



Foundation of Faith

The Fullness of the *Holy Spirit*

The Power of the Holy Spirit

Did You Receive the Holy Spirit?

The Path to Holiness

Mother's Day:

Just a Homemaker

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

While I lived in the high plains of Chihuahua, Mexico, between 1975 and 1980, there was one year when less than 10 mm of precipitation fell from October to the beginning of June. What distress, what drought! Everything dried up. Livestock on the pastures died of thirst, and their skeletons were often seen along the roadsides. Oh, how dependent we are on the weather or, better said, on our gracious God and Creator!

Humans often think they are intelligent and wise, but when God pulls back His hand for a short time or allows storms, hail, rain, or other natural disasters, how small and helpless they stand there!

But now back to Mexico. When the rains came after many months, when the floodgates and windows from heaven were opened, life and blessings reappeared, and the desert bloomed in wonderful ways.

I rejoice in this Word: "For I will pour water on him who is thirsty, and floods on the dry ground; I will pour My Spirit on your descendants, and My blessing on your offspring; they will spring up among the grass like willows by the watercourses" (Isaiah 44:3-4).

As in the physical world, God longs to spiritually awaken those who are dead in their sins, who are empty and have a longing in their hearts, through His Word and Spirit. He wants them to pass through death into life so they can begin to grow spiritually, bloom, and bring fruit: love, joy, peace . . . Yes, He wants them to be witnesses of God, redeemed of the Lord, ready to lay their lives and souls on the altar of God, consecrated servants, consecrated young men and women, consecrated fathers and mothers. Yes, we need showers of grace and showers of blessings in order to be useful to God's glory and honor!

H. D. Nimz

Praying Bill

Many years ago, a vessel sailed across the ocean to America. It had sailed there many times before but had never experienced a storm quite like this, as the coast of England disappeared in the distance. Waves pounded the deck with white foam, just waiting for the hour when the proud vessel would fall victim to them. The wind howled through the rigging, making the masts and yards creak and groan as if they were complaining about their near demise.

“Bill! Bill!” the helmsman suddenly called. And as a fourteen year old boy jumped up at his call, he pointed to the main mast where the sail was coming loose at the top and gave the order to fasten it again.

“I stood,” said one traveler, “holding onto a rope on the deck and thought: it is certain death to carry out that order. The mast swayed up and down with the movement of the ship. The storm shook the rope ladders and the ropes back and forth. How could any

person safely get up and down that dizzying height? The boy standing next to me possibly thought that as well.

After he had glanced at the top of the mast and at the angry sea, he pushed his cap to the side and pleadingly looked at the helmsman as if to say: “It is impossible, please, no!”

But the boy’s pleading eyes did not move the helmsman. Pointing upwards, he called out with a commanding voice: “Up, boy, up, I say!”

“I’m going,” replied the boy, “I’m going right away,” but he jumped below deck for just a short moment. Then he reappeared, pressed his cap firmly on his head, and climbed up.

“Why are you sending the child up there?” I asked the helmsman reluctantly. “He is the only son of his mother and she a widow who only sent him to sea because of her poverty. You know that.”

“Men tend to fall, but boys don’t,” said the helms-



man calmly. “Look, he is climbing up just like a squirrel.”

I observed this as my eyes followed the boy in fearful suspense on his dangerous journey. Now Bill wriggled around the mast cage and climbed even higher to the last row. The storm threw him back and forth on the rope ladder. I had to hold my breath as I watched the little figure hanging at a dizzying height under the tangle of ropes. At least ten times, I thought a howling gust of wind against the ship would cause him to fall.

But he didn’t fall. In a few minutes, he had fastened the sail, climbed down, and stood on the deck with a heaving chest but otherwise healthy and well.

“Bill,” I said to the boy after the storm had subsided and I met him alone on the forward deck, “you must have been afraid when you had to climb up the rigging this morning?”

“Yes, of course, sir,” he answered candidly.

“You were probably thinking for a moment in your

room whether you should go or not?” I continued.

“Not because of that, sir,” he replied. “But I wanted to pray first. I thought this could be deadly and I might not come down alive. After I prayed, the fear was gone.”

“Where did you learn how to pray?” I asked.

“My mother taught me while I was still at home,” he said. “When she shook my hand to say goodbye, she said: ‘Bill, I have to send you off to sea. It is very difficult for me but there is no other way. Do not forget one thing, Bill, my only son. It is the last request of your mother: Pray every day. Do you hear me, Bill, every day! The Lord will be with you.’ Since that day, I pray every day.”

Some mothers will read this simple story. What does it want to tell each mother? It wants to say: Your children will have to go out into this world full of storms and tribulations. Don’t let them go unless they have learned to pray! ■

The Power of the *Holy Spirit*

As I was sitting on D. L. Moody’s porch one Sunday morning at his home in Northfield, Massachusetts, USA, he told me the following experience:

Shortly after he received salvation, a great crowd gathered in a market hall in Chicago to listen to his Sunday evening services. However, the results were rather poor. Some Christian women usually sat in the front row seats. When he stepped down from the pulpit, they said something like: “Very good, Mr. Moody, very good! But there’s still something better. And we are praying for you!”

He asked himself what they might mean. Wasn’t the hall filled to the last spot? Were there no signs of God’s blessings in revived lives?

One Sunday afternoon, however, as Moody was walking along Fifth Avenue in New York, he felt an urge to spend some time alone with God. Upon this urge, he changed his direction and headed for a friend’s house, where he asked to use one of the rooms to be alone and uninterrupted. He declined the offered refreshment and locked the door to remain undisturbed. During this holy hour, he rededicated his entire life to Christ and received the baptism of power.

On the following Sunday evening, the Holy Spirit was so noticeable that the women who had prayed for him had tears in their eyes but also a smile on their faces. They said: “Mr. Moody, now you have received it!” That was the beginning of a powerful ministry. ■

Christ's Ascension

Christ's ascension is as indispensable to the message of salvation as His coming to earth, His perfection, His suffering and death at Calvary, and His resurrection from the dead. Without the reality of the Ascension, the fulfillment of Christ's saving work of grace on earth would be missing.

The Ascension is the confirmation of His testimony of His divine heritage. In discussion with Nicodemus, Jesus said, "No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is the Son of Man who is in heaven" (John 3:13).

The most decisive reference to His ascension is found in His final words and in His high priestly, intercessory prayer: "I came forth from the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go to the Father" (John 16:28).

The Ascension completes the resurrection, through which the Father placed His seal of approval on the sacrificial atonement for sin on the cross. With respect to this, Jesus said in Matthew 26:64, "Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." He now sits on His heavenly throne of intercession as head of His Church.

The Ascension was the coronation. After humiliation and death on the cross, exaltation had to follow. "Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

After His resurrection, heaven was open and He could return home to His Father. He delayed this return for the sake of His disciples. He wanted to assure them of His resurrection through several appearances. And then He wanted to continue teaching to prepare them for the gift of the Holy Spirit.

The Ascension had an additional, wonderful meaning. It is the picture of the promise of Christ's return for judgment. Jesus was taken up to heaven and now sits to the right of the Father, but we read in Acts 1:10-11, "And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, who also said, 'Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven.'"

The Christian faith has the specific promise of a wonderful, triumphant future. Before His ascension, the Lord left His disciples with a great legacy. He told them He had received unlimited power in heaven and on earth. For this reason, assured of victory, they should fill the entire world with the message of His gospel. And then He gave them the promise of His presence: "and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

In addition, prior to His ascension, Jesus commanded His disciples not to depart from Jerusalem, "but to wait for the Promise of the Father, 'which,' He said, 'you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit'" (Acts 1:4-5). Without this baptism of the Holy Spirit, Christ's Church cannot accomplish anything. The Ascension would serve no purpose if the Holy Spirit had not been poured out. But this Fountain of power and blessing is available to every believer. The best way to celebrate the Ascension is to seek in faith the gift of the Holy Spirit, Whom the risen Christ offers us.

Luke reports that Jesus' disciples returned to Jerusalem with great joy after the resurrection (see Luke 24:52). How did they manage that? They knew His physical absence assured them of His constant presence. So they continued in one accord, praying, thanking, and praising their Lord, awaiting the more glorious revelation of His presence. ■

Waiting for the Holy Spirit

The Lord Jesus instructed His disciples to stay in Jerusalem after His ascension to await the Father's promise (see Acts 1:4; Luke 24:49). This "waiting" to be filled with the Holy Spirit is of great importance. People who have not learned or do not want to learn this "waiting" will often face insurmountable difficulties.

We find this waiting not only in the realm of grace but also in natural creation. Many things are subject to the process of development, while with others everything is instantaneous. In a parable of the kingdom of God (see Mark 4), the Lord explains to us in verse 28: "For the earth yields crops by itself: first the blade, then the head, after that the full grain in the head."

The great work of God's creation proceeded in succession and did not happen in an instant. It was 4000 years before the promise of the coming Savior, which was given in the Garden of Eden, was fulfilled. Jesus waited 30 years before starting His great life's work. God's promises are for those who have learned to wait.

Receiving the Holy Spirit is, from God's side, an instantaneous work. On the part of the child of God, however, it means preparation and waiting for His coming and then His fullness. When we busy ourselves with this waiting, we encounter some very valuable lessons.

The time of waiting initiated a great transition in the disciples' lives.

In the Psalms, we sometimes read the word "Selah." This means an interlude, for the singers a break, a silence, a pause to express something special. So, the Holy Spirit gives us certain "Selahs," emphatic breaks. He wants us to be quiet, listen to Him, and reach out for a greater abundance of His thoughts and will.

This time of waiting taught the disciples the greatest lesson in Christian life, namely the cessation of autonomy.

The greatest damage done is often caused by someone trying to do something that they are not prepared

for, before they fully understand God's will. God tries to hold back His children until they are ready to walk in divine power. This is often the hardest lesson a person has to learn, namely to recognize his helplessness and to understand that one is nothing by himself, so that God can be all in all.

The disciples' deepest experience was crucifixion of self. Crucifixion means death. Too few walk this way of death. To do that, waiting is necessary—genuinely and truly becoming silent. How many wrong decisions are often made when doing one's own work. It took the Father of Faith, Abraham, a long time to get to where he became quiet before God. Moses had learned to be still and wait for many years, which is why he could tell the people of Israel at the Red Sea: "The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14). God most certainly cannot use us until we are at the end of our own strength. Then we recognize our own helplessness and are able to say with the apostle: "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Corinthians 3:5).

These days of waiting were also necessary so that the disciples would be able to recognize their own nothingness and their dependence on the great Master.

They first had to be "emptied" before they could be "filled." They would have remembered some things that they had done before of which they were ashamed of now. Yes, God desires that we become very quiet and allow ourselves to be searched through to the very core of our being. He wants us to recognize our need. It requires time for this work of the Spirit of God to be thorough. Yes, it takes time to really burn this into our consciousness. Many experiences would be more thorough if those concerned had only learned this "waiting." Child of God, learn to wait and be quiet before the Lord so that He can do His work in you. ▶

Days of waiting are important because only then are we in the position to listen to the voice of God.

A child of God is often so busy that he is unable to listen to God's voice. How much is often spoken and how little opportunity does the Lord have to speak to us! He wants us to listen to what He tells us so that He can convey His thoughts and desires and in this way guide us in His will.

God wants us to wait on Him, not only to recognize our own need, but also the fullness of His power and glory.

He wants us to look at the past, but He also gives us a glimpse at the future. He wants us to lift our eyes, and then He says to us: "For all the land which you see I give to you and your descendants forever" (Genesis 13:15). He wants to call us to a higher service.

This waiting is not just preparation for the Holy Spirit but also a reception.

Waiting in prayer brings with it an increase of strength. The answer and blessing will surely come. See those hundred and twenty in the upper room! They were together in prayer and supplication. A fervent desire filled their souls. Do we need to wonder, then, about the roaring from heaven at Pentecost? Such a thirst and desire will certainly be satisfied. The person who does not learn to wait loses time instead of gaining it. Yes, "tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high."

Without the Holy Spirit, you are not suited for your life's journey, and you are not adept for the service of the Master. Let us appreciate this time of waiting! ■

A. Borbe



Why Do We Need Sanctification?

The doctrine regarding sanctification is an essential part of the Holy Scriptures and deals with the entire salvation of man. Sanctification is so important that we find many foreshadows in the Old Testament which help make this doctrine be unambigu-

ously seen in the New Testament. Furthermore, we find that the Lord Jesus taught a complete plan of salvation and the necessity of a second, definite work of divine grace.

It is sad to say that there are many who profess they are Christians, but lack a desire to have a

deep and close relationship with God. Yes, there are even those who despise the preaching of sanctification and do not see it as a necessity. In fact, they even admit they are not sanctified and have no desire to obtain it. Many say: "I don't understand sanctification and have no

idea what it is.” At the same time, they say they have been saved for many years. During all these years, they were aware the Bible taught sanctification but did not concern themselves with it. Dear soul, remember that there is no such thing as a standstill in the kingdom of God; either we press forward, or we begin to drift backwards.

In order for us to understand sanctification, which is a great privilege for us, with a better sense of clarity, let us study it a little deeper:

God desires it.

“Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God; for you know what commandments we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification” (1 Thessalonians 4:1-3).

Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). What is God’s will? According to the previous text, we must say: “The will of God is our sanctification.” This requirement was directed to the Thessalonians and, brother and sister, it is also personally directed to you.

Everyone needs sanctification.

Jesus said: “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you” (Acts 1:7). He knew that His disciples would need this power because He would no longer be among them in body. Their future was a life of serving and working for the Lord, and for

that reason, Jesus told them to wait until they received the power of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49). If Jesus required this, then I would like to ask you the question: “How are you equipped to work in the service of the Lord?” Perhaps your answer is: “Oh, I am not a pastor.” Perhaps not, but you are a witness for Him. When the Lord Jesus told His disciples how they would receive power when the Holy Spirit came upon them, He said: “You shall be witnesses to Me!” You may say that you can be a witness for the Lord without sanctification. But think about Peter that night Jesus was arrested. That is why I say with all resoluteness that if we want to possess everything that Jesus has prepared for us, we have to search for it in all earnestness.

Other things that require sanctification are our temptations and selfish desires. Our ego or self-importance has to die and in turn be filled with God’s power in order to have a life that is pleasing to God. Our carnal nature does not want to submit to God’s will, and if the tempter attacks us, we are in serious danger.

Since we know that God cannot use someone in His service who is not entirely consecrated to Him, it is our duty to make an effort to attain sanctification so that we can be equipped for His work. God desires to always have the first place in our heart and in our life.

We need sanctification for our duties.

Besides resisting temptations and persecutions in our life, our work for the Lord, no matter what, is very important. Every person is a tool in God’s hand. Everyone has a

special duty. There are people who only you can help and who no one else can. Be aware of the great responsibility you have and think about the influence you leave with them. Therefore, you must do as Paul wrote in Romans 12: “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to God.” Only then can God use you in His service as He wishes, and only then can He also give you the power necessary for your duty.

The Church in its entirety compares to an engine in which every part has a job to fulfill. If someone is not sanctified, he is like a faulty part, and the engine does not work properly. In this same manner, the work in the Church suffers if only one soul is not strong in temptation and is overrun by Satan’s tactics. The outside world looks upon the Church and judges it by the life of this one person.

When someone has consecrated his life completely to God, God will then cleanse him from all carnal cravings and fill him with the Holy Spirit, filling him with faith and power. Such a holy service glorifies God and leads people to salvation through the precious blood of the Lamb.

If you would also submit yourself to God’s leading and let Him use you as a tool in His hand, what a wonderful and blessed influence would flow from you. The same words people said of Stephen they will say about you: “And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke” (Acts 6:10). Therefore, “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service” (Romans 12:1). ■

H. Brooks



The Holy Spirit

In the New Testament, there are many verses which give us insight concerning the Holy Spirit. Scripture says more about the Holy Spirit than many theologians cover in their expositions. Perhaps it is because Christology is emphasized to such an extent that the Gift of the Spirit is undervalued. Nonetheless, it was the glorified and resurrected Christ who sent the Holy Spirit. For many teachers and preachers, the Holy Spirit is thought of in terms of nominal

Christianity, and the special gift of Pentecost has little meaning for them.

The word “Spirit” has been defined in various ways. Some hesitate to cover the topic. And indeed, words fail to do justice to clearly describe the Holy Spirit. Yet at the time of the Apostles, the concept “Spirit” had a clear and definite meaning. The Christian experience, which includes the wonderful gift of the Holy Spirit, was such a marvelous and unique experience

for the Apostles, so different from all else, that it could not be overlooked or misinterpreted. At the time the New Testament was written, experiencing the Holy Spirit had a clear and definite meaning.

The most wonderful and marvelous thing about the experience of Pentecost, fifty days after Christ’s resurrection, was not the rushing of the wind or the tongues of fire that descended upon the group of one hundred and twenty who were gathered in prayer. Rath-

er, it was that the Spirit of God was actually poured out into the hearts of the believers. The blessing they received did not just last until the end of that day of Pentecost.

No, the Holy Spirit is the gift of the resurrected and glorified Savior, Jesus Christ. Through His sacrificial death and resurrection, He made salvation possible for us. Our transgressions are blotted out through the cross. He did not remain in the grave but arose from the dead and ascended into heaven. Sitting at the right hand of God, He continues the work that He began on earth. After obtaining salvation for us, He now offers it to us through the Holy Spirit. Through the work of the Holy Spirit, we are given the heritage of the saints, which Christ purchased for us through His own blood and sealed with His death.

Without Calvary, there would be no Pentecost. The Holy Spirit was the Promise of the Father, part of the reward obtained by Christ's obedience, even to the point of His death on the cross. The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was a confirmation that the Father had accepted the sacrifice of the atonement made by the Son. This important fundamental fact is of great significance and should not be overlooked. In his sermon on the day of Pentecost, Peter said that Christ was "exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:33), the result of which was now evident.

The Holy Spirit is often called the "Spirit of Truth." By receiving the Holy Spirit, the first Christians were reminded of the past, so that by faith the life and sacrificial

death of Jesus was seen in the light of God and properly understood. The Lord still had much to say to His disciples while He was still with them (John 16:12), but they were not ready for it yet. They were not to be left walking in darkness, so the Spirit of Truth came to glorify Jesus and to lead His disciples into all truth. The New Testament is proof that the Lord fulfilled His promise.

One of the roles the Spirit of Truth has is to bring the wonderful gospel of Christ to peoples' hearts and to convict them of their sinfulness. "And when He [the Spirit] has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:8). The role of the Spirit is to teach people to recognize what sin is. Out of compassion and love for us, Christ sent His Spirit to convict people of their own sins.

Secondly, holiness is an important leading attribute of the Holy Spirit. Every child of God experiences the work of the Holy Spirit. It is through the Spirit that the new life in Christ is given. All experiences that we can make as Christians are made through the Holy Spirit. First, the Spirit convicts of sin. Then the Spirit gives us new life so that we can be children of God. We read that "the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses" (Romans 8:26). "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Galatians 5:22-23).

Looking at the Christian life, we realize that all is dependent on the working of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit calls us, and we respond. He leads us to sanctification. We are totally dependent on Him. No one

can be holy, in the New Testament understanding of holiness, without having the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is also a Spirit of Power. Before the Ascension, Jesus said to His disciples: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you" (Acts 1:8). In the gospel according to Luke, we read of the same promise: "but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). We know that being endued with power on high is the baptism of the Holy Spirit.

This power is an equipping of the saints that gives us the special anointing, making our ministry effective. Christ taught His disciples that they cannot be effective witnesses without the Holy Spirit. Therefore, they were to wait until they had received the Holy Spirit in His power.

Paul testifies: "my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4). When Peter and John preached the Word, we read that when the people "perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled" (Acts 4:13). The reason for their boldness and success was the disciples' experience at Pentecost. The anointing of the Holy Spirit transforms people into living witnesses for Christ.

The unseen power of the Holy Spirit is as effective today as it was at the time of the first disciples. The power of the Holy Spirit is still here. May we all understand and experience the secret of being filled with the power from on high! ■

A. Miller

Two Divine Works of Grace

In Acts 8, we read about an occurrence where it is very evident that God has provided two works of grace. Both of these works are accomplished in the heart of man through the direct work of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Acts and various letters written by the apostles, we find many more examples.

The Samaritans were a mixed race who occupied the land between Judea and Galilee. They were exposed to all sorts of heresies. At the time when Philip went down to Samaria, a man named Simon who had practiced sorcery in the city, had found great favor among the people, who said: "This man is the great power of God" (Acts 8:10).

Philip went to visit these people who were living in spiritual darkness. He was equipped with the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3-5) and had only one goal: to preach the gospel and lead people to the Lord. As soon as he arrived in Samaria, he did not delay and began preaching the gospel of truth to the people (Acts 8:5).

The Holy Spirit granted him the power to share the message. He preached the complete truth, regardless if he made friends or enemies. God blessed his work. In fact, we read that the people listened attentively to his words (verse 6). The warnings that Philip gave them entered their hearts. They accepted the joyous gospel message with gladness and followed in obedience and faith (verses 12, 14). That's when they received forgiveness for their sins. The guilt was gone, and great joy was found in this city (verse 8). A complete, thorough conversion brings inexpressible joy.

Thus, Philip worked among the Samaritans, leaving many blessings behind. In the name of Jesus, he healed the sick, drove out unclean spirits, and performed miracles (verse 7). This city experienced a revival, and all who believed were baptized (verse 12).

Not long thereafter, the people in Jerusalem heard how God had done marvelous things through Philip in Samaria. The church in Jerusalem then sent Peter and John to visit this new church in Samaria (verse 14), "who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them" (verses 15-16).

We see that the people in Samaria experienced a conversion and were baptized while Philip worked among them (verse 12). Later, when Peter and John came, they also received the Holy Spirit, for these Apostles "laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit" (verse 17).

When they received the Holy Spirit, they had a definite second experience; they were "sanctified by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 15:16). When the Holy Spirit moves into our heart, it is purified from all inherent corruption.

Have you also experienced this purifying experience in your heart, dear reader? Are you able to say with complete conviction that you have received the Holy Spirit? God shows us His will through His Holy Scriptures. You have now been made aware that a conversion alone is not enough. God wants you to receive the Holy Spirit. Are you prepared to accept this second, glorious work of grace? ■

"Now the Lord is the Spirit; and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

2 Corinthians 3:17

Did You Receive the *Holy Spirit*?

Having crossed Asia Minor, Paul arrived at Ephesus, where he found several disciples. He asked them, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” (Acts 19:2)

Paul’s question to the disciples in Ephesus is telling. It is crucial for every child of God to be filled with the Holy Spirit because without the Holy Spirit, salvation is not complete. Our transgressions themselves are forgiven through justification, and the sins we have committed are washed away by the blood of the Lamb when we repent. Peter said in Acts 2:38, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized . . . and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Repentance is a prerequisite to receiving the Holy Spirit. John the Baptist promised those who repented that they would be baptized with the Holy Spirit. The power to lead a Christian life and to always serve God comes from the Holy Spirit. Jesus said to His disciples, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Through the Bible, I would like to show you how to come into possession of the Holy Spirit. Only with the Holy Spirit are we truly fit to serve God. Our bodies then become the dwelling of God in the person of the Holy Spirit.

In 2 Corinthians 6:16, we read, “For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them.’” And in 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul writes, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?” The Corinthians had dedicated themselves to God, both in body and in soul. When our bodies are consecrated to God, the Holy Spirit takes up residence and prepares us for service, as promised by Jesus in Acts 1:8.

The best preparation for serving the Lord is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. The central idea to consecration is expressed by Christ Himself, saying to His Father, “Not My will, but Yours, be done” (Luke 22:42).

These are the words of a soul surrendered to God. By adopting this position of surrender, we are able to receive the Holy Spirit. When you take this step of surrender, the Holy Spirit will come and fill your soul, removing all doubt. I believe that if everyone claiming to be religious had the Holy Spirit, the many false beliefs about the Bible would soon disappear.

The Holy Spirit wants to be our Comforter and Teacher. “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you” (John 14:26). The working of the Holy Spirit in our hearts helps us lead a truly godly life.

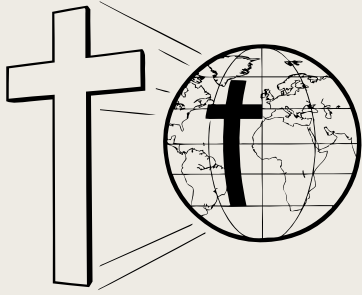
The Holy Spirit cleanses our hearts when He enters. The prophet Malachi said, speaking of Christ, “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like launderers’ soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:2–3).

John the Baptist said, “He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (Matthew 3:11). The fire that John mentions describes the purifying and cleansing power of the Holy Spirit. With regard to the Gentiles receiving the Holy Spirit, Peter says, “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8–9).

This cleansing of the human heart is an important part of salvation. Human nature became unclean through the fall, and the human heart was tainted by sin. As Paul wrote in Ephesians 2:3, we were “by nature children of wrath.” It is the job of the Holy Spirit to tear the evil out of our hearts and make them pure. Every Christian should seek and obtain this experience; it is our rightful inheritance.

Have you received the Holy Spirit since you were saved? ■

M. H. Craig



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

The Path to Holiness

*Are you looking for depth in your spiritual life, for greater abundance of grace and strength? It is God's will to give you this—in your sanctification!
The Bible shows us the way.*

Based on the Bible's testimony, one can have various encounters with God. However, a spiritual experience is only genuine if it has been searched for and attained in a biblical way. God's Word therefore shows us the way to rebirth, special faith experiences, spiritual maturity, sanctification, and last but not least, eternal salvation.

Sanctification is a special blessing from God. The first requirement is assurance of salvation. Only children of God can have this assurance, since assurance is tied together with an experience. Only those who have sought forgiveness through faith and repentance and attained the salvation of their soul can possess this assurance of salvation. The Holy Spirit also gives us the assurance that we are children of God. Paul writes: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. . . . The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God" (Romans 8:14,16).

Jesus' disciples had this certainty because He called them "My brothers and sisters" (see Matthew 12:49-50). He further testified: "They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. Sanctify them by Your truth, Your Word is truth" (John 17:16-17). In any case, the prerequisite for being a child of God and the assurance of salvation had been met.

The second condition is child-like, faith-filled pleading. One does not have to fight for spiritual expe-

riences, nor can they be forced and arbitrarily invoked. Jesus simply says: "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Luke 11: 9), and again: "Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them" (Mark 11:24).

With regard to the gift of the Holy Spirit, Jesus also recommended this path to His disciples when He said: "How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:13).

The disciples acted precisely according to this instruction, for they stayed in the upper room in Jerusalem and remained united in prayer and supplication, waiting for the gift of the Holy Spirit which had been promised to them. However, not only they, but God also acted according to His word, fulfilling the promise as we read: "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:4).

The third condition is personal sacrifice to God. Jesus taught us what this meant through His struggle in prayer in Gethsemane. In His high priestly prayer, He prayed: "And for their sakes I sanctify Myself" (John 17:19), and in Gethsemane, He gave Himself up entirely to the will of the Father.

Before He sacrificed His body on the cross, He sacrificed His will. And we must also become a complete self-sacrifice for Him. Regarding this consecration and surrender to God, the letter to the Hebrews says: "By that will we have been sanctified through the offer-



ing of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:10). This means: On the basis of God’s will, who required the sacrifice of Jesus for our redemption and sanctification, He also demands the sacrifice of our body and will so we can be sanctified.

The most crucial step in experiencing sanctification of the heart is the real, complete sacrifice of self to God. At the same time, this seems to be the biggest obstacle that distracts or holds back many born-again believers from this experience. In Acts 8:14-15, we read of the Samaritans who, after becoming believers through Philip’s preaching, had Peter and John come to them and pray that they might receive the Holy Spirit.

Fourthly, the work of sanctification is done by God. Jesus asked the Father to sanctify His disciples.

In the same way, Paul wrote to the Thessalonians: “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely . . . He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24), namely sanctify you.

We recognize that God does the work of sanctification. However, sanctification, like the experience of salvation, has a human and a divine side. God works the part that we cannot do, and we have to do what God will not do for us.

When we are ready to follow the biblical path and fulfill the conditions, God is willing to do the work of sanctification on our hearts. Therefore, dear child of God, press on persistently, and you will receive all the blessings of salvation. God bless your soul! ■

Delight yourself in the Lord

*“Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart”
(Psalm 37:4).*

The Bible contains a diversity of verses: there are commandments, promises, and laws. I do not mean the “you shall” or “you shall not” laws; I mean the “If- then-” laws. If you delight yourself in the Lord, then He will give you what your heart desires. There is no exception to this verse, no small print that could devalue the verse. No, God really means this statement.

It could be that the phrase “delight yourself also in the Lord” is less meaningful to you. In another translation, there is a footnote for “delight,” stating: “Do what the Lord wants” or “hope in the Lord.” You can do more with that, right? In the New Testament, we find a verse that can be associated with the verse from Psalm 37:4: “Seek first the kingdom of God . . . and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Your delight, appreciation, or desire in the Lord means that God is the fulfillment of your life. The aspirations of your heart are centered in God. It means asking yourself in every situation if each action is in tune with God’s will or not. It means bringing joy to God through your life and not living “for [myself], but for Him who died for [me] and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:15).

How do you respond to decisions in your life? Do you decide with God, or do you decide on your own which way is best? I have to say that during my last years of high school, I preferred my own decisions regarding courses. Even though I knew that my decision was not according to the will of God, I still chose my way. Therefore, it was harder for me during study time, preparing for exams, and even during the exam itself. It was my worst mark.

How is it regarding your university plans or your career path? Can God be glorified through that? Does He like your choices? A lot depends on the choices you make in your early adulthood. They decide your entire life.

Now, many would think that you need to please God perforce: “I have to do everything in order to please Him and to make Him be satisfied with me because He is a strict God.” It’s not like that. Look at what is written after “delight yourself also in the Lord”: “and He will give you the desires of your heart” or what you wish. This is one of the most loving promises God has for you.

Look, He knows exactly what you wish for. He knows your deepest longings, no matter what they are. He knows your tears at night when you tell Him what’s heavy on your heart, things you might want differently, or the things you really want. Maybe you see yourself fail over and over again and wish to be more grounded in God and to be a role model for others. Maybe you desire a great job or a spouse with whom you can worship God together. Your Lord knows everything, and He wants to fulfill those desires if they correspond to His and you’re “delighting in the Lord.” He loves you and knows you like no one else can. Trust Him with your desires and tell Him your longings; lay everything at the throne of God and focus only on pleasing Him. You can be sure that God will fulfill His Word and will give you what your heart desires. Trust His Word. It is true. I have experienced it myself. ■

Erika Grötzingler
Eppingen, Germany



Consecration!

Let me burn for Jesus!" exclaimed 27 year old Henry Maryn when he arrived in India in April of 1806. His devoted love for Christ drove him from caring for England's tuberculosis patients to India to preach the gospel to a lost people. He gave his best, his all, to the Lord.

Every time the best is offered to Jesus, blessings flow out. This principle flows through the entirety of the Bible: "Abel also brought of the firstborn of his flock and of their fat. And the Lord respected Abel and his offering" (Genesis 4:4). He also sacrificed the fat of the lamb. "The fat" means something good and valuable (e.g. Genesis 45:18; Isaiah 55:2).

All wood objects within the tabernacle were made out of acacia wood, the only useful wood for the tabernacle in the desert. It is very durable, and insects avoid it. Only the best wood in the desert was good enough for the construction of God's holy Dwelling Place.

In 2 Kings 22 we read about Josiah, who became king at eight years of age, and at sixteen he "started looking for the God of his father David." At twenty, he started clearing Judah and Jerusalem of their idols. At twenty-six, he sent people to "enhance the building of the Lord." The book of the Law was found there, and "when the king heard the words of the law, he ripped his clothes" and kneeled before God. God told him: "Because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before God when you heard His words against this place and against its inhabitants, and you humbled yourself before Me, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you," says the LORD" (2 Kings 22:19). Commitment, honesty towards God, and honesty towards oneself, together with fervent prayer, brings forth an answered prayer.

"Thus Josiah . . . made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the Lord their God. All his days they did not depart from following the Lord God of their fathers" (2 Chronicles 34:33). "Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him" (2 Kings 23:25).

Let us take Josiah as a role model and live a dedicated life with one goal in mind: glorifying God!

What does that look like in our everyday lives?

Dora Rappard encourages: "During my first Chrischona time (mission station in St. Chrischona, Switzerland), I did not have a specific task or job. I did not have my own house, and all the positions in the institute were taken. Coming out of a high-demand mission work, it was not easy to stand on the sidelines not being needed. I did not want to complain, however, some of this attitude must have transferred over into a letter to my old aunt Sophie, causing a response like this to come back: "When you have the impression that you do not have a full and satisfying task in front of you, do the little you have to do well and satisfyingly, to the best of your ability, even if it is only sewing a button onto your husband's shirt. Do even the little task with eagerness as for the Lord, and you will see how rich every day will be that He entrusts you with!"

C. H. Spurgeon encourages: "All our libraries and study rooms are empty rooms compared to our prayer rooms. We grow; we thrive immensely when we pray a lot in our quiet rooms." Let us do the best in our prayer rooms, and then He will use us! ■

Erich Schall
Lörrach, Germany

Testimony

*“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.”
(Psalm 23:1)*

I grew up in a large family in Russia, whose Communist government persecuted Christians at that time. Despite that, my parents owned a Bible. We children grew up with a basic knowledge of God’s Word.

After I married and left my parent’s home, the Lord gave us our first son. Three years later, when I was pregnant with our second son, I suddenly became ill with a severe nerve illness that no doctor in Russia could help me with. Over the next few years, I had two more children, but the illness continued and didn’t improve. In 1990, we decided to immigrate as a family to Germany. I lived in the hope that the doctors in Germany could help me, but, to my disappointment, they couldn’t either.

I was already so much in despair that I toyed with the idea of taking my own life. But the Lord was gracious to me and didn’t allow it. One day, I was at home alone, which was always terrible for me. I expected another attack, but a power came over me instead that caused me to go into my room and pray. I obeyed this feeling, knelt down, and began to pray. I begged with tears. Suddenly, it became so bright in my room and a great joy and peace came over me so that I thought my heart would explode from joy! At the same time, I could feel that I had been healed from my suffering! My Lord delivered me. Not only had He forgiven all my sins, but He also freed me from this long illness.

There have been many lows in my life, but only the grace of God has delivered me from them. I have experienced that Jesus is my Savior. I thank Him with all my heart for His grace and love, and I want to be obedient to Him. I want Jesus to reign in my heart, and I want to be faithful to Him until the end of my life. The Lord is my shepherd! ■

*Linda Valger
Steinbach, Manitoba*



Erased

Rainer,” Mother said, “I just planted the garden plot over there in the corner. Make sure you don’t run through it or even step over the edges of it!” “No, no, Mommy,” the cheerful boy called quickly. Then the mother laboriously went up the stairs to the house; she felt sick and needed to go to bed.

Meanwhile, Rainer was having fun alone in the garden. After a while, a beautiful butterfly flew past him. Rainer had barely seen him when he forgot everything else: he had to have it! He no longer thought about the promise he had hastily, but also gladly, made his mother. He kept crisscrossing the garden plot, trying to catch the butterfly, thereby destroying his mother’s hard work.

After the butterfly had escaped its wild hunter, he finally saw what he had done. He was horrified. What should he do now? He couldn’t fix the garden himself. He

had no choice but to tell his mother what he had done.

He crept into the house with a heavy heart. When he heard that his mother was in the bedroom, he wanted to go to her. But he was told that it was not possible. She did not feel well at all. Rainer was now even more unhappy. What should he do? He was not allowed to go to his mother to confess his guilt, but he would not have any peace before he did.

After he had repeatedly tried, unsuccessfully, to get into the bedroom, an idea came to him. He went into the living room, fetched an erasable tablet and wrote on it: “Dear Mommy, I was very, very disobedient. I crushed the new plot in the garden when I tried to catch a butterfly. Please forgive me! Your sad Rainer!” Then he stood with the tablet in front of the door of the sick room and waited until someone came out.

When Miss Elizabeth opened the door, he pleaded with her to bring the tablet to his mother’s bed and added: “If she forgives me, she can just erase everything on it. Then I’ll know that everything is good.”

Elizabeth took pity on the boy and carried the tablet inside.

Now followed a few long, anxious minutes for Rainer. Finally, Elizabeth came out and held out the blank tablet. There was nothing left on it. Rainer’s heart was so light now! How grateful he was, how determined to be obedient in the future, because of the longed-for forgiveness of his mother!

This is how God erases our sins. You know that God gladly forgives. He promises those who want to come to Him: “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins” (Isaiah 43:25). ■

The Friend of Children





Dear Mom,

Many times in my life, I neglected to thank you adequately on Mother's Day, so I'm grateful I'm able to share this with you today.

Being your child makes me a very privileged person. I know you never really saw it that way; instead, you thought the opposite. But that is exactly what distinguishes you from others. What your children have become—what I mean is, the fact that we are a blessed family who have wonderful relationships with one another and also with our parents—is something you never took credit for. To this day, you have only considered one plausible explanation for this: God's goodness.

Sometimes you told us that raising your children often took you to the limit of your strength. To this day, it makes you sad that you often had so little time for them. The circumstances just didn't allow for more. When it came to daily tasks, you were often the first one up in the morning and the last one working in the evening. And when the house was finally quiet, you invested unbelievably more in your children: you prayed for them. Later, when I was older, I sometimes noticed that—and to this day, it touches my heart. You entrusted the things you could not manage to the One for Whom nothing is impossible. The fruits of your prayers became fully evident after your children left home, and since then, they return gladly, without needing to be pressured.

Clearly, your faith in God was something you always clung to. And over and above that: You found it important to show your children the way to Christ. I'm so glad to belong to those people who understand Paul's statement regarding the genuine faith of a grandmother

and mother. Both of you were that example for us children. Of course, to our child-like way of thinking, you sometimes overdid it. Was it really necessary to haul us to every prayer meeting? Was it really important to control what we watched or listened to? Was it really essential how long, or if at all, we were allowed to play on the computer? Was it truly necessary to prevent me from spending time with some "friends"? Mom, today I know why and understand: Yes, it was necessary! You can't imagine how thankful I am!

Yes, as a child, I sometimes made life difficult for you. Sometimes you didn't know what to do and felt helpless. What does one do with a boy who wants to do his own thing while seemingly ignoring all well-meant advice? I recall one situation when you simply let me have my way. Even if this instance was a sign of your helplessness, you weren't giving up but praying with greater urgency. In addition, despite everything, you demonstrated your unconditional love during these tough times.

Well, I could keep adding more and more lines, but I wouldn't be able to tell everything—and I don't need to. You know me well enough. Nevertheless, at this time I want to tell you that I am very thankful for every day I still have you as my mom, and yes, you as my parents. I'm so thankful that precisely YOU are my mom. I am more blessed because of you. Thank you for loving me today and for always being there for me. Thank you for praying for me. Thank you for the many ways you have been my good counselor. Thank you for listening to me. Thank you for being trustworthy. Thank you for totally being my mom. I love you.

Your son

The *Prayer* of a *Mother*

During one of my regular visits to prison, I once entered the cell of a young convict. My first discussion with him seemed an utter failure, and as I left after ending the visit with prayer, his face revealed only a derisive smirk. It saddened my heart, and I resolved to pray for him at home and to visit him more often.

At my future visits, he nonetheless maintained the same cold disregard. Only once—as I showed him Christ, the Crucified, with His fervent love for sinners—did a tear shimmer in his eyes. However, by my next visit, this emotion seemed to have been extinguished—until he broke into sobs as I prayed. I turned around to see him prostrated on the floor, and when I asked what distressed him so, he replied:

“Oh, it burns like a fire inside me. In your prayer, you said that God wants to answer godly parents’ sighs and prayers for their children. When I heard that, it felt like burning coals being heaped onto my head, and I thought about my good mother.”

I did not know exactly what he was trying to say, so I waited while he collected himself. Then he told me the following story.

“I am the wayward son of a godly, praying mother. She prayed with me often, and I frequently heard her sigh over me as she lay in bed, but I was reckless and didn’t listen to her and soon repressed whatever feeling her prayers awakened in me. At times, I had compassion with my poor mother, and when I saw her crying, I would promise to do better, pretending to mean it. But behind her back, I continued to do bad things. Because my godless friends made fun of prayer and

church, and felt sorry for me because of my mother’s strict supervision, I ended up becoming angry with her.

“My behavior became worse and worse, but my mother did not stop praying for me. A girl convinced me to travel to America, and I promised I would go. One afternoon, I staggered into my mother’s apartment, half drunk, and told her of my plan in very few words. Shocked, she asked me to stay but finally sank down onto her knees and said, ‘Come here, Johann, let me pray with you one more time before you go.’ I became angry and shoved her away on her chest,”—here, the convict paused with a loud sob—“in which beat such a loyal, tender heart. The poor woman collapsed but got right back up and reached out both hands to me. As I ran off, she called, ‘Oh, my son! My son! Lord Jesus, forgive him! Save him! Follow him with your Holy Spirit!’

“I ran away. The floor seemed to sway under my feet, and only in the bar did I recover from my shock. That is how I arrived in America, weighed down with sin. There, the long arm of the law finally stopped me on my sinful path.”

The young man spent several weeks in a state of great sorrow, his pillow at times damp with tears. Wanting to let God alone work within him, I drew his attention to God’s comforting promises in the Bible and prayed with him. In His grace, our merciful God heard his sighing and pleading and granted him solace in the assurance that his sins had been washed away by the blood of the Lamb. The mother’s prayer was answered! ■

Just a Homemaker

While filling out a form, a woman came across the question: "What is your career?" – "Just a homemaker." Just before she was about to write that, she stopped. Suddenly, several tasks related to her career as a homemaker came to mind. She had to be a companion and help-mate and be able to cook to properly nourish her family. She had to be a janitor and seamstress. Often, she also took on the role of a doctor or nurse. When disputes in the family arose, she had the job of a lawyer. It was also her job to care for the souls or to be the teacher, depending on what the situation called for. Money also had to be properly budgeted.

Have you also thought: "Oh, I am just a homemaker" and then suddenly realized what that all entails? Maybe you've thought: "Who can do all that?" I would like to tell you today: only with Jesus can you complete all these tasks.

As a wife

God's Word is very clear about the attitude of a wife toward her husband. She should submit to his leadership (Ephesians 5:24) and respect him (verse 33). This attitude should not cause us to be unhappy or lead to inner rebellion. In contrast, if we properly understand and accept it, it will produce joy and gratitude. Every time we read in the Bible that a woman should submit to her husband, we also read that the man is the head. In other words: As women are called to submit to their husbands, so then men are commanded to love their wives as Christ loves the church (Ephesians 5:25). A woman who knows she is loved in that way will see submission to her husband as something good and

natural. In His wisdom, God ordained the relationship between husband and wife in this way for their happiness. Therefore, if we rebel against His plan, we will receive only worries and problems instead of blessings.

"But," you may say now, "my husband is not a believer. Do I have to submit to him anyway?" We must, of course, be aware that we must obey Jesus first of all. If submission to your husband in a specific situation would bring dishonor to God, then it is your duty to obey God more than him. However, in all other matters, it is your task to submit to your husband in love (according to 1 Peter 3:1). Only in this way can you win him for Christ. The influence of the holy life of a believing wife is great. An unbelieving spouse needs this blessing, whether he has earned it or not. Not even we ourselves can say that we have earned our own salvation (Ephesians 2:8). If we live this out in front of our children, isn't that the best way to raise them to respect and obey their father?

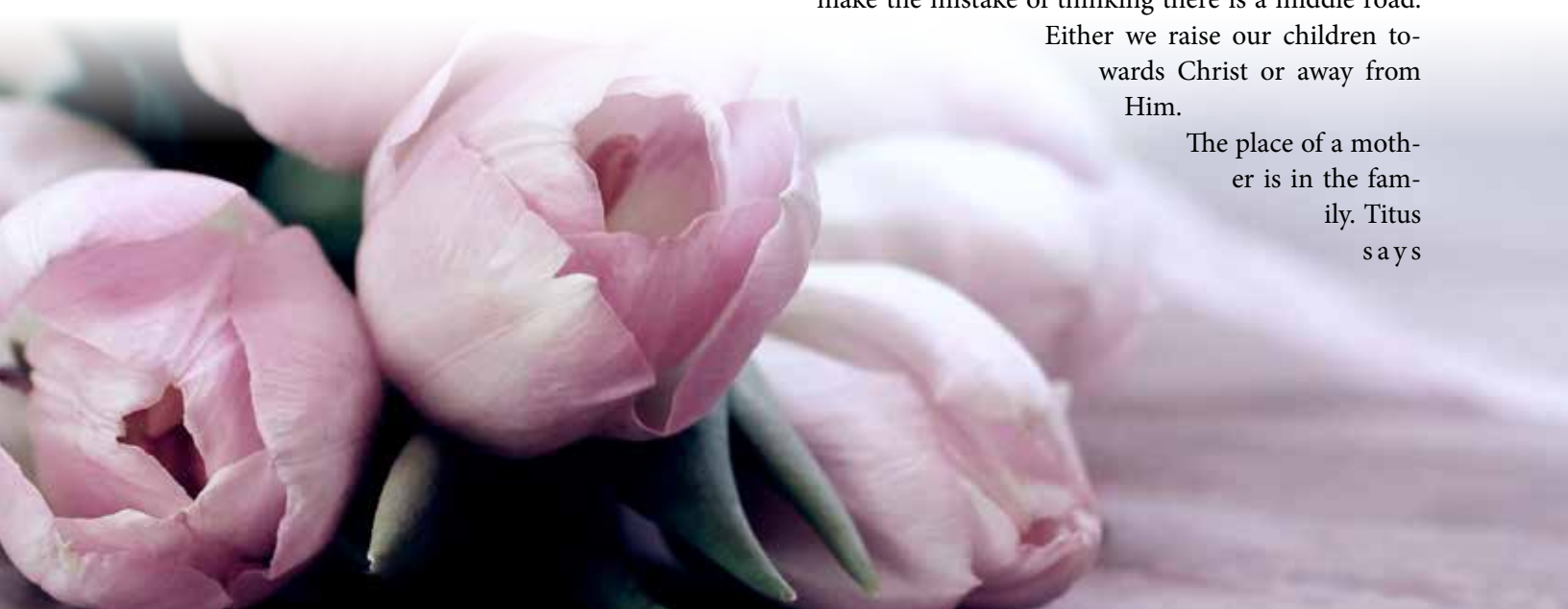
An elderly woman said: "I know what I did wrong in my life. I did not submit to my husband as I should have. Because he was always so unreasonable, I thought God would not require it of me to be submissive. Today, I would choose to put faith ahead of reason."

As a mother

The greatest responsibility of a mother is to lead her children in the ways of the Lord. The promise in Proverbs 22:6 still applies today: "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." That is a sobering, almost alarming fact. We can influence living souls for good or evil. Some make the mistake of thinking there is a middle road.

Either we raise our children towards Christ or away from Him.

The place of a mother is in the family. Titus says



in chapter 2 verse 5 that she should be “busy at home” (NIV). When a mother is there, a child has a feeling of security, which he desperately needs as a baby, child, and teenager. Over the years, our children have grown up, but I have realized that they need their mother in their later years as much as in their childhood, and perhaps even more. They don’t need her as much in a physical sense for their physical wellbeing but for mature, advice-filled conversations and as a confidant to whom they can come at any time. After my husband and I recently returned from a three-week trip, my 17-year old son put his hand on my shoulder and said: “You’re back again.” During our absence, he was well cared for, but he felt that everything was well when his parents were in charge again.

Have we thought of those children and teenagers who never hear a welcoming word when they come home from school and ask: “Mom, are you there?” This has often crossed my mind in the last 25 years when our children stormed through the door with this question. They usually didn’t want anything in particular—only the assurance that their mom was there. Of course, there are exceptions when mothers must be separated from their families for a part of the day, for example, if they’re sick. I am sure that God gives a special grace in such cases and situations. But that does not change God’s fundamental plans for the family.

As a homemaker

No one thinks of a mother without thinking of the home. These two things are nearly impossible to separate. In Proverbs 31:27, we read: “She watches over the ways of her household, and does not eat the bread of idleness.” To lead a household for the Lord means to do all the work with the desire to please Him. Even the smallest and menial job can be done with inner satisfaction and gratification. “And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him” (Colossians 3:17). This simple service for the benefit of the family is a valuable task for every woman and is recognized by the Lord.

How extensive the role of a woman is in the family! We could not even carry out this great task without the enabling power of the Lord. Do you know Him as your personal Savior and leader? If you do, then thank Him today for His help and also for His grace so that He may glorify Himself through your life. ■

ANNOUNCEMENTS

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 Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany

August 15 - 20, 2020

Convention in Swartz Creek, Michigan

September 5 - 6, 2020

Fest in Seminole, Texas

September 26 - 27, 2020

On the Road of Salvation

Part 16

When Jeshurun Grew Fat

Ron Taron

God's Plan of Salvation in the History of Israel

“But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation. They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger. They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear. Of the Rock who begot you, you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you.” (Deuteronomy 32:15-18)

From a human perspective it seems that our loving God must have been greatly saddened and frustrated by this state of affairs. How did Jeshurun (name of honor for Israel) grow “fat”? Clearly by God’s blessing! Being described as fat does not refer to bodily dimensions, but to affluence. God loves His people with endless love and finds pleasure in giving them gifts and flooding their lives with blessings. However, it seems that if God does so, man can hardly bear it! Imagine that you, as a father or mother, pour your love into your children by giving them your best gifts, and they are harmed by them! A saying describes this phenomenon as follows: “Nothing is harder for man to bear than a long series of good days.” God blesses with rich blessings . . . and man “forgets” Him!

God had fulfilled every one of His promises to Israel and blessed them to the fullest. What was the result? Did His people respond with overflowing thanks, with sacrificial love, and consecration to God? Did God’s many blessings draw them closer to Him? God says through Moses: “Jeshurun has scorned Me. They have turned from Me to abominations and have sacrificed to demons!” How was this possible? We can hardly grasp it! And yet it is an observation that clearly is applicable in our time!

God has also blessed us, His people, exceedingly. Especially in the Western world, mankind, including Christians, enjoy never before seen prosperity. A large percentage of the population can access almost unlimited opportunities to experience every adventure and sensation the world offers. Many people have sufficient disposable income that they can experience rapidly advancing technological marvels at their cutting edge. In every dimension of the human experience new possibilities abound. What effect do they have on our spiritual life? How do they affect the relationship of God’s people with their Lord?

All too often God’s people “forget” their God. Oh, they know exactly who and where He is! When they need Him, they know exactly where to go with their need. And He *is* there for all of our needs! “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you” applies today, as to every time. But when, because of God’s blessing, things are going well, God somehow tends to disappear from the central focus of man’s existence. He’s still on the periphery and a few minutes of every day are spared for Him, but in the normal course of life He’s “forgotten.”

How does one forget God?

God’s Word says here it happens when one “kicks,” i.e. rebels in one’s own works and desires. God says here that Israel grew fat and strong. They thought they could make it on their own, without having to trouble God much. We can just get used to being a Christian and living an appropriate life. But how long will we succeed when we forget God?

“Kicking” against God in our desires adds another dimension. Because God continues to bless so richly, I can get away with a few liberties! And so the Christian “kicks” out by using the resources God has entrusted



to him by throwing himself ever deeper into materialistic excesses. He needs to constantly try new things, seek a steady stream of adventures and conquests. The accomplishments of his friends on social media drive him on to new exploits, so that he is soon addicted to a continuous stream of adrenaline. We may have heard the saying: “People don’t know what to do with themselves anymore.” And God? “Oh yes, I certainly still want to serve Him too!”

In the New Testament we find a reference to this condition: “And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, ‘These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the creation of God: . . . Because you say, ‘I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing’” (Revelation 3:14, 17). This congregation was “kicking out” too. The pastor and the people thought everything was in perfect order. “I am rich, wealthy, have need of nothing!” But how did the Lord, the great “Amen,” the “faithful witness,” the Creator, judge their condition?—“and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.” Jeshurun had forgotten his God!

In our text passage, the Lord further states that Israel had “scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” Somehow, they disdained their high calling as the chosen people of God. Had this all become mundane to them? The consequence of growing “fat” was that God’s Word and His Law weren’t as important, as serious, or to be followed as strictly anymore. “God is a God of love, and He wants His children to enjoy themselves! It is our privilege to experience the excitement of the world too!” And God says: They have provoked Him (their God) to anger with foreign gods, with abominations, and by sacrificing to demons. Of course, we would never go that far! Never! Israel wouldn’t have believed it either, but somehow it came

to be. God’s Word is earnestly trying to warn us. The dangers of growing “fat” are very real!

How can we be spared from growing fat?

God is not the problem, and neither are His blessings. We need God’s blessing upon us, and if we serve Him wholeheartedly, He will richly bless us. But we must remain vigilant at all times.

Israel forgot their God and grew fat because they became proud. As soon as we grow “great, fat, and strong” in our own eyes, God is forced to retreat. Yes, His perfect nature compels Him to actively resist the proud. When the church at Laodicea came to see themselves as rich and lacking nothing, their fate was sealed. Real service of God and a right relationship to Him is always based on sincere heart-humility and the realization of total dependence on Him.

In order to be spared the judgment that God pronounced on Jeshurun, we dare never forget the purpose of our existence here on earth. We are here to serve God, to praise Him, and to glorify Him. He must be at the center of our existence, not we! In Israel, the image of Him as the almighty, holy God was somehow lost, and they forgot Him. Very quickly, their hearts were filled with substitutes. Dear Christian: your Creator has put you here on earth to continually glorify Him. Never forget that, as His child, your life belongs exclusively to Him, and not to you!

If we will nurture and preserve burning love to God in our hearts, we will be protected from growing “fat” and forgetting Him. God will delight in blessing us and making us, as His faithful child, a blessing to many. And soon, very soon, at the Last Day, we will hear the words: “Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:21).

The Call

We were conducting a session of our men's gathering. About 35 mountain men were seated around me. The conversation was lively. All kinds of questions you can think of were hurled at me. One man said, "You say that God is all-powerful. So I ask you now, can God create a rock so huge that He wouldn't be able to lift it?"

Before I could answer, another called out: "Why did God create mankind, knowing full well, in His wisdom, that it would just go awry with these people?"

A third one thrust himself into the conversation: "The Bible says that the first man and woman had two sons. The first one killed his brother. Then he travelled to an unknown land and took a wife. Where did this wife come from?"

And so the torrent of questions the men pelted out bombarded me. When I tried to answer, they didn't even wait for an answer but immediately came up with new questions.

Finally, old father Böhnke took over the conversation. He was the oldest in the circle. I knew him well. We had both shared some remarkable hours when his conscience was stirred, and through his tears he could only stammer: "I'm so lost! I am so lost! I have spurned God."

Then, as the rising of the bright, shining sun, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ burst forth into his life. This transformation resulted in this man becoming quietly reserved and paying close attention during the men's study sessions.

To the surprise of the gathered men, he now contributed to the conversation: "Boys," he said, "those questions you're asking are really dumb. I used to numb my conscience with those kinds of questions too, when I tried to escape from God. But . . ."

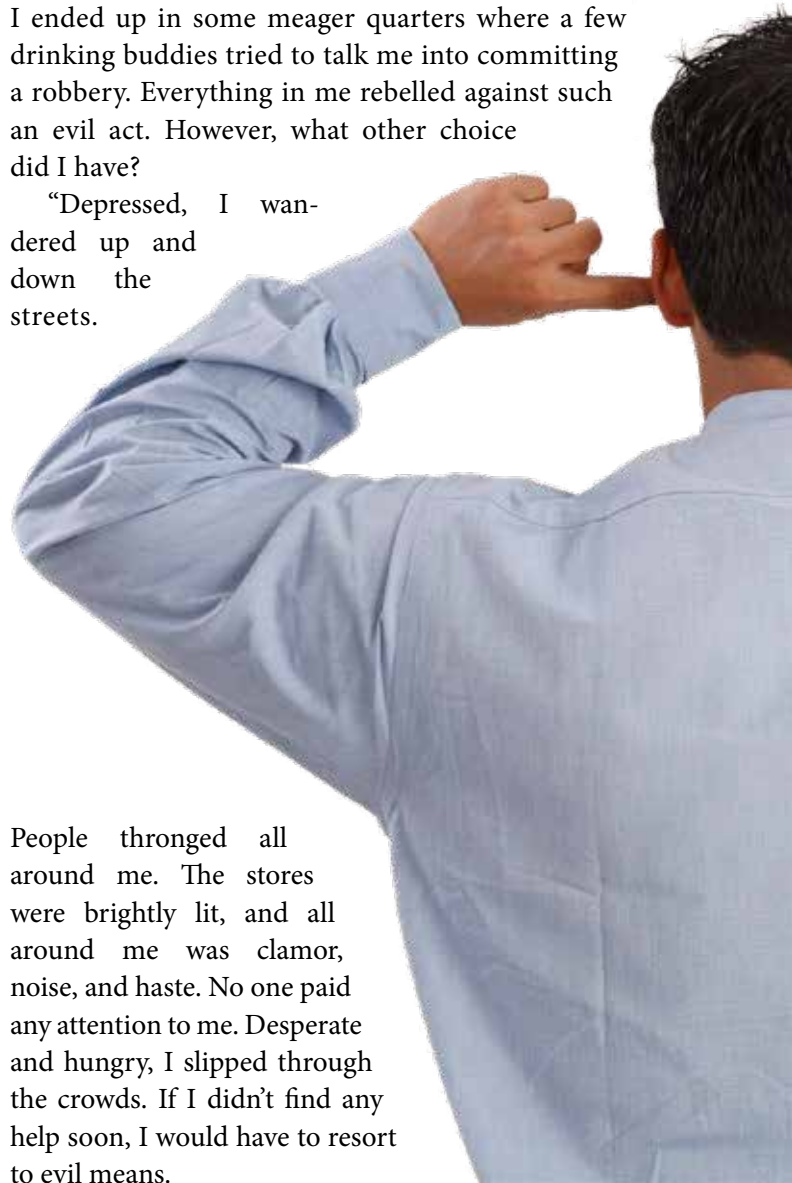
He paused for a moment, thoughtfully rubbing his forehead, and then started anew. "I'm going to tell you a story," he said. Now he had everyone's attention. "I would have never amounted to anything on my fa-

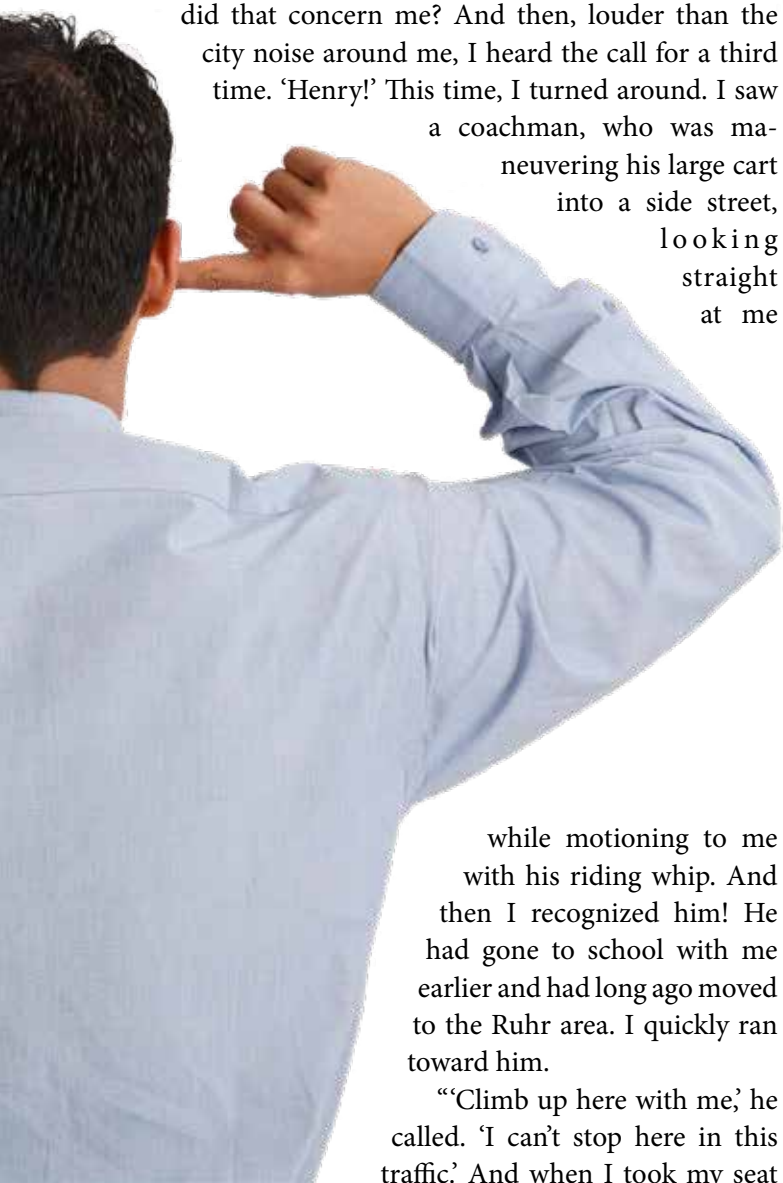
ther's small estate. Back then, rumor had it that in the Ruhr region of Germany, the money floated around on the streets. You just needed to pick it up.

"And so I found my way over there. What a disappointment! There was no money on the streets, only dirt. I fell on bitterly hard times. My money was soon used up, and I couldn't find any work. Finally, I ended up in some meager quarters where a few drinking buddies tried to talk me into committing a robbery. Everything in me rebelled against such an evil act. However, what other choice did I have?"

"Depressed, I wandered up and down the streets.

People thronged all around me. The stores were brightly lit, and all around me was clamor, noise, and haste. No one paid any attention to me. Desperate and hungry, I slipped through the crowds. If I didn't find any help soon, I would have to resort to evil means.





“Then, all of a sudden, I heard my name being called. ‘Henry!’ I was about to turn around and look, but I reminded myself that no one knew me here! Who would be calling my name? Surely there were many Henry’s in this large town.

“I simply continued on my way. But, once again, I heard the call, ‘Henry!’ I just continued walking. What did that concern me? And then, louder than the city noise around me, I heard the call for a third time. ‘Henry!’ This time, I turned around. I saw a coachman, who was maneuvering his large cart into a side street, looking straight at me

while motioning to me with his riding whip. And then I recognized him! He had gone to school with me earlier and had long ago moved to the Ruhr area. I quickly ran toward him.

“‘Climb up here with me,’ he called. ‘I can’t stop here in this traffic.’ And when I took my seat

beside him, he admonished me. ‘I called you so loudly. Why didn’t you turn around? Another few seconds, and I would have been around the corner and would likely never have seen you again! But now tell me, how things are going with you?’ And so I spilled my whole story: the misery I was in and how they were trying to make a robber out of me.

“My old school comrade had such empathy with me that he took me to his home. He gave me food and helped me out with clothing as well. And eventually, he even found some work for me to do. In short, I am indebted to my comrade who prevented me from ending up shattered and destitute. And now listen up!”

The old man Böhnke suddenly became very reverent. “Did you understand that in those few seconds, I was teetering on the edge of the knife? I ignored the first call and the second one too! If I had ignored that third call, my life would have gone to the dogs. Everything depended on me answering that third call and heeding it!” Breathlessly, the men listened. Oh yes, they understood this story well. They were all people whose life always staggered to the cliff’s edge. They understood this old man’s story all too well. Solemnly he continued. “Everything depended on whether or not I ignored that third call. And that’s exactly how it was with God. He called me. But I never understood it then. And then He called me again. I still didn’t respond to that call. But when the third call came, I knew: this one you must heed. Otherwise God might turn the corner and you’ll never hear Him again. Now you see, that’s when I turned to Him.

“So that is what I just wanted to say to you. Those dumb questions you always ask are irrelevant. It’s all about you hearing God’s call and choosing to obey Him.”

The old man sat down. Total silence filled the room. We finished with a song and then thoughtfully went home. ■

W. Busch

Ready for Service

*Dear Lord, here are my hands now;
They're wonderfully made.
They follow Your command now,
So that Your name be praised.
Help me to understand,
Though others tempt and scorn me,
If something will not please Thee,
That is not for my hands.*

*Dear Lord, here are my feet now,
Let them not go astray.
Show me the way and lead now
Upon the narrow way.
Though others may retreat
And think not of tomorrow,
But walk in sin and sorrow,
That is not for my feet.*

*Dear Lord, here are my eyes now;
Let them be quick to see
What's pleasing, good, and wise now
And helpful unto me.
O, let Your light arise
To shine in brightest manner;
Mere worldly glitz and glamor,
That is not for my eyes.*

*Dear Lord, here are my ears now;
Let them be quick to hear
Your Word that is so dear now,
It quiets all my fears.
As long as I am here,
Temptation may come knocking;
But all ungodly talking,
That is not for my ears.*

*Dear Lord, here is my whole life,
My tongue included too;
It will not bring my soul strife
When all I say is true.
O, let me pray and shout,
My mouth shall sing Your praises;
Ungodly jest and phrases,
They are not for my mouth.*