



Foundation of Faith



**The Lord
is Risen!**

THE RECONCILING BLOOD
THE GREATEST LOVE OF ALL
THE SAVIOR'S HOLY SUBMISSION
JESUS LIVES!

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

What is the significance of the cross?

When we started our work in Mexico, we often found our attention drawn to an unusual sight: wooden crosses dotting the roadside, singly or in groups. We soon learned that each marked the place where someone had died in a collision.

Once, when I was discussing the cross's meaning with a Mexican man, he confided, "I've told my son to put up a cross as soon as I die so that the devil can't harm me. Then I'll be safe!"

This particular line of thought might have been an exception, but it is common for people to wear a cross around their neck or have one hanging in their car.

Nonetheless, despite all this display, there are many who have no real knowledge or understanding of the cross of Christ. What truly matters is not the cross itself but rather the One who bled and died on that cross, the Son of God. He was crucified at Calvary for our sins. He is our Lord and Savior. He is what matters.

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, was willing to die for us. He sacrificed Himself as the Lamb of God, atoning for our sins and taking away our punishment so that we might have grace, peace, and eternal life.

It is not the wooden cross but rather our faith in the death and glorious resurrection of our Savior that offers us a way back to God and hope and assurance of eternal life.

J. A. von Poseck writes (translated from German):

*On the Lamb my soul is resting,
What His love, no tongue can say;
All my sins, so great, so many,
In His blood are washed away.*

*Conscience now no more condemns me,
For His own most precious blood
Once for all has washed and cleansed me—
Cleansed me in the eyes of God.*

H. D. Nimz

The Scarred Hand

William Dixon was not a believer. If there were a God, which he actually doubted, he could not forgive Him for taking away his wife after just two years of marriage. His young son died as well. Dixon was a lonely, bitter man.

Ten years after the death of Marie Dixon, something disturbing happened in the small village of Brackenthwaite. A small house belonging to an old widow, Greta Winslow, began burning to the ground. While the old woman was just barely rescued from the blaze, several onlookers heard the terrified voice of a child. It was Greta's little orphaned grandson, Richard Winslow, who was all but forgotten amidst the turmoil until the flames woke him and forced him to the window, screaming for help.

Although the concern for the child was real, it appeared to be too late to do anything, as the staircase had already collapsed. Suddenly, William Dixon stormed towards the burning structure, climbed up an eavestrough and grabbed the trembling child from the burning house. Holding the boy in his right arm, he began his descent, his left arm holding onto the downspout. Amidst loud cheers, the pair reached the ground just as the smoking walls caved in.

Richard was unharmed, but Dixon's hand that had held onto the smoldering eavestrough was badly burned, leaving a deep, visible scar.

Poor Greta could not recover from the frightening episode and died a short time later. The question now

arose, what would become of Richard?

Jacob Lovatt, a prominent man in the community, was interested in adopting the boy, as he and his wife had lost their own child. Surprisingly though, William Dixon also requested to adopt Richard. It was a difficult decision to make, and consequently a meeting with the officials was announced.

Mr. Haywood said, "It is commendable that both Mr. Lovatt and Mr. Dixon wish to adopt the boy. But what would be best for the child? Dixon, who saved his life, should actually have first say in the matter. However, Mr. Lovatt has a wife, and that would probably be most beneficial for the boy."

Then Pastor Lipton countered, "An unbelieving, heathen man would not be an appropriate father, whereas Lovatt and his wife, a Christian couple, would teach the child the correct way. Dixon saved the child's body, but it would be sad for the boy's future if he had saved him from a burning building only to lead him into eternal ruin."

"Let us hear the opinion of the two men," suggested Mr. Haywood.

Lovatt answered, "Dear Sirs, my wife and I lost a little son not long ago, and we believe this boy is meant to fill the empty spot. We would do our best to train him up in the fear of God. Additionally, such a young child needs a mother."

Quietly, Dixon answered, "I can only say one thing," after which he removed the bandaging from his

left hand and held up his burned limb.

Complete silence filled the room, and here and there, eyes filled with tears. The sight of that hand created an atmosphere demanding a sense of justice. Dixon had earned a claim to that boy as a result of his own suffering and pain. And consequently, the majority of the votes decided that Dixon deserved to have the child.

A new chapter of life began for William Dixon. Richard didn't lack maternal nurturing, since William lavished him with great tenderness.

Richard was a bright young boy and soon got used to his new father. He adored him with all the eagerness of his loving little heart. When he would recall his daddy rescuing him from the blaze, his eyes would well up with tears; each time he would take notice of the hand so scarred because of him.

One summer, Dixon took his son to an art exhibition in their town. The boy enjoyed the stories his father told him

about the various art pieces. The painting that intrigued the young boy the most was the one of Jesus admonishing Thomas. The words written beneath were, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands" (John 20:27).

Richard read those words and asked his father to tell him that story.

"No, not that one!"

"But why not?"

"Because I don't believe in that story."

"Oh, that doesn't matter," said Richard. "You don't believe in the stories about giants and dwarfs, but I like them. Please, tell me the story of this painting. Please, Daddy." And so Dixon finally told the story, and it left quite an impression on Richard.

"That's the story of you and me, Daddy!" he said. "When the Lovatts wanted to have me, you showed them your hand. When Thomas saw the scarred hand of Jesus, he might have felt he belonged to Him."

"Perhaps," answered Dixon.

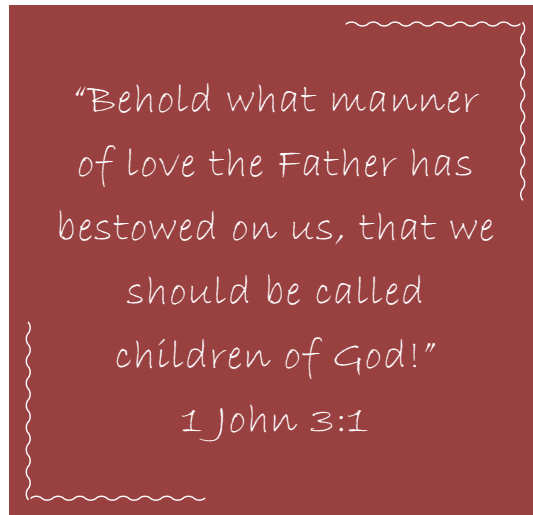
"Jesus looks kind of sad," continued Richard. "I think He was sad because Thomas didn't believe right

away. That was terrible of him, right? Because He died for him."

Dixon did not answer, and so the little one continued, "It would have been terrible of me if I had disagreed when they told me about you and the fire and I would have said I don't believe you really did that, right, Daddy?"

"I don't like to think about Him, my son."

"But later on, Thomas loved Jesus, just like I love you. And when I see your scarred hand, Daddy, I love you even more."



Soon afterward, tired little Richard fell asleep. But Dixon's night was far from peaceful. He could not get the picture out of his mind, that gentle, saddened face looking down at him from the painting on the wall of that exhibition. He dreamed about the day he and Lovatt had negotiated for the custody of Richard. In his dream, he showed his hand, but the boy turned his face away from him. A bitter feeling of injustice arose in him.

Then he saw Jesus, reaching His wounded hands toward him, saying the words, "Reach your finger here, and look at My hands."

Dixon did not immediately submit to this godly impression. However, his love for Richard had softened his heart, and the seed no longer fell on stony ground. He was an honest man and could no longer deny that the same argument he had used to gain Richard would someday be used against him in judgment, as long as he denied those nail-scarred hands that were wounded for him. When he thought about the child's heartfelt thankfulness for saving him, Dixon had to admit he was a poor role model in comparison.

As time went by, Dixon's heart became like that of a child. In reading the Bible, it became clear to him; just as Richard belonged to him, he actually belonged to the Savior, Who was wounded for his transgressions.

And finally, he gave his entire being, body, soul, and spirit, into the hands that were once nail-scarred for him. ■



The Reconciling Blood

The great Nile flows calmly and peacefully through Egypt. It is nighttime. The bright moon sends its silver light across the land and reflects itself in the waters of the river. Everything is quiet. The hustle and bustle of the day has ended. People and livestock rest from their toil and work.

Suddenly, a mysterious figure with a sword in its hand moves like the wind through the land of Goshen. It is the angel of death sent by God to kill all firstborn in Egypt because Pharaoh did not let the Israelites go.

Approaching a hut, he inspects the sides and tops of the doorframes, finds blood on them, and passes by. One life in this house was spared. Through the window, we see a family gathered. Before them lies the Passover lamb.

Now the angel stops in front of a big, grand building. It's the king's palace. Here too, the angel inspects the doorframes, but he doesn't find any traces of blood. The icy hand of death touches the firstborn, and Pharaoh's son lies dead on his bed. Why? Because the doorframes of this house were not painted with blood.

The angel continues along throughout Egypt. No house is spared by him. Everywhere, he leaves someone dead behind. The firstborn of humans and livestock are killed if blood is not seen.

A terrible cry echoes throughout Egypt. The people are in great mourning. Fear and horror have seized them. Pharaoh now gives the command to let Israel go. God's judgment has taken place; God's people are freed.

It is the blood, and nothing else, through which we become reconciled to God. If the children of Israel had relied on their prayers, good works, or morally upright lifestyle, but had neglected to paint the door-

posts with blood, then the angel of death would have entered their houses and killed all their firstborn, as he did with the Egyptians.

The Passover in Egypt means more than the deliverance of the children of Israel. It was a wonderful foreshadowing of the deliverance of all nations. It was a foreshadowing of the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, Who came to spill His blood on Golgotha for the sins of the world, in order to reconcile men to God.

When John the Baptist saw Jesus, he cried out, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). The Lamb of God, Jesus Christ, gave Himself as a sacrifice. He was nailed onto a tree on Golgotha and spilled His precious blood there for us. What the prophet Isaiah spoke in chapter 53, verse 5 was fulfilled here: "But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Yes, through His blood on the cross, Christ reconciled us to God.

No soul can be saved by good works or through tears, fasting, and prayer. None of these are wrong, but we cannot buy ourselves salvation through them, nor become reconciled to God. Only the blood of Christ can do this.

If all sins of all the people of the world passed by in front of you, you would be horrified. What would you answer God if you had to account for your own sins before Him? What money could you pay for them?

You would fall silent before the holy God. There is no other way to reconciliation than the blood of His Son. But you can come to the cross with all your sins, no matter how big or small they are. Throw your own



self-righteousness away. As far as the east is from the west, so far will God remove your sins from you. In place of sadness, He will give you joy; in place of a restless conscience, He will give you peace and rest. May the blood of Christ be our only righteousness.

If you earnestly strive to lead a life of victory but are challenged by the enemy of our souls and accused or plagued with doubts, be courageous. The blood of Jesus, His sacrificial death, will break all chains and shackles that bind you. His blood will remove all mountains of impossibilities, all fear and doubt, and give you power to overcome Satan and his whole army. Jesus' blood will give you victory, rest, and peace for your soul. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 12:11).

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Emmanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

E'er since by faith I saw the stream
Thy flowing wounds supply,
Redeeming love has been my theme,
And shall be till I die.

Dear dying Lamb, Thy precious blood
Shall never lose its power,
Till all the ransomed church of God
Be saved, to sin no more.

■
E. P.

As You stood before Pilate

*As You stood before Pilate, wrongfully tried,
I was part of the crowd that gathered there.
I was part of the mob that scornfully cried,
"Crucify Him!" as the shouts filled the air.
And without cause, I condemned you to death;
There is blood on my hands, like all the rest.*

*As You carried Your cross towards Calvary,
The load of my sin helped to weigh it down.
As the nails pierced Your kind hands most cruelly,
I was watching with those that stood around.
To the mocking You heard as we stood by,
I gave my consent, as we watched You die.*

*Can such blatant scorn ever be forgiven?
Can You love me, who took part in Your death?
Who cared not for You, each hour I was living,
Who caused You such pain with every breath?
And are not these sins, deserving the rod,
Too great for even the patience of God?*

*With shame and remorse, to the old rugged cross,
I dare to come and confess all my sins.
I look up to You, who suffered such loss;
My prayer is fervent. How shall I begin?
All guilt and sin against You to this day,
Through Your saving grace, forgive me, I pray!*

Hans Georg Noack

The Blood of Christ, the Lamb of God

We find clear and direct statements in the Bible about the great power of the blood of Christ. However, many people do not wish to know about this “blood religion,” as they call it. It goes against their delicate feelings. However, God’s Word tells us “without shedding of blood there is no remission [of sins]” (Hebrews 9:22).

Blood is a common theme throughout the entire Bible. God already put great importance on blood in the Old Testament. In Leviticus 17:11, we read, “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.” The souls of men can, therefore, only be reconciled with God through blood—the blood of Christ.

Only the sprinkling of blood saved the firstborns of Israel from the sword of the angel of death. Only with blood did a high priest risk going into the Holy of Holies to appear before God. Without it, he would have been a candidate for death. The blood of thousands of animal sacrifices had to flow in streams for the sins of Israel and teach them that God is a holy God and that sin is most abominable in His eyes. The blood of these many animal sacrifices spoke earnestly to the people.

How much more is this true of the blood of Christ, the only Son of God! The sacrifices and the shedding of blood in the Old Testament were just foreshadowings of Christ as the innocent Lamb of God and of the spilling of His blood on the cross for the sins of the world.

At the beginning of His earthly ministry, when John the Baptist saw Him, he said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1:29). Only through His blood can the world be reconciled to God and can the sins of men be blotted out. Out of the mouth of the Lord Himself, we hear these words, “For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). There are many other passages referring to the power of the blood of Christ and showing us that only through His blood can we be saved from our sins.

In Revelation 5:9, we read, “You are worthy to take the scroll, and to open its seals; for You were slain, and have redeemed us to God by Your blood out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation.” An elder asked John who the countless multitude of nations and languages was, and who stood before the Lamb and His throne in white robes with palm branches in their hands. The elder answered, “These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14). Yes, through the precious blood of the Lamb, this great multitude from all nations was bought by God as His possession. This blood will be the theme of the saved for all eternity. There, they will exalt and sing praises to Him who shed His blood for them. Praise be to God for the precious blood of Jesus!

Dear Soul, here in the blood of Christ is your salvation. Even though your sins may be scarlet, they shall become white as snow if you come with a believing heart to the cross in true sorrow and repentance. Only the blood can save you; only the blood can reconcile your soul with God and free you from sin. Do not allow the devil to offer you some other way. There is only one cure: the precious blood of Christ as a lamb without blemish and spot (see 1 Peter 1:19). Come with your guilt and sins to Him, the Lamb of God. The blood of the Son of God flowed for your sins as well. Come, confess your sins and guilt and accept His blood in faith, and your great burden of sin will be lifted from your heart. The peace of God will enter in.

Child of God, if you have already experienced the power of God in your heart, you can have victory through faith in this blood. Do not allow yourself to be oppressed by the devil, but look to Jesus, the author and finisher of your faith. He, who spilled His blood for you, will always give you victory. “And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death” (Revelation 12:11). ■

G. T.

The Savior's Holy Submission

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14).

The death of our Savior is considered a failure by many scholars of our time. Others have the opinion that Jesus died against His will. But we can see from the Old and New Testaments that the death of Christ was God's eternal plan.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Jesus stated what would happen at the end of His life. He knew He must die because He came for the salvation of all people. His heart burned with a passionate love for lost souls. The unfathomable love the Father had for a lost world paved the way of salvation out of horrible, eternal condemnation. For this reason, Father and Son were willing to bring the greatest sacrifice.

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son” (John 3:16). He gave Himself by allowing His Son to die out of love. Jesus walked this path because He wanted to save mankind. Yes, He wanted to save humanity because of His love. In John 10:18, He says, “No one takes [My life] from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father.”

During His entire time on earth, He contemplated the necessity of His death. He understood His assignment, His mission. To fulfill His God-ordained mission, there was only one way: the pathway to death. And Jesus chose this path. The way He lived, thought, and spoke showed complete acceptance of His assigned, overwhelming responsibility. He was filled with holy, willing obedience to fulfill His mission. He completely submitted His will because He saw the future victory. His entire life had one, distinct goal—submission to the Father and the cross. Even as a twelve-year-old boy, we observe His total obedience as He lovingly confronts His parents with these serious thoughts: “Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” (Luke 2:49). Time and time again, this “must” appears in His conversation:

“The Son of Man must suffer many things” (Luke 9:22); “even so must the Son of Man be lifted up” (John 3:14).

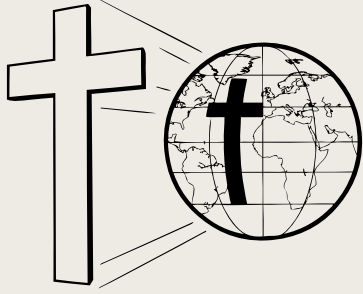
After the resurrection, after His work was complete, we hear this holy, godly prerequisite once more: “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” (Luke 24:26). Yes, it was difficult for the grieving disciples to grasp. With sorrow-filled hearts, they told the stranger on the way to Emmaus how their hearts were burdened. Yes, He had to. Yes, He chose to walk this road to save the world. What a worthy example of a sense of duty! He saw His responsibility as a holy, high calling of submission to the Father and of love for all people. There was no other way. He had to do it. He couldn't remain in heaven's glory and watch immortal souls, His creation, heading to eternal damnation. “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2).

Dear Reader, are you living in this holy, heartfelt submission? Does it lead you in all the spiritual responsibilities of life? Does your heart remind you, when something different or distracting is expected of you, “Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?” His was a wonderful, willing submission!

The time will come when each of us is compelled to face God. “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ” (2 Corinthians 5:10). “For if you live according to the flesh you will die” (Romans 8:13).

But choose to live in holy, godly submission. Paul lived in this holy submission his entire life as a Christian, allowing him to say, “Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:8). The Savior, the Father in heaven, and the Holy Spirit will not force you, but hopefully you can say with all your heart, “Oh, Your saving Love! There's nothing else for me. I must serve You, You alone!” ■

R. Girke



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Jesus on the Cross

Imagine if we had been there and seen Jesus on the cross—to which group of people would we belong?—Many saw it and yet did not have the right view. Do we understand what the Lord desires to say to us from the cross today?

Palm Sunday reminds us of Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem. It was a day of jubilation and joy for the disciples and the many pilgrims since they believed Jesus would establish an earthly kingdom. Yet for Jesus, it was a day that would lead Him straight to the cross. With quiet contemplation, He entered the city, knowing what He would encounter in the next few days. While the council was secretly meeting to plan Jesus' execution, there were still a few events that brought Him joy during this week. In the background of all these events stood the cross, and Jesus could see it.

He saw the noisy, yet blind people around Him. He thought of the traitor among His disciples. He saw the stubbornness and rejection of the city of Jerusalem and was deeply saddened by it all. Nevertheless, He was able to walk courageously towards Good Friday and the cross, without guilt or self-accusation. His past was pure, a path full of light, a work almost completed, and a fulfilled life. What a truly royal state! With His innocence, His purity of soul, He approached Gethsemane, the cross, and death.

Good Friday draws the Christian community to the cross. Therefore, we want to approach the cross of Jesus and reverently remain there in spirit for a while. The main character of Good Friday is Jesus, because it is all about the crucified Christ.

In Luke 23:47-49, Luke tells us about three groups of people who stood under the cross of Jesus or in the immediate vicinity. And everyone either saw or watched.

First, there was the centurion and those who were with him. When he "saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous Man!'" (verse 47).

Then there was a crowd who came together to view the sight. "Seeing what had been done, [they] beat their breasts and returned" (verse 48).

The third group was Jesus' acquaintances and the women who had followed Him from Galilee. They "stood at a distance, watching these things" (verse 49). But they saw more than everyone else.

The Roman centurion gained some valuable knowledge. The people watched and yet saw nothing, just as Jesus had said in Matthew 13:13 and 15, "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull." The followers of Jesus saw everything, and their hearts were filled with sadness.

As we live in the Spirit, it is crucial to have a spirit-filled attitude and clear insight and discernment.

In the seven words Jesus uttered on the cross, we can see the essence of His character. His mind and heart become profoundly visible. Let's consider



His intercessory request: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). Even amidst His agonizing suffering, He was interceding for the people as a priest in the Old Testament did.

On the cross, Jesus reveals to us His way of thinking, His benevolence, His innocence, His vicarious suffering, and His deep, incredible love. If Jesus’ exemplary, holy behavior during His suffering and death fails to impact our hearts, then we are lacking true spiritual insight. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 1:18, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” Thank God!

The “Holy Week” compels us to draw our attention to Jesus, His last days of activity in Jerusalem, His agony in prayer in Gethsemane, His trial and ill-treatment in Jerusalem, His humiliating walk to Golgotha, His crucifixion, His last words, and His horrible, innocent death. There is so much to think about and see. However, it is very important that we see correctly, understand rightly, and have the nec-

essary insight. Or do we want to be like those who look but don’t see, who beat against their chests and guiltily walk away? Maybe we have not recognized or really seen what happened on the cross because we paid too much attention to the cross and not enough to Him Who was crucified?

What Jesus shows, says, and teaches us from the cross is truly phenomenal. It is as if He wants to tell us more through His death than through His life. We want to allow the Holy Spirit to lead us to the cross and to help us recognize anew what we have never seen or have possibly lost. May the picture of His suffering grip our souls again and place before us the wonderful fact that He died for us. A quiet contemplation will profit each of us. Friedrich von Bodelschwingh once said, “The cross is the great document of the eternal mercy and love of God. . . . Opposition towards God ends when one earnestly stands beneath the cross of Christ.”

May the Lord deeply touch your heart as you also stand beneath the Cross! ■

Resurrection

*With Christ we have died, died to folly and sin;
With Christ we are risen, we are born again.
We are free from the bondage of sin and of shame;
Our garments are white, we have a new name,
As gladly we walk in the light.*

*We celebrate Easter with joy and with hymns,
For Jesus is risen and we live with Him!
With new life in Christ we proclaim the story;
As pilgrims on earth we live to His glory,
For Christ is our Master and King.*

*We're patient and know that all mortals must die,
Our citizenship is in heaven on high.
Cleansed vessels the Master can use for His cause,
We strive to live justly for Jesus because
We're eager to glorify Him.*

*When we leave this body, ascending to heaven,
We'll share in the glory of Christ, Who is risen.
From the darkness of earth to eternal light,
We inherit His splendor, for that is our right.
Oh that will be glory indeed.*

Rita Henschel

He is not here, He is risen!

It is Sunday morning, the third day after the crucifixion. It is impossible to express the anguish and hopelessness felt by the disciples. Their Master, Friend, and Counselor, their comfort and future, hopelessly sealed in a grave! Could they allow themselves to be publicly seen again, after Jesus was crucified? Had not all of His teaching disintegrated into nothing? And yet there seemed to be a mysterious veil over what had happened and a mysterious yearning in their hearts.

Two women went to the tomb of their Lord with embalming spices. But there was a huge stone at the entrance of the grave, barring the way. The stone was even sealed! That way, no one would dare to enter the grave. The scribes and Pharisees suddenly remembered that Jesus had said He would rise again after three days. Though they did not believe this, to quiet their misgivings, they arranged for soldiers to stand watch outside the tomb, preventing Jesus' disciples from coming and stealing the body in order to proclaim His resurrection.

Meanwhile, the women had reached the sepulcher. What did they see? The heavy stone had been rolled away. They went inside and, instead of the corpse of Jesus, they saw a young man who said, "He is risen! He is not here" (Mark 16:6).

We are all familiar with the Easter story. It still fills us with awe every time we read it. If it were just a unique story, one among many, it would not have much significance. Yet what is the significance of the Easter story?

Without the glorious resurrection of our Lord and Savior, the Christian faith would be the greatest folly one could think of. All preachers of the gospel would be false witnesses. Would the apostles have been able to proclaim the resurrection of Jesus with such zeal and enthusiasm in Jerusalem if it had not happened? Thousands of people were gathered together at Pentecost in Jerusalem when Peter preached and said, “This Jesus, God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses” (Acts 2:32).

His message was so effective, together with the witness of the other disciples, that 3000 people repented. Many of them were probably among those who cried out, “Crucify Him!” Praise God, the message of the resurrection depicts reality and not an illusion. As Christians, we have a message, the proclamation of a living Savior, Who has conquered death and the tomb.

Without this glorious resurrection, our faith would be in vain. How many have put their steadfast faith in the living, risen Savior and have lived and died in this faith! As they were dying, how many have yet whispered the name of Jesus, the name of the One Who meant so much to them in life and is now above all in death—that name of Jesus. Were they deceived? Was their faith in vain?

In Jerusalem, there was a man who sat begging at the gate of the

temple. He was crippled from birth and carried there daily. Peter and James came, and Peter took him by the hand and told him in the name of Jesus to rise up and walk. The man got up, leaped, and walked. The people were astonished. Peter explained it was not they who had made the man well but Jesus, whom the Jews had put to death and God had resurrected from the dead. They could vouch for that. Was faith in the risen Savior in vain? Could such a miracle have happened if the apostles or the lame man had put their trust in an illusion?

What the risen Lord could do there in Jerusalem, He can surely still do today. May God help us to trust Him more. Let us pray and ask God to stretch forth His hand and allow signs and miracles to happen in the name of the risen Lord.

Without the resurrection of Christ, there is no salvation from sin. A prisoner in jail may have a wonderful dream in which he finds himself free again. But that is not reality; it is only a dream. Would that not be the same for Christians if Christ had not risen from the dead? The resurrection of Jesus Christ assures us of real freedom from sin. Sin is unrighteousness. Christ is risen so that we can live in righteousness, free from the unrighteousness of sin.

Is salvation an illusion? It seems to be for some. They speak of repentance and salvation, but their lives do not show it since they do not have victory over sin. These people have not yet experienced the power of the resurrection in their hearts. Yet there are many honest witnesses of Christ today

who can say in truth that they have been saved from sin and no longer live in it. Their witness is verified by their lives and their actions. Such lives of God’s children are another wonderful verification of the resurrection story.

Without the resurrection of Christ, all the dead in Christ would be lost. Think of the first martyr, Stephen, who prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). Paul says he has “a desire to be with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:23). Think of it. Despite their faith, these and other faithful witnesses would experience eternal night and hopelessness, if Christ had not risen. All hope for life eternal would be in vain. In the words of the apostle, we would be “of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:19) if Christ were not risen. But now Christ is risen from the dead.

Is it an illusion when a dying person says goodbye to her loved ones, with joy and a heavenly glow on her face, knowing she will be with Christ from now on, for Whom she lived and Whom she loves? Definitely not! Therefore, we joyfully proclaim with the apostle Paul, “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Surely, we too can live in the glorious hope that God “will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (Philippians 3:21). Dear Reader, the glorious Easter message is for you. Christ is risen indeed! ■

A. Borbe

Jesus Lives!

| *“Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19).*

In this passage, Jesus is speaking about resurrection and immortality. Because Jesus lives, we as Christians and children of God can go through life as new creations. Since we believe in the Son of God and have received forgiveness of sins through Him, we have found the secret of abundant life. Since we are His disciples and keep His commandments, we now live in His fullness and look forward to His return. Living in the fullness of Christ, we are also willing to take up His cross to help others carry their cross. If we try to avoid the cross, our faith will lose its lustrous power. Christianity has forfeited its glow because today’s generation chooses the easiest way, the path of least resistance.

People who worked for the glory of God and did their utmost to share the gospel with others were different. We read about David Livingstone, who had been working in Africa for years and had suffered many hardships working in the jungles. One day, he was standing on the shoreline bidding farewell to his friends who were returning to his homeland. He could have gone with them, and his friends begged him to accompany them, but he chose to stay behind and continue his work on this dark continent. He stood for a long

time on the gangplank watching the ship slowly disappear over the horizon. His friends on the ship asked themselves, “Why does he insist on burying himself in such a God-forsaken place?” There is only one answer to this question: “Jesus Christ lived powerfully and brightly in the heart of David Livingstone.” This dauntless missionary never lost his joy, enthusiasm, and devotedness to fulfill his God-given mission of obedience.

Why do so many people turn away from Jesus, even though many see Him as the only hope in our hopeless world? Who or what can bridge the gap and the hatred between nations other than Christ, His Spirit of love, and His forgiveness? Christ holds in His hand the answers to all injustices, if only people would accept His plan. If only they would not persistently push Him aside and purposely overlook Him, He could be “the way, the truth and the life” for all nations.

If we want to have joy and fullness of life, we need His Spirit to live in us; we need to embrace the attitude of Christ in all areas of life. Christ is alive in this world. But that is not enough; He needs to be alive in our hearts. We need to experience His resurrection. If He can fill our hearts entirely with His

Spirit, then we will have power as Christians to take a stand against evil in this world.

Paul questioned, “Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24). The answer was “Jesus Christ our Lord!” Souls who are lost in sin and transgressions can only be awakened by Christ to a spiritual life. Today, many repentant people who have much weighing on their conscience urgently need to search for such a resurrection. Sinners search for forgiveness and a new life. Those in despair search for an open door. Those who have failed are looking for a new beginning. Those who are emotionally disturbed are looking for peace lacking in their lives. Anchorless souls, disappointed and lost, are searching for a stronghold on which they can build a new life.

When Christ’s life becomes our life, then we have found a Partner who will walk with us every hour of the day. He will be our Leader on a path He has already traveled. His life in us gives us enough strength to carry life’s burdens, and abundant power to have victory over all temptations. With Him, we will find a new hope, and our faith will cling to His promises, giving us a guarantee to have His fullness in life, death, and eternity.



Christ lives today. He is alive here on earth in the hearts and lives of His people. He lives in His church and in her work. He is also alive in Heaven and still promises today, “Where I am, there My servant will be also” (John 12:26).

Those who have Jesus living in them will become like Him. A few years ago during a gathering in an English castle, a famous actor was asked to perform something. An elderly pastor asked him to read Psalm 23. The actor agreed with the condition that the pastor would also read the same passage after him. With some hesitation, the pastor agreed.

The performer read the Psalm very impressively. He had a wonderful voice and utilized it to the best of his ability. The audience listened breathlessly until he was finished, and then broke out with

an energetic applause.

Then the pastor arose and recited the Psalm. His voice wasn’t as powerful, and his expression wasn’t without error. When he finished, there was no applause, but no eye remained dry. After a lengthy lull, the performer arose, laid his hand on the pastor’s shoulder, and spoke with a trembling voice, “I reached your eyes and ears, my friends. He reached your hearts. The difference lies in the reality that I know the twenty-third Psalm, but he knows the Shepherd.”

Do you know this loving Shepherd, the One who left ninety-nine sheep to search for one lost lamb? Have you experienced the resurrection of life and hope through Jesus?

After breakfast on the last day of Robert Bruce’s life, he suddenly said to his daughter, “Stop, Daugh-

ter, my Master is calling me.” He asked for his Bible, but he noticed his eyesight was failing him. Therefore, he asked his daughter, “Open the Bible to Romans 8 and place my finger on verse 39.” In this position, he called out, “God be with you, my children. I had breakfast with you, but supper I will have with the Lord Jesus.” In the same moment, he collapsed dead in his armchair.

Jesus said, “Because I live, you will live also.” And in Romans 8:39 we read, “Nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

This is the joyous message, not only at Easter, but for every day of our lives. Look up to the Master and live!

D. Oldham

Young— and Pleasing to God (Part 2)

What was he?

... in the eyes of Jesus? John was a very young man whom Jesus loved. He had called John to follow Him. Jesus took John along several times and revealed Himself to him in a special way. John was among the disciples who was very close to Jesus. He was the one especially loved by Jesus; perhaps it was because he was the youngest of them, or maybe because his personality needed the most love. Maybe he needed much encouragement due to the many battles and challenges he faced.

John was someone Jesus trusted. This is explicitly revealed at the cross. When John and Jesus' mother stood at the foot of the cross, Jesus commanded John to take care of His mother. According to the eyewitnesses, John fulfilled this assignment faithfully.

John was someone Jesus could mold and change. His youthful eagerness later turned him into an earnest, determined witness. An important step was receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. After that, God was able to mold John even more. In his later letters, written in his advanced age, John points to pure truth without weakening it or sweeping it under the rug. He teaches in all meekness and love. The Lord was able to form John into a meek and humble man.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke mention John about twenty times. However, in the gospel of John, written in Ephesus under his guidance in about 100 A.D., he was not mentioned a single time by name. What humility! He allowed himself to be put in the background to give his Lord and Savior all the glory. He knew he was only a tool, yet the Lord had something significant planned for him.

In John 21:20-23, Jesus had already mentioned that John would die a different death than the other disci-

ples and would live longer on earth than they would. To this day, Jesus still works in special ways through the Gospel according to John, where he describes his experiences with God not mentioned by the other gospel writers; his determined yet loving letters; the book of Revelation showing us glimpses of God's thoughts about His Church, revealing eternity and how it has been an encouragement for believers in the past. John was a pillar in the church (Galatians 2:9).

Who, what, and how are you?

Young—but called by Jesus into His discipleship. Faulty—but moldable by the Lord. Unsure—but a firm part of God's plan.

Through John, we see it is not always easy as a young person to follow God. But when we long to be close to God, it is possible. He loves us and knows us. He knows our feelings and thoughts. We shouldn't pull away from Him, but should rather seek comfort and peace in Him. We should search for the presence of the Lord, Who will mold us. The Lord wants to reveal Himself to us and wants to use us in His kingdom. Even if we don't see our purpose yet, the Lord is already preparing it for us, and will show it to us. Let's stay loyal to Him, even if we receive push-back from others. Think of young John. How did he feel at the foot of the cross? There, his beloved Master hung and left him behind. He must have had so many questions: Were his relatives, the priests, and the Pharisees right? Had he followed an illusion? How reassuring that on the third day he saw the empty grave and believed in the risen Savior! Maybe you are standing at the foot of the cross and realize some of your plans, wishes, thoughts, and hopes are hanging on the cross. Is this the reward of your dedication to Christ? Is this



the reward for sacrificing everything to follow Jesus? No! Have faith and go to the grave and believe in the risen One. He has something better planned for you. He lives for you, too, and wants to guide you. He has a good and perfect plan for you. Do not let yourself be held up in following Him, remembering that God wants to use you as a pillar, a support, and a helper

in His Church. I wish you the determination, loyalty, love, meekness, humility, and faith of young John. May the Lord grant this to you. I wish you God's blessing. ■

Markus Schmelzle
Pforzheim, Germany

Verse of the Month

“The Lord is risen indeed” (Luke 24:34).

Jesus lives! This message is not just relevant at Easter. No, it reaches out to you and me daily in our everyday lives. If you believe and accept this message, you will personally experience that Jesus lives everyday.

When you need to make a difficult decision . . .

He will help you make that decision!

*When you fail in something and don't know
how to continue . . .*

With Him you will find counsel and help!

When you are tired and powerless . . .

He gives power to the weak!

When you are burdened by sin . . .

He will make you free!

When you feel lonely . . .

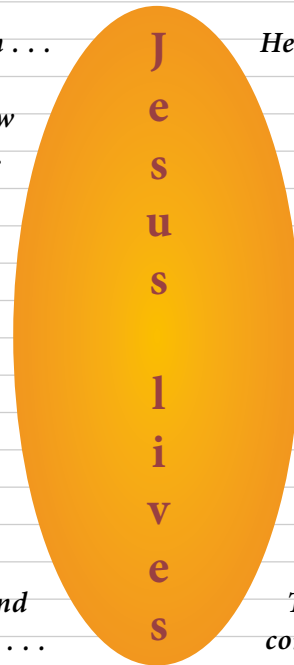
*He will listen and seek communion with
you!*

*When you feel misunderstood by your
friends . . .*

*He understands you better than any
friend!*

*When you have experienced help and
blessings . . .*

*Thank Him, since all help and blessings
come from Him!*



You can expand this list of personal concerns and know that in every situation, Jesus lives! He is aware of all your circumstances and will carry you through.

The Greatest Love of All

With a sweeping pace, a sled rushed through a forest in Poland. It was a harsh winter. The snow was piled high, and the wolves were hungry. The nobleman, seated beside his wife, was aware of the significance of hungry wolves. The servant, their driver, was also well aware. As such, the sled flew through the woods as quickly as the horses could manage.

But it wasn't long before they heard howling in the distance, and this howling drew ever closer. Soon, the sled was surrounded by a number of hungry wolves. The nobleman was well armed. He aimed at the hungry animals, and his aim was good. However, even if he succeeded in killing the odd one, many would remain. He expected they would all die, including the horses.

Then the faithful servant handed the reins to his master with the words, "Sir, look after your loved ones, and please take good care of my children!" Grasping his saber in his clenched fist, he jumped into the wolf pack. The nobleman cracked the whip, and the team thundered ahead like the wind. Soon, the village lights greeted them. He and his wife were safe.

With deep sorrow, he thought of his faithful servant. He gathered a number of courageous men and rushed into the forest to search for him. They did not encounter any wolves but only the tragic remains of the loyal man.

That is great love, but it is not the greatest love.

A raging fire broke out in a village on the Lüneburg Heath. The homes were built with straw-thatched roofs. Once the roof caught fire, there was little hope of dousing the flames. The occupants scrambled out of the flames with whatever they were able to gather. When all those rescued were counted, two little girls were missing. Soon, screams were heard from within the burning home. Some strong, brave men prepared to enter the house to save the children from the horrible flames. Just then, the flaming roof crashed to the ground, surrounding the home like a sea of fire. Even these strong men retreated in fear.

Is not one willing to help in this dire situation? But look, the loyal maid of the house races through the heat and flames. Is it possible she will succeed in saving the children? The straw turns to charcoal. They break through the rubble to find the faithful maid lying on the floor, burned to death, holding the two charred, deceased children in her arms.

That is great love. But it is not the greatest love.

Up in the Scottish highlands, an eagle stole a mother's youngest child. It was harvest time, and she had placed the infant in a bed of soft hay. The eagle carried the child to its nest, clearly visible on a high cliff.

But who would dare to make the climb to rescue the child? A skilled hunter made the attempt. He became dizzy halfway up, so he climbed back down. Then the mother scaled the cliff to the eagle's nest. She grabbed the child, wrapped it in her apron, and descended safely amid the cheers and prayers of those watching.

That is also great love. But it is not the greatest love.

It was festival time in Jerusalem. It was Easter. A procession of people headed to Calvary. There was one Man who captured their focus. Blood streamed from Him as He carried a heavy cross. Surrounded by soldiers, He was mocked by the crowd as He was led to Calvary to suffer disgraceful death by crucifixion. He was no sinner. He was the holy Son of God. He suffered and died but not for His employer, not for the children of His employer, not for His own child. He died for His enemies, His adversaries. He suffered the excruciating death of crucifixion in order to save them from eternal condemnation.

That is the greatest Love of all!

Love, that gave itself for me
On the cross of Calvary.
Love, that forged for me a place
Up in heaven, saved by grace.
Love—to You, my all I give,
Evermore for Jesus live!

The Punishment Was On Him

When I was a little boy, I once behaved badly and acted stubbornly at the breakfast table. Finally, my father said to me, "Paul, go outside right now and stand by the door for ten minutes; I will tell you when you can come back in."

I got up, forcibly held back the tears, and without looking at my father, went to the door, which was immediately closed behind me. The minutes were very long, and now my tears fell profusely because I was ashamed and regretted my disobedience. Half of my allotted time of punishment wasn't even over when the door suddenly and quietly opened, and my little brother's head appeared. He flung his arms around my neck and said, "Paul, go inside. I want to stand outside for you." And before I could say a word, he had pushed me in and closed the door.

I stood there now, blushing, with my eyes lowered, greatly embarrassed, because I didn't dare go to the

table. But my father came up to me, took me by the hand, kissed me, led me to the table, and sat me down on my chair. He had forgiven me, I knew, for little Benny's sake. I could see that. In his eyes, it was as if I had borne the punishment myself. But, oh, how much I wished to see my brother back in his place!

When the ten minutes were up, he was finally called inside. And now Father pulled both of us towards him and took Benny on one knee and me on the other. Then he hugged us tightly and held us with equal love to his heart, me, the naughty boy, and Benny, the loving brother. And there, at the heart of my father, I was allowed to sob everything out in remorse, love, and gratitude.

This is what Jesus did for us on the cross. He took our punishment so that we could have eternal life through Him. "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5). ■



Memorial Stones

After wandering in the desert forty years, Israel finally approached the boundary to the Promised Land. Anticipation was high among the people of Israel since they had been told by Joshua of the bountiful land that awaited them. When the moment of truth arrived and the priests stepped into the river, we read that the waters which came down from upstream stood still, and rose in a heap very far away. Then the priests and all Israel crossed over on dry ground. Upon crossing, Joshua gave the twelve elders a very peculiar directive: “each one of you take up a stone on his shoulder . . . that this may be a sign among you” (Joshua 4:5-6).

In the course of our lives, we collect all sorts of stuff. We want to ask ourselves, what am I collecting, not of this material world but rather of the eternal? And when it comes to our children or the next generation as a whole, are we focusing our efforts just on material goods or are we thinking of things which have eternal value? Jesus also spoke of amassing treasures in Matthew 6:19: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal.” As parents, we strive to create the best environment for our children to grow up in and give our children as many opportunities as possible. But we need to reflect and ask ourselves: In ten or twenty years will our children reflect more favorably

on a sports trophy and an achievement award or will they be grateful for the values we instilled in them? Will we be able to say to our children, “Look, we have gathered these ‘memorial stones’ for your inheritance. Here are just a few stones to be found in your memorial altar.”


**Memorial Stone #1:
Jesus Christ, the Cornerstone.**

In Isaiah 28:16 we read, “See, I lay a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation.” We know this verse is a prophesy unto Jesus Christ because the Apostle Paul writes in Ephesians 2:20, “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone.” Is Jesus Christ the central tenet of our faith? Are we building our spiritual home on Jesus Christ, on what Jesus taught us? Do our children know that the words and teachings of Jesus provide the foundation for our actions? Let us all strive to have families that are founded on the rock. Only if our families are founded on the rock of Jesus Christ will they be protected from eventual ruin. Have we put down this capstone, this cornerstone in our personal lives? And do our children know that all subsequent stones have been placed on this firm foundation?

**Memorial Stone #2:
The Presence of God.**

In Genesis 28, Jacob had a special encounter with God and marked it as a pillar at Bethel. We ask ourselves: Can we vouch to having this stone in our collection? Times





and places where we were so close to God and His presence that we could say just like Jacob, “Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it. . . . How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God” (Genesis 28:16-17). This special stone which Jacob set up as a pillar resulted in him having an even more intimate relationship with God, and certainly strengthened his faith in Him. Are not these experiences the ones that result in the greatest blessings for us as well? Often we may be dealing with fear or anxiety, and when we experience God’s presence in such a profound way, these experiences remain unforgettable. And at some time in the future, we can share these experiences with our family, with our children.

Memorial Stone #3: Large and costly stones of God’s temple.

When King Solomon began building the temple, we read in 1 Kings 5:17, “And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, and hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple.” This is a verse steeped in New Testament symbolism. The temple referred to in the New Testament is the church of God and so the builder of this temple, Jesus Christ, is urging us to quarry large, costly, and hewn stones for the temple. Symbolically, these stones collectively refer to the doctrine of the church of God. As mature and older Christians, how are we faring in the pursuit of quarrying and hewing these precious stones and then showcasing them to the next generation? Are

we possibly making due with “run of the mill” fieldstones which can be found littered anywhere, or are we in possession of imitation or engineered gemstones? A few of these truths include a) the infallibility of the Bible b) the doctrine of personal redemption and salvation c) the doctrine of holy living d) the governance model of the church of God—that of the Holy Spirit. What we need to be reminded of is that the extraction, mining, and carving of these large and costly stones is heavy work. Are we willing to do the heavy lifting required and to take heed of what Paul told the young Timothy, “[These things] I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth” (1 Timothy 3:15). Let us cherish and celebrate the truths of the church of God and add them to our collection.

Memorial Stone #4: Ebenezer—the Stone of God’s Providence.

In our spiritual journey, there will be events which take on major significance. Occasionally, we will relive these events and will take comfort in God’s past grace and guidance. The people of Israel also had these experiences. As a result of their previous disobedience to God, the Philistines had invaded Israel and had taken the Ark of the Covenant with them—that precious symbol of the presence of God. After Israel repented of their sin, God was again gracious and gave them victory over the Philistines. We then read in 1 Samuel

7:12, “Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen, and called its name Ebenezer, saying, “Thus the Lord has helped us.” By the grace of God, we too can place these stones as our memorial of God’s help and providence. It may be our own day of salvation, it may be the experience of sanctification, a divine healing, or a special answer to prayer. Then, during difficult times, we may need to remember and share with the next generation the crucial turning points from our past to help us through the present. Memorial stones such as these can help us remember God’s past victories and gain confidence and strength for the present.

Returning to Joshua 4, we know the elders collected these stones as a memorial for the next generation. Their story was retold in subsequent years just as God had commanded it. But each generation needs to build their own memorials. As much as we in our current generation desire that our next generation will follow in our footsteps of faith, the decision ultimately rests with each generation. So for those of the current generation, let us renew our commitment and refocus our efforts to provide the next generation with an inheritance money cannot buy. And for those of the next generation who are to receive this inheritance, I pray that they would cherish these memorial stones and truly make them their own as well. ■

Harold Schulz
Hamilton, Ontario



On the Road of Salvation

Part 15

Drive Out the Inhabitants

Ron Taron

God's Plan of Salvation in the History of Israel

“Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan, across from Jericho, saying, ‘Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: “When you have crossed the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, destroy all their engraved stones, destroy all their molded images, and demolish all their high places; you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it, for I have given you the land to possess. . . . But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them”’” (Numbers 33:50-56).

God had promised to give the land of Canaan to Israel as their inheritance. When they took possession of it, they were to exact God’s judgment on the godless inhabitants of the land and dispossess them. “Drive out all the inhabitants!” The Lord warned them not to make peace or to tolerate the Canaanites among them. What did Israel do? At the very first city, Achan gazed at the cursed things: “I coveted them and took them” (Joshua 7:21).

This was followed by the covenant with the Gibeonites. Israel’s leaders did not ask God for direction and were deceived by them. Then, in Judges 1 we read, “But the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; so the Jebusites dwell with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem to this day” (v.21). “However, Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shean and its villages, or Taanach and its villages, or the inhabitants of Dor and its villag-

es, or the inhabitants of Ibleam and its villages, or the inhabitants of Megiddo and its villages” (v.27). “Nor did Ephraim drive out the Canaanites who dwelt in Gezer; so the Canaanites dwelt in Gezer among them” (v.29). “Nor did Zebulun drive out the inhabitants of Kitron or the inhabitants of Nahalol; so the Canaanites dwelt among them, and were put under tribute” (v.30). And thus it continues on verse for verse.

What was the result? “They did not destroy the peoples, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them, but they mingled with the Gentiles and learned their works; they served their idols, which became a snare to them. They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to demons, and shed innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters, whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan; and the land was polluted with blood. Thus they were defiled by their own works, and played the harlot by their own deeds. Therefore the wrath of the LORD was kindled against His people, so that He abhorred His own inheritance” (Psalm 106:34-40). How was it possible for Israel to fall so far? They didn’t obey God and drive out the inhabitants of the land!

Drive Out the “Inhabitants” in Your Life.

In 1 Corinthians 10, the apostle Paul writes about Israel’s fall. In verse 11 he says, “Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.” God had warned Israel that if they would not drive out the inhabitants of the land, they would become a great spiritual hindrance to them.

What are these “inhabitants of the land” we are to deal with? Firstly, they could be things from our old



sinful life that we find difficult to give up. They powerfully clamor for their place in our life along with our service of God. They may be old habits which seem normal to us, but which grieve God's Spirit and prevent Him from working in and through us. They could be literature and media, movies, music, godless friends, and many other things. But they aren't so bad or wrong . . . we know them so well. Yet they stifle our spiritual growth. Somehow, we are unable to progress spiritually, and the often-unknown reason is that there are a few of these "inhabitants of the land" left in our life.

It may be that your "inhabitants of the land" are things out of your old life you haven't yet cleaned up. When you repented and turned to God, you knew they would need to be dealt with, but repeatedly you've hesitated. It was so easy to push them off for tomorrow. And slowly, these "inhabitants" have become a normal part of your life again. You wonder why you've lost your joy in serving God, why your prayer life and Bible study have lessened, but you're able to convince yourself that these "inhabitants" couldn't have anything to do with it.

Dear Friend, listen to me. If you tolerate such "inhabitants of the land" in your life, serving God will become burdensome to you. Yes, you truly want to serve God and not be lost, but these "inhabitants" have a stronghold in your heart. The result is lost joy and love for God, for worship services, and for fellowship with God's people. Slowly, it all becomes burdensome and tiring. Drive out the "inhabitants"!

The "inhabitants of the land" are compromises with the world, with sin, with disobedience. God had clearly and directly commanded Israel to drive out the inhabitants. He had even expressly warned them about the consequences of not doing so. Yet, somehow the

Israelites came to see advantages in allowing the land's previous inhabitants to remain among them. "We are stronger than they are. We can handle them. We'll use them to our advantage . . . and then put them back in their place. It's a win-win situation for us. They serve us, make our lives comfortable, and even pay taxes. Our life as God's people is wonderful, even with them among us!" But was that really true?

If the Inhabitants Are Not Driven Out

God had been very clear about the consequences if Israel would not drive out the inhabitants of the land: "But if you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then it shall be that those whom you let remain shall be irritants in your eyes and thorns in your sides, and they shall harass you in the land where you dwell. Moreover it shall be that I will do to you as I thought to do to them" (Numbers 33:55-56). Not only would the inhabitants be irritants and thorns for Israel, but God threatened them with the same judgment He had reserved for their enemies. They were to be banished from before God's face. How earnestly God's Word speaks to us!

Dear Soul, are you tolerating some of these "inhabitants of the land" in your life, ones you just don't want to drive out? Are there things or habits, compromises or wrongs you have not yet made right? Take them seriously. Radically drive them out and clean them up or you will not be an overcomer. You will not have an inheritance in Canaan, and you will not gain the prize. With His heart full of compassion and love, God is warning you. In the face of your eternal destiny He is begging and commanding you: "Drive out the inhabitants of the land!" ■

Letting Go— in Theory and Practice

| “[Cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares for you”
(1 Peter 5:7).

I have often spoken about worries, dedicating several sermons to the topic and encouraging many people to fully surrender, to give their worries, cares, and troubles to God. In the course of these discussions, I have found the following illustration by Spurgeon to be particularly illuminating.

One day, he came upon a group of boys playing in a courtyard, trying to throw a small ball into an attic window. As he watched, they missed the window over and over—but they never gave up. They kept on trying until the ball finally hit its mark, going through the window and into the attic. Only then did they move on.

This shows us what to do with our worries: throw them to God. The act of throwing involves letting go; but if our worries nonetheless fall back down into our hearts, we can throw them towards God, again and again, until we win a full victory and our hearts can rest in God, at peace, with a child-like faith.

Before the experience occurred that I am sharing here, I frequently had the opportunity to put this truth to the test. However, our heavenly Father knows our hearts, and He knows how important it is for us to regularly experience biblical truths for ourselves. “Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, and whose hope is the Lord” (Jeremiah 17:7). When disaster strikes, how strong is our faith really? What goes through our minds, and what happens to our feelings? Are we truly quiet and confident in God? (Isaiah 30:15). Can we calm the storm of our fears and emotions through the grace of faith in God?

Rarely have I had to practice this so intensively as on September 9, 2019. On this warm, sunny day, we were touring Lisbon, Portugal, on a double-decker bus. I was sitting on the upper deck, camera in hand, taking in the city’s many impressive sights. With only

my camera bag, car keys, smartphone, and wallet on me, I had gotten into the habit of checking once in a while to see if I still had all my things with me. When the bus made a stop at lunchtime, I got off. As it pulled away and around a corner, I made my routine check to make sure everything was still there. Everything was—except my wallet. Apart from some cash, it also contained my ID, drivers license, credit cards, and the like. I went through all my pockets and even the camera bag, but it was not there. I asked my wife if maybe I had given her the wallet, but she did not have it either. At this point, I had already been calling out to God for some time. Losing all personal documents abroad is a big problem. I felt weak in the knees.

I collected my thoughts and prayed to God, saying, “Lord, I urgently need your angels to watch over my wallet. I don’t know where it is, but I really need it, and it would be so easy for You to bring back to me what I’ve lost.” I paused and directed my thoughts inward, trying to strengthen my faith in God’s promises.

Since I was sure the wallet had accidentally fallen out of my pocket, we told a bus driver from the same company what had happened, and he passed word of our search to the driver of our original bus. We were assured he would look for the wallet at the end of the line and were advised to check with the head office in the evening to see if the wallet had been found.

Despite the shining sun, I felt a fierce storm raging in my heart and mind. My thoughts were racing, desperately seeking a rational solution, when I suddenly heard a quiet voice saying, “You prayed and gave everything over to God. Why are you so anxious and troubled? You preach to others and encourage them to trust in God, but what is it you’re doing now?” I felt very clearly that God was trying to teach me a special lesson.

He revealed to me not only the promises of His Word but also my weak, human heart, and my fears and worries, and my stubborn struggling. It was so unbelievably hard not to be able to do anything. God spoke to me several times, encouraging me to be still and to trust in Him. I would manage for a while before giving way to anxious thoughts and feelings yet again.

This all took over three hours. That can be a very long time, and God used it to build up the pressure on me in other ways as well. When He saw that I had learned my lesson, I absentmindedly reached into my camera bag. There, in an inside pocket I had clearly overlooked earlier, my hand suddenly brushed against my wallet. I am sure everyone can imagine the feelings coursing through me at that moment.

It is so important to God that His children trust Him. He needs their trust to be unconditional, no matter how bleak the situation may appear. Our Father is the almighty, omniscient God. None of our problems are too great, too messy, or too complex for Him—nothing is. When our imagination reaches its

limits, and we cannot conceive of any possible solution to our problem, we enter a realm where God can demonstrate His might, wisdom, and glory.

It is good to trust in the Lord. Our best and healthiest option is to throw all our worries to God—and to let go. Throw your worries to God as often as it takes for your heart to become still in His hands and for you to completely surrender your problem or crisis to God, and don't forget to be patient with yourself. After all, you are only human, with human feelings and human thoughts. God knows this and will be very patient with you. Finally, remember that our heavenly Teacher sometimes sends us problems because His lesson plan calls for them; if we take the lesson to heart, God's blessings will become evident in our spiritual growth.

“O Lord, You are my God. I will exalt You, I will praise Your name, for You have done wonderful things; Your counsels of old are faithfulness and truth” (Isaiah 25:1). ■

Hermann Vogt



Labored in Vain?

“Then I said, ‘I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength for nothing and in vain; yet surely my just reward is with the LORD, and my work with my God’” (Isaiah 49:4).

We all love to hear testimonies from those who have preached the gospel and subsequently experienced conversion of the listeners. Or they have distributed a tract and the recipient is so deeply moved that he immediately confesses his sins to God. Have you ever thought when reading such events, “Why doesn’t my testimony have the same effect?” I have often distributed a tract, yet nothing came of it. People pass by or are even upset. Then Satan can whisper in the ear of the child of God, “Give up!”—“You’re doing it wrong.”—“You can’t do it like so and so. . .” Or even, “There must be something wrong in your life, otherwise the fruit would come.” Would it not be much more satisfying if we could do our job with ease?

Jesus said in John 15:19-20, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you. Remember the word that I said to you, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” If we look at the mission of Jesus, we see that very often He spoke words that fell on deaf, indifferent, or

hateful ears. He also had little “success” on earth. Subsequently, He also instructed His disciples to prepare for failure. Only when the Holy Spirit has made one’s heart receptive will such accept the gospel; but others will reject it, no matter how and by whom the gospel is shared. We must take this into account when we think of our spiritual work.

We read of Noah, the preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5), who testified and preached for years, and not a soul listened to him. The prophet Jeremiah said, “O LORD, You induced me, and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed. I am in derision daily; everyone mocks me. For when I spoke, I cried out; I shouted, ‘Violence and plunder!’ Because the word of the LORD was made to me a reproach and a derision daily. Then I said, ‘I will not make mention of Him, nor speak anymore in His name.’ But His Word was in my heart like a burning fire shut up in my bones; I was weary of holding it back, and I could not” (Jeremiah 20:7-9). Although these people were sent by God, led by the Holy Spirit, the fruit did not come, and Jeremiah was about to give up and no longer preach the Word of the Lord. Maybe you feel like Jeremiah when you read other people’s testimonies of how God



was able to use them. If you are struggling with such discouraging thoughts, I would like to encourage you. Take a look at the following facts:

1) We are responsible for obedience; God produces the fruit. I often have to think about the life of the apostles. Their tasks were very different. For example, James, the brother of John, was already killed by the sword in Acts 12. He was a witness for Jesus only a few years and then God allowed his time to cease. But Paul, Peter, and John worked, suffered, fought, and endured much longer. Who was more Spirit-filled? Who was more obedient? They were all the same, but God's plan for each disciple was different. Dear Child of God, do not be discouraged if you cannot write stories like others. Continue to be obedient in your work of witnessing.

2) Often we do not see what is happening in people's hearts. On the outside, people in our lives may reject the gospel and make fun of it, but on the inside they may listen and have a desire to hear more. We may not be the person privileged to harvest, but God uses us to prepare the ground, sprinkle, or water the seeds. After perhaps praying for a person for years or sharing your testimony, the person meets someone else who can lead them to Jesus. But that doesn't happen in a heartbeat. The Spirit of God may have started speaking through your testimony long before and prepared the soul for this time. When many came to Jesus through the testimony of the Samaritan woman, he said, "For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors" (John 4:37-38). We are often inclined to admire only those who bring in the harvest and forget about those who have sown. But what requires more stamina to continue: when our testimony has an effect, or if it seems to fall on hard ground? The answer is certainly if we see no fruit and yet continue to testify and love in prayer and obedience to God.

Dear Child of God, be encouraged by the experiences of others leading people to Christ, and do not be discouraged if you cannot write such stories. Remain faithful and obedient at the place where God has put you. The servant who gained a tenfold return was also rewarded, as was the one who gained five. Do what you can. Do it out of love for the Lord. The Lord will reward your obedience forever. ■

John Reimer

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Easter Conference in Hamm, Germany
April 10 - 13, 2020

Fest in Winnipeg, Manitoba
May 16 - 17, 2020

Pentecost in Herford, Germany
May 30 - June 1, 2020

Youth Retreat in Tuningen, Germany
July 31 - August 4, 2020

*Bible Course in Winnipeg/Steinbach,
Manitoba*
August 10 - 21, 2020

Camp Meetings in Blaubeuren, Germany
August 15 - 20, 2020

Convention in Swartz Creek, Michigan
September 5 - 6, 2020

Fest in Seminole, Texas
September 26 - 27, 2020

“My Jesus Lives!”

Many years ago, I read an inscription on the gravestone of a farmer's wife which I have never forgotten: **“It matters not that I am gone: my Jesus lives!”** That is Easter joy!

Doesn't that sound like spring awakening after a long, dark winter? Isn't it like getting well after a long, difficult illness? Like coming home after being gone too long? I don't know her history, but this Christian was looking toward that Resurrection Day with hope.

What I do know is that this simple inscription was carved into the stone out of an inner conviction. May the bright Easter light envelop us in such a way that all dark walls in us are broken and our mouths open in praise: **My Jesus lives!**

Alfred Ullrich