become a true citizen of Madagascar!" But his Lord was more beloved to him than his queen, and after a short pause he spoke clearly:

"I am a true citizen of Madagascar, your Majesty. And because I am so, I cannot deny the One to Whom I swore loyalty, as much as I would like to obey you."

"The Christian faith takes our men's power to resist our enemies. Do you not think of the freedom of your people?"

"I do think of this, your Majesty, for I love my people," the youth boldly replied. "But only Jesus Christ can truly make free. And faith in Him makes one strong and faithful until death."

"Do you think you can teach me, you, a young boy?" the queen countered sharply. "Here I wanted to save you, but you do not wish to be saved"—she motioned with her hand. Ramanabona moved back in the row of captives with his head held high.

The next day, the four most pious captives were burnt alive, to the horror of the others. Ramanabona, who had to watch in the first row, heard their prayer: "Lord, give us strength to remain faithful to you!" Piercing cries of pain rose from out of the flames for a moment, followed by a deep quiet.

Days afterward, Ramanabona had to appear in the palace again. The queen greeted him with the words, "If you recant the God of the Christians, in time I will make you a leading official of this city. I like you. Remember and consider: It is your queen who is speaking with you and making this offer."

"But the King of all kings prohibits this of me," came the firm answer. "And He who gave His life for me has the first claim on me." "Away with the dreamer!" the queen angrily called. Her patience had worn thin. The courageous young witness was roughly bound and pushed out. His fate had been sealed.

Of the forty remaining captives, twenty recanted their faith. The others were led across a burning hot path on

the peak of a high mountain with a river at its base.

“Look down!” the leader called to the group. “I have the command to push you all down there. But even now you have the opportunity to save your lives. You can yet renounce your faith. It will not be the queen’s fault but your own if your life is not spared.”

Two of the twenty declared their intention of giving up Christ. Of the remaining, one was tied to a rope which was attached to a protruding crag. He swung freely over the great abyss. “Deny your God!” the leader called.—“No!” rang the answer.

The rope was cut and the body was released into the depths. The others suffered the same fate one after the other. Ramanabona was the last in line. The leader’s eyes rested on the youth for a long time before he directed his oft-repeated words, “Recant your God!”

“No,” Ramanabona firmly said. “But I have one request: grant me one minute to pray.”

His request was granted. Ramanabona knelt down on the side of the mountain. He thanked God out loud that he was considered worthy to die for his beloved Lord. Then he prayed for those close to him. His last words were for the queen and his executioner. With the call, “Help me, Lord!” he allowed himself to be bound to the fatal rope.

While the rope was being attached to the crag, the leader stood with face turned and held his eyes and ears firmly closed until it was all over. He had experienced many awful scenes and still needed to face many more, but the memory of this moment never let him go. The death of this young Christian remained indelibly in his mind and was the reason he submitted to the Savior twenty years later.

The account of Ramanabona’s heroism and faithfulness spread quickly. Only eternity will be able to reveal the number of those led to Jesus through his example and testimony.

HE LOOKED TO THE REWARD

Where Will We Spend Eternity?

Fear of Reality

It is well known that the French “Sun King” Louis XIV, in the last years of his life, forbade anyone in the royal household from mentioning even one word about dying in his presence. The word “death” was not to be used in his presence. Did he have such a fear about death?

What Is Our Response?

Whether it suits us or not, since the day we were born, we have been heading towards our death. Our “being in the world” is a “being until death”! Now however, we must take care not to think that death is the end of our life. Even though our physical life comes to an end, death

is not a period, but a colon. In other words: with death, our actual life, eternal life first begins.

Fleeing from death is fleeing from eternity. It is the basic knowledge of all people, that one day every person’s life will be placed on the scale of the final Judge. Therefore, it is good if we, while there is still time, examine our life under God’s light. For no person will change after death.

Where will we spend eternity? That is determined by our attitude towards Jesus. He once said: “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37). But we must, no, we are permitted, to come to Him! You do the same, while you still have the opportunity!

An Eternal Home

“For we know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens” (2 Corinthians 5:1).

Again and again one hears news reports of terrible catastrophes: floods, wars, and the like. How many people are homeless and in misery! It is such a gift to have our own comfortable home!

Yet how much more important is a home which offers us security both now and in eternity. There must be a place for us to settle when our earthly tent is destroyed and our end has come. All too often people act as though they do not need to concern themselves with that, as if their end is far away. They feel secure in their four walls and don't want anything to change. They also avoid any reminder that they cannot remain this way forever.

Only when a dear family member or friend dies do their thoughts turn to the afterlife and what comes after death. As long as we are blinded by the seen and by money, property, honor, and power, there is no need to concern ourselves with the unseen—or so we think. But what happens when the carpet is pulled out from under our feet? Then everything becomes uncertain. What a horrible feeling!

With respect to the hereafter, the Apostle Paul wrote that he “heard inexpressible words, which [are] not lawful for a man to utter” (2 Corinthians 12:4). Dr. Karl Heim said: “Our stay in this visible world is like a short, stormy crossing of the sea. We make our way to the shore of an unknown land. What cannot be seen yet will appear later, when we reach the other shore. That is eternity.”

If we already have a connection with the heavenly world through Jesus Christ, then we are already its citizens. Crossing to the other shore is simply going home, to our heavenly home. From the Scriptures we know that God will be all in all. The eternal land is filled with glory, light, purity, and health . . . and is infinite.

When our earthly focus diminishes, the sufferings of this present time that rob us of our courage and strength become lighter. They become easier to bear. Out of his rich experience, the Apostle Paul explains that they are not worthy of the glory that will be revealed to us.

We're on the way home,
why do you look so weary?
We're on the way home
to the God who loves us dearly.
O sweet return home!
That word strikes a chord.
We're on the way home
to Salem, to the Lord!

Recently I read: “We could be more familiar with our eternal home if we would move our point of reference closer to it. The unseen, eternal world with Christ is more real than the visible current world!” Should we not be more attuned to the world we are approaching, the one that awaits us? There we will find our loved ones, those who have followed Jesus. Let us not postpone this eternally important decision! Then we can have the joyful assurance that our loved ones have arrived in their eternal home and will not be separated from us forever.

We are not apart, -
they're just on the other side!
They walked softly into dawn,
where the King's glory shone.
Though the pain of loss does smart,
we drew closer to His heart!

He is the Lord of the dead and the living. Our departed loved ones are closer to Him than we are. This is both our consolation and our incentive to seek what is above, where Christ is. We can find rest despite any loss. He is the Lord and He is eternal! Nothing and no one can snatch us from His hand if we place ourselves completely in His care. Is it not true that death profits us? Our earthly tent is destroyed, so that we can move into our heavenly home.

First, we were sought after and found by God's kindness, drawn by His Spirit and forgiven of our sins by the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, finally—after we have finished the fight—we receive the crown of eternal life. That is what the Bible teaches, that is the triumph of the faithful. What a glorious future!

C. L.

Experiences with God

Let me tell you how I came to Christ. The short answer is through many prayers and the intercession of Jesus.

I did not grow up in a Christian home. For some 55 years I did not know anything of Christ or about church. However, I married a Christian, Ursula. For 23 years I went to church in Edmonton sporadically, not understanding the German language or the message. During the service I thought of other things and aspects of my life.

When I was 55, some time after my mother died, I attended more often. Eventually, a man named Adolf Scheming gently persuaded me that it was not an imposition to make use of the translation service. Then I really began to hear the Word! I thank all those who translated for me.

Eventually, I read the Bible at home and discussed it some with my wife. With Ursula and her sister Ingrid, we stayed up late discussing Christianity. I was stunned by Ingrid's emotions when she declared through many tears that Jesus loved her, and had saved her. I never forgot that. I started bringing my Bible to church. Some weeks later I even had the courage to take it out of my pocket and follow along, marking texts with a pencil. I had been worried someone would see me with a Bible (!) and reading it. Around this time I also began reading Christian books that Ursula helped me select.

Between church, Bible, and books, a whole new world opened for me. I was being pulled into the Light. I was most uncertain of where this was all going, but deep down I knew I had to make a commitment at some point.

Getting to this point was the result of much prayer on the part of Ursula and our sister, Ingrid, and the kindness of some brothers and sisters in the church who took a genuine interest in me.

Then I hit a crisis. Satan, the old serpent, put severe

doubt in my mind. I wavered terribly between saying "Yes," and then angrily, "No." This was folly and didn't fit with the science I thought I knew. I flipped back and forth for weeks and nearly turned my back on it all several times. It was a stressful time until Jesus intervened.

We were sitting on the balcony. In the middle of a sermon, it seemed the church and everyone around me disappeared. From a distance I saw myself in a plain brown landscape of deep sticky mud—the miry bog. I felt I was standing up to my waist in the mud, unable to move or extract myself due to the immense pressure. As far as I could see scattered throughout the distance, there were others in a similar predicament. Nothing else was visible.

Suddenly, right in front of me I saw Jesus standing on a golden path suspended in the air at eye level. This path was just wide enough for two feet. It stretched from horizon to horizon. Jesus stood before me, clothed in a purple robe. He bent slightly and extended His right hand down to me. I was struck by the size and power of His hand.

I took His Hand. Jesus lifted me up and out of my sinful life, a life separated from God, and set me on the narrow path following Him. He gave me a new life with Him. Then I came back to the sermon.

Here I experienced repentance, forgiveness, and salvation.

There was more. Several weeks later before the morning service, Pastor John Reimer called for a laptop computer to be donated to our mission in Bolivia. He repeated this request during the evening service.

Suddenly, a Voice spoke to me in my mind. "What about your computer?" I know my inner voice. This clearly was not my voice. A voice of such beauty I had never heard before or since—soft, clear, sharp, and crisp. That night I sent Pastor John an email. It was the beginning of a life of obedience to the voice of God. Baptism followed



on October 23, 2011.

These past four years have been the most joy-filled times of my life, learning to walk the way of Christ, and especially because I can walk this path with Ursula. Our Holy Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit have blessed me greatly. I have many reasons to be thankful and much to learn.

I would like to emphasize two points:

1. Prayer. Do not give up praying. Ever. Ursula prayed for me for 25 years before I got saved and was baptized.

“Love is patient and kind. . . . Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends” (1 Corinthians 13 ESV).

2. What I saw seemed to be Jesus’ perspective of my life—my world of the earthly kingdom, stripped down to its essence. I saw only four objects: myself, the miry bog of sin in my life, separated from God, Jesus, our Lord, and the narrow path of His way.

There was and is no other road to travel or anywhere to go in that thick, sticky mud. Jesus came to seek and save the lost. I was lost. The choice was clear: Stay in sin, unable to move and unable to save myself, or repent and

take Jesus’ hand and be lifted up and out, forgiven and transformed in my heart to follow Him.

Much later I discovered Psalm 40:1-3, 9 (ESV): “I waited patiently for the LORD; and He inclined to me and heard my cry. He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the LORD. I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation; behold, I have not restrained my lips, as you know, O LORD.”

So, that is my story and it hasn’t stopped since or before!—As I look back over my life, I remember many instances where things happened to me that should have been fatal but weren’t. I could tell you of downright bizarre experiences. I did not understand it then but now it is clear that the Lord was always working in my life. He has a plan.

“Thank you Lord Jesus, I am so grateful!

Your servant, Sam.”

What will you do with Jesus? May God bless your decision!

Sam Barry
Edmonton, AB

Prayer Topics 2016

This year our prayer week is guided by the theme, “Spiritual Protection.” Every person who is concerned about eternal salvation will consistently pray for spiritual protection. God’s people are truly vulnerable in this current age. We need to acknowledge how urgently we all need spiritual protection.

MONDAY, JANUARY 4TH, 2016

I. “Preserve me, O God” (Psalm 16:1).

Spiritual Protection in our Personal Lives

1. Without spiritual protection we cannot have true victory, nor can we hold steadfastly to our faith (Ezekiel 11:2; Matthew 9:4; Luke 9:46).
2. We need to face the fact that we live in an alluring world full of temptation (2 John 7; Colossians 2:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:10).
3. In Jesus’ farewell address to His disciples, He impressed upon their hearts the special warning, “Watch!” (Mark 13:37).

Let us pray:

- a) For the preservation of a pure attitude and pure thoughts (Romans 8:27).
- b) To be and remain blameless before God and man (Job 27:5–6; Proverbs 13:6).
- c) For the spiritual protection of our heart and conscience (Proverbs 4:23; Philippians 4:7; Matthew 5:8).

TUESDAY, JANUARY 5TH, 2016

II. *Spiritual Protection of our Homes and Families*

“The family is the source of blessing or curse among the nations” (Martin Luther) – e.g. Lot – Genesis 13:11–13; the jailer in Philippi – Acts 16:34.

1. We are aware of the great threat to families of faith around the world, and of the great need to protect them. In Psalm 127:1 and Matthew 18:19 we are shown a helpful remedy.
2. Approximately 50% of marriages and families are broken or entirely disintegrated—one result of alienating God.
3. The condition of a country is dependent on the condition of its families. To an even greater degree this affects the prosperity and adversity within a church congregation.

Let us pray:

- a) That God would grant us mothers like Hannah and fathers as strong in faith as Joshua (1 Samuel 1:10–12; Joshua 24:14–15). A family that prays together, stays together.
- b) For new fire from heaven on the altars in Zion (1 Kings 18:37–39).
- c) For a genuine, Spirit-led revival in every family (Acts 16:14–15).

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 6TH, 2016

III. Spiritual Protection and Preservation of the Local Church

1. The formation of a local church is always dependent on at least three factors: the clear preaching of God's Word, the refreshing work of the Holy Spirit, and members who are truly redeemed.
2. Every flock needs a shepherd called by God. This is referenced in 1 Timothy 3 and in Titus 1:5–9.
3. Just as in every family, each congregation will have certain hardships, worries, and sufferings that arise. Every church congregation is therefore constantly dependent on God's grace, help, and protection.

Let us pray:

- a) For protection from the loss of our pure "first love" (Revelation 2:2–4).
- b) For protection from intrinsic self-deceit, from compromising sympathies, and from destructive associations with others (Revelation 2:20–23).
- c) For protection from a dangerous apathy resulting in eventual spiritual death. How tragic to speak of the soul's belonging, when in reality you are spiritually destitute (Revelation 3:1ff).
- d) For protection from dangerous delusion, from fraudulent half-heartedness and carelessness, from a skewed self-evaluation, and from the loss of a clear, spiritual vision (Revelation 3:14–18).

THURSDAY, JANUARY 7TH, 2016

IV. God's Gracious Protection of His Work all Over the World

Praise God, His work can be found on many continents of the world. It is the fruit of Jesus' death, as He said Himself in John 12:24. We also want to consider what Matthew 18:6–7 teaches us.

1. Sadly, this work is threatened by increased animosity (2 Thessalonians 2:3–4).
2. Above all else, it is grievous to note the partially decaying unity of God's precious work (Ephesians 4:1–3).
3. We should consider that the afore-mentioned brokenness or decay can be traced, for the most part, to the church's willingness to be more open to the world's influence.

4. Furthermore, there is a painful scattering and persecution of God's people in many parts of the world.

Let us pray:

- a) That the Lord would protect His beloved work from outward hindrances and from inward decay (Matthew 10:16; Psalm 62:2–3).
- b) That God would protect His people from the deceptive spirit and ways of the world, because He says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy" (1 Peter 1:16).
- c) That the Lord would tangibly burden us with the seriousness of our own personal salvation (Philippians 2:12).

FRIDAY, JANUARY 8TH, 2016

V. Requirements for Spiritual Protection

You cannot rely on spiritual protection when you make decisions in your ways and actions that are contrary to the Word and will of God. But God has helped many people through turbulent times when, like Abraham, they "walk before [Him] and are blameless" (Genesis 17:1).

1. Jesus says, "Remain in Me and I in you" (John 15:4–5; Acts 4:12).
2. A further condition is walking on God-pleasing paths of righteousness (Matthew 3:15; 5:20).
3. Absolutely crucial is our standing firm in the faith and in obedience (John 7:38; Matthew 8:10).

Let us pray:

- a) That the critically important working of God in the church is not hindered by our actions.
- b) That God would make us willing to clear away any obstructions or encumbrances.
- c) About our personal faith and the wellbeing of our soul (3 John 2).
- d) That whoever is willing and ready to protect himself spiritually will also be protected by the Lord (Matthew 5:8).

Keep your personal experiences of spiritual protection in mind and be willing to share them with others.

We Are Just Pilgrims

*Now we are just pilgrims and strangers below;
We're trav'ling to heaven, as homewards we go.
We're following Jesus, the One we adore,
Our heart does not pine for this world anymore.*

*We're going to heaven. It will not be long
Until we are leaving this world with a song.
We'll see the Creator of sun, moon, and stars
And Jesus, Who saved us, what glory is ours!*

*O, I cannot fathom the wonders we'll see:
The bright streets of gold, and the clear crystal sea.
Yes, we'll be at home there, forever to stay;
No battles, temptations, or sin will be there.*

*Then we will see clearly what now is unclear,
We don't understand all that's going on here.
From fears and anxieties we will be free,
At home up in glory forever we'll be.*