

Foundation of Faith

Learning from God

How Do We Learn Obedience?

God's Curriculum

Blessing in Temptation

A Winding Road

An Unusual Soul-Winner

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

The author of Psalm 43 reveals his heart's desire as he asks the Lord, "Oh, send out Your light and Your truth! Let them lead me; let them bring me to Your holy hill" (Psalm 43:3).

Why does he turn to God with this wish? He lived in a godless world, just like we do. Forces of darkness surrounded him on all sides, and he was in danger of being influenced by lies, deceit, and by human fallacies and philosophies. Facing these challenges, he prays, "Plead my cause against an ungodly nation; oh, deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man" (Psalm 43:1). In addition, the psalmist would certainly have been familiar with Job 36:22, which reads, "Behold, God is exalted by His power; who teaches like Him?"

Yes, dear reader, we have the world's greatest teacher in God through Jesus Christ. From the heavenly heights of the throne of God, He can fulfill our desire as we pray, "Send Your light and Your truth to guide me."

God is revealed through light and truth. They show us how to find our way out of night and sin to the mercy seat, how we can lay down our guilt and our burdens at the cross of Calvary, and how we can find forgiveness, salvation, peace, and bliss through the blood of Jesus. In God's Word, we find the way, the truth, and the life, and we enter the presence of God. We enter His holy temple and join His Church, which Jesus paid for with His own blood.

Yes, Jesus Christ is the best teacher, and we can learn from Him throughout our lives. As our faith becomes reality, when we complete His school here on earth, we will be transformed in wonderful, eternal glory. There, we will be with Jesus and all the redeemed, for it is written, "Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb" (Revelation 19:9).

H. D. Nimz

Learning from God

This is not about acquiring knowledge, but to learn from Christ to be perfect and skilled at all good works.

He Learned Obedience (Hebrews 5:8)

The secret of true obedience is a clear, close connection to God. All our efforts to achieve complete obedience will fail unless we can live in constant communion with Him. By consciously remaining in God's holy presence, we can successfully resist disobedience.

God's Word explains, "Though [Jesus Christ] was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered" (Hebrews 5:8). Why was that necessary, and how does it help us? Everything Jesus suffered taught Him obedience: "And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:9).

Suffering requires a surrender of the will. Christ had to suffer to complete His mission, so He could be our high priest. He Himself was obedient unto death, and He became the author of eternal salvation to save those who obey Him. On earth, Christ was a student in the school of obedience; now that He is in heaven, He teaches obedience to His disciples on earth. In a world where disobedience reigns until the stroke of death, Christ restores obedience. Just as He did while He was on earth, He is still working to support and strengthen us. He teaches and works within us.

Let us take some time to think about what and how He teaches. Perhaps we recognize how poorly prepared we have been to study in this school, where the only thing in the lesson plan is obedience. Teachers, textbooks, and students are as essential to the school of obedience as to a regular school; let us examine how these three elements look in this context.

The Teacher

The Son of God learned obedience. As our teacher, He now shares with us His own obedience to His Father. Jesus came to earth at His Father's instruction. Day after day—indeed, every moment of His life and work—He lived in constant communion with the Fa-

ther, receiving His instructions. He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do . . . for the Father . . . shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these" (John 5:19–20). In John 14:10 He says, "The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works." Repeatedly, we see an interdependence of fellowship and cooperation between Father and Son. The Son observed and listened to what His Father said and demonstrated.

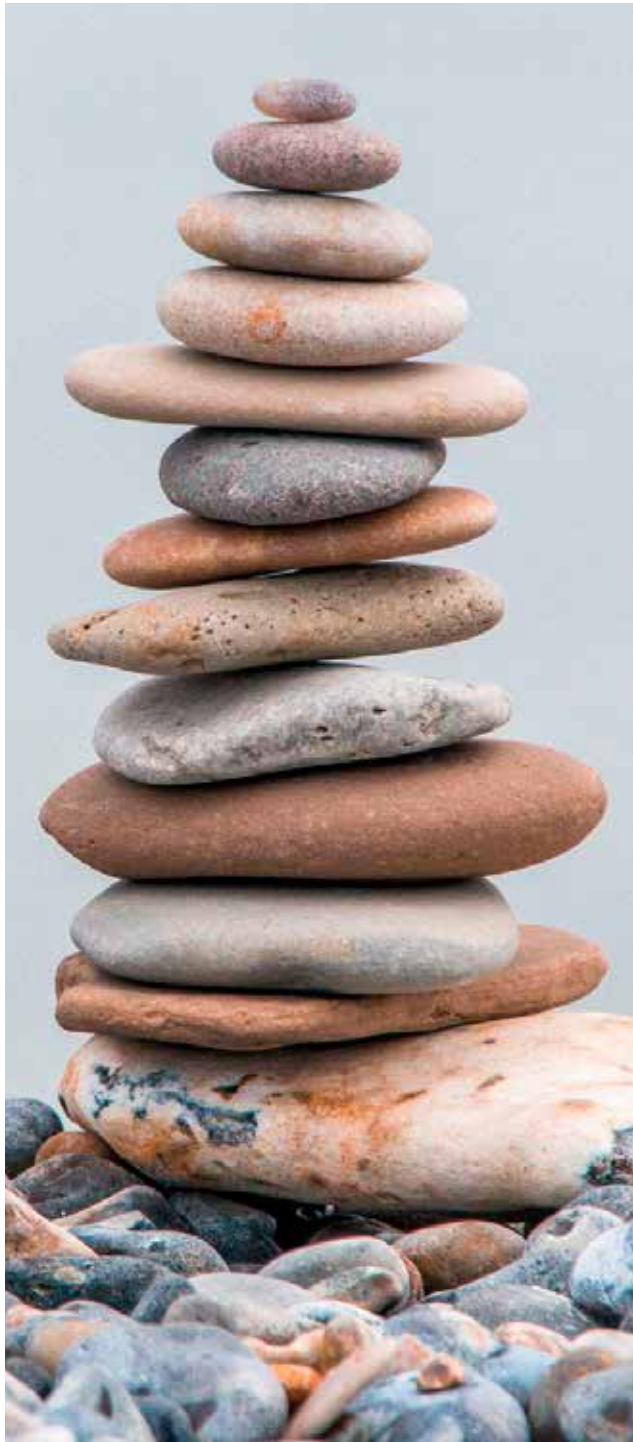
Similarly, it is vital for us to receive our instructions and guidance directly from God Himself. We should obey His voice because He is our God. Scripture rarely tells us to "obey my commandments." It is far more common for God to say, "obey Me" or "obey My voice" or "listen to My voice."

To ensure true obedience of the heart, military commanders, school teachers, and fathers cannot use rewards and threats of punishment, no matter how clearly stated or effective; instead, they inspire obedience through personal influence, by enthusiastically modeling a life of genuine love. The Father's voice sparks joy and grants strength for true obedience.

Let us learn the lesson Jesus wants to teach us. He learned obedience by observing the Father and listening to His words at all times. Like Jesus, we can only learn obedience if we always walk with God and listen to His voice. Pray earnestly for God to grant you the desire to give up everything in exchange for the joy of the Heavenly Father's presence.

The Textbook

There is only one textbook used in God's school of obedience. When Christ had a lesson to teach or someone to convince, He would use God's Word. From the beginning to the end of His public life, He lived out the Word of God. "It is written" was the sword of the Spirit with which He defeated Satan



(Matthew 4:4); “that the Scripture might be fulfilled” was the light in which He bore all suffering (John 19:24); and after His resurrection, starting with Moses and the prophets, He used the Word to explain to the disciples everything the Scriptures said about Him (see Luke 24:27).

The only textbook in God’s school of obedience is the Bible. We should study it with the simple desire to learn what is written about God’s will, so we can fulfill it.

The Holy Scriptures were not written just to give us knowledge, but “that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:17).

By studying the Scriptures, you will be equipped to do Christ’s will, and will learn what He has to teach you about the Holy Spirit and about God’s love, will, and character.

The Student

A sincere student places his full trust in his teacher, giving him as much time and attention as he demands. We can learn obedience only from Christ, and then move forward by surrendering our will to Him, fully trusting Him, and making His will our highest priority.

The art of obedience to God is foreign to our human nature, so we cannot be surprised if we need more time at the Master’s feet in prayer, patience, and contemplation. Unfortunately, most people are not willing to do this.

We can live obedience and learn obedience from Jesus, Who modeled it as our Savior and teaches it as our Master. Let us ask God to show us how to obey at all times. We will become true students, giving our whole hearts and all our time to Christ. He will teach us how to keep His commandments and remain in His love, just as He kept His Father’s commandments and remained in His Father’s love. ■

For I Have Learned

Just as children learn in school, we can learn much in our spiritual life. Every day something new is added that makes us more useful in the hand of God.

“For I have learned . . .” Philippians 4:11.

Paul, the Apostle, found himself captive in Rome as he penned the letter to the Philippians. He reviewed his life of struggles, suffering, difficulties, and sacrifices. At the same time, he could look back by the grace of God at a richly blessed life in which he was able to spread the gospel in all of Asia.

The hardships he endured were not his main concern, but rather, the personal growth and spiritual values gained through all his experiences. His challenging, yet also pleasant daily events became a foundation for him, through which he gained wholesome and valuable life lessons.

When this tried and true man of God said, “For I have learned,” it becomes clear that previously, there were things he wasn’t capable of or didn’t know. He was weak in his own strength, ineffective in good works, and unusable in the service of God. This pertains to the time before his conversion. Even afterwards, he was not perfect. He acknowledged, “Our sufficiency is from God” (2 Corinthians 3:5). Though he could say to God’s glory, “but I labored more abundantly than they all,” he also added, “yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me” (1 Corinthians 15:10).

It became clear to him that God’s leading in his life was not primarily targeted toward other people or even toward God’s kingdom, but for the benefit of his own inner person. He lived by the principle, “first I learn and then I teach,” and then applied the lessons learned at the appropriate time and place.

How it glorifies God and inspires others when a follower of Christ humbly declares, “I have learned to be obedient to the Lord!” Everyone beginning to follow Jesus knows from personal experience that lessons

in obedience are not easy. Obedience is acknowledging God’s sovereignty and power. Obedience is giving up our own free will, and coming down from the place of pride where “self” rules. The path to true obedience begins with humiliation, where “self” must die. Absolute obedience transforms theory into practice in everyday life. The spirit of obedience is planted into the converted heart, but the practice of obedience must be learned and exercised in humble submission to God’s will.

Is that lesson easily learned? Not by any means! In order to truly learn this, we must actually unlearn a few things. We must give up our own self-confidence and learn to practice daily placing our trust in the Lord. He directs everything so it is profitable and beneficial for us.

The child of God may then experience a further step of growth in grace: learning meekness and humility. Are these traits freely offered to a Christian? Why does Jesus suggest, “Learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart?” (Matthew 11:29). There is such a thing as false humility, which can be identified by its repulsive nature.

There are some “religious” people who belittle themselves, while fully expecting to be praised by other people.

Gottfried Krummacher visited a woman who seemed to be a devout Christian. In reality, she was a self-righteous person. She said to him, “I cannot tell you, dear Pastor, what a miserable creature I am.”

“Oh, I can believe it,” said the pastor, being a good judge of character.

“What!” the “humble” woman cried. “What have you heard about me? What do you have against me?”

There we have it. This apparent display of humility

Learning of My Savior

was not true humility at all. May God give us the true spirit of meekness and humility.

There is another lesson to be learned as we endeavor to imitate Jesus: to suffer without complaining. Physical, mental, and emotional suffering can be found everywhere. These afflictions are borne by strong-willed and cheerful people with stoicism. Some people, prone to navigating life on the dreary, shadowy side, seemingly cannot lift themselves out of their lamentations. Some woes may be a hereditary predisposition, while others may be the result of an irresponsible lifestyle, arising as consequences of a sinful past.

On the other hand, God in His wisdom may allow suffering as a means of testing. Some heroes in God's kingdom were tested and tried in the fires of suffering to become equipped for their service and for God's eternal glory.

Finally, we may also learn to speak in truth, "I have learned to be satisfied." Some people will always be dissatisfied, even when they have much reason to be grateful. Other people are easily pleased but then rapidly become disgruntled again. There are some people, however, who are truly satisfied in the Lord in all situations. In the course of his life, Paul learned not to become influenced by outward circumstances. He was no longer like a ball tossed about by waves; instead, he was a rock in the billows. He attained a marvelous capacity of grace and an inner peace of which we read in Hebrews 13:9, "For it is good that the heart be established by grace." He guarded this rock-solid state in different situations, in both plenty and in need. His multi-faceted work and his arduous missions trips gave him enough opportunities to demonstrate that he had learned some valuable and essential lessons. In this dimension, as we also learn from Jesus, we too can be a blessing for others. ■

*I am learning of my Savior
Precious lessons every hour,
How the soul, which He has ransomed,
May be kept by mighty pow'r.*

*Learning more and more to love Him,
Yielding all into His will;
While a joy beyond all utt'rance
Through and through my soul doth thrill.*

*I am learning how to serve Him
With my hands, my heart, my feet;
And each day my Master's service
To my soul becomes more sweet.*

*I am learning how to trust Him
With my life, and for all things;
And my spirit, filled with glory,
In exceeding gladness sings.*

*I am learning, I am learning
Precious truths in Jesus' Word;
I am learning, I am learning
Of the lowly Lamb of God.*

Georgia C. Elliott

God Speaks

“Then the hand of the LORD was upon me there, and He said to me, ‘Arise, go out into the plain, and there I shall talk with you’” (Ezekiel 3:22).

As one of the captives in Babylon, the prophet Ezekiel pondered the fate of his people and God’s leading. His head and heart were full of thoughts that deeply moved him. There were so many questions he dearly wanted answers to. God’s blessings from the past, written in Israel’s history, came to his mind. The great sins of his people towered like mountains before him. He saw that God’s punishment was righteous.

All at once, his thoughts were interrupted by God’s voice calling him. Ezekiel had a listening ear and an open heart for the voice of God. God told him to leave the city and go out into the plain, into the quietness of the countryside. Ezekiel obeyed. In his heart, he knew God wanted to be alone with him to reveal something important. So he went. Ezekiel left his own thoughts behind, disregarded his worries, and went to meet his God. There, in the stillness of the plain, the glory of the Lord stood before him. Prayerfully, he fell down before Him, his face to the ground. His heart was saying, “Speak Lord, your servant is listening.”

God speaks in different places, at different times, and in different ways.

Scripture shows us again and again that God speaks to groups

and to individuals. Knowing this, Asaph, who composed Psalm 50, exclaims, “The Mighty One, God the LORD, has spoken and called the earth from the rising of the sun to its going down” (Psalm 50:1). And in Psalm 19, David says, “The heavens declare the glory of God . . . there is no speech or language where their voice is not heard” (Psalm 19:1, 3). God speaks in the city, in the country, in the forest, in the desert, on the ocean, on mountains, and in valleys.

From time to time, God will pick certain places and certain people for His message. God chose a place outside the city, in the plain, to speak to Ezekiel. He spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden, to Cain at the spot where he had slain his brother, to Jacob by the river Jabbok, to Moses on Mount Horeb, to Israel at Sinai, to Saul on the road to Damascus, to Jonah in the depth of the sea, to John on the island of Patmos, and so on.

Where has God spoken to you in a special way? Was it during a sermon at church, on your knees during prayer, on your sickbed, on a trip, on the road, while you were at work? All at once, you may have felt like Jacob, who said, “How awesome is this place. This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:17). You knew for certain, “My

God is speaking to me.”

Wherever God speaks to us, we are on holy ground. “Take off your sandals” (Exodus 3:5) and open your heart and ear for what God has to say.

There are times when God communicates with us in a clear and definite way. He spoke to Job in the stillness of the night. He spoke to Mary early in the morning. He encountered Paul “about noon” (Acts 22:6). He spoke to Adam and Eve in the cool of the day. In each case, God picked the time that suited the occasion best and when His message would be understood.

What time of day do you make time for God? When do you become still before Him? When do you leave the noise and busyness of life behind to spend time with Him? Were there not special times in your life when God spoke to you? When you quiet your heart, God can speak to you. Jesus went to places of solitude to pray and seek God.

Whenever God wishes to speak to you, He has “thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope” (Jeremiah 29:11). These are special times of blessing. Your salvation is His concern. He wants to “instruct you and teach you in the way you should go” (Psalm 32:8). He wants to comfort you, as a mother comforts her child (Isa-

iah 66:13). What a privilege to hear the voice of the Lord! What joy it brings! What blessing it bestows! What revelations were given to those who listened!

David Brainerd was a missionary to natives of North America in Delaware. When members of the tribe drew near his tent to kill him, they saw him on his knees. He was speaking to someone they could not see. In their superstition, they were filled with fear.

Then suddenly, a rattlesnake crawled beneath the tent toward the missionary and lifted up its head as if to strike him. But without harming him, it lowered itself again and slid off as silently as it had come.

The natives were bewildered and amazed. This white mission-

ary must be under the protection of the Great Spirit, whom they revered, since the poisonous creature did him no harm. They returned and related the incident to their chief.

The next morning when Brainerd, full of faith, came into the native village with Bible in hand, the whole tribe came and met him. They greeted him as if he were a long-trusted friend. They listened to the message of salvation. They accepted the gospel of Jesus and His love. The gospel had a great impact among that tribe. The tribe found salvation and was changed through the gospel of Christ. God was able to speak to them.

How has God spoken to you? When He spoke to you through

His Word and His Spirit, did you understand what He had to say? Did God accomplish His goal? “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:15). The consequences of not heeding God’s voice are catastrophic. God calls, warns, asks, and pleads. Yet, if a person hears and continually refuses to obey, God’s sad response will be, “but you were not willing” (Luke 13:34). God will pass you by, and you will be lost.

When, where, and however God speaks to you, listen to His voice. When He speaks, say, “Lord, what do You want me to do?” (Acts 9:6) and pray, “Show me Your ways, O LORD; teach me Your paths” (Psalm 25:4). Ask, and you shall receive. ■





God's Curriculum

God's people are those whom He has taken into His school. This is a course of study that will continue until the end of our lives. What does God have to teach us? What is His curriculum?

1. We Must Learn to Be Quiet

The first thing our young children must learn in their first schooldays is to be quiet. Most often, this is not an easy task for their Kindergarten teacher. Likewise in God's school, we must learn to be quiet, which can often be so difficult, but is so important. God's Word says, "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength" (Isaiah 30:15).

Why are we so often weak? Because we allow ourselves too few hours of quietness before God.

2. Reading

The next thing students must learn is the alphabet. Many new believers begin to falter when learning the ABCs. They give up at the starting point. Jesus said, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself" (Matthew 16:24). This means saying "yes" to Jesus and giving only Him control of our lives. Subsequently, our lives will be lived according to His will. In order to do this, we must become familiar with God's Word. Therefore, learning to read is of the utmost importance. His Word affords us glimpses into the heart of God. Obedience to God's Word will result in us being truly happy and free.

Yet I have the feeling that many believers have not really learned to read. Our "reader" is the Bible. Have the words of God in His reader truly changed our lives?

3. Arithmetic

Mathematics teaches us to make proper calculations. In this life, we make decisions based on observable

facts and use them to ascertain what is probable and what is certain in the future. Yet, often our expectations are not realized. In our spiritual life, we also make projections, but base them on an unseen element. God's people must learn to calculate differently than the world does. In the physical world, ten is more than nine. But in God's school we learn that nine is more than ten, since giving our tithe to the Lord results in getting much further with the nine remaining parts. God teaches us in Malachi 3:10, "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this," says the LORD of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."

4. Singing Praises

Ongoing mathematical problems can tire us out quickly, but in music class our spirits are soon revived. The following quote has often resounded in my heart: "Singing encompasses a healing and sustaining power by which the body, soul, and spirit of man is made whole." Yes, let us sing the glorious spiritual hymns at home and abroad, so the world hears and knows, "The LORD is my strength and song, and He has become my salvation" (Exodus 15:2).

5. Prayer

Let us not forget to pray as Jesus' disciples did, "Lord, teach us to pray."

Prayer must be learned. The more we practice it, the more we will realize that without prayer and our heavenly Father's response to it, we are nothing. Yet the better we learn this, the more we will find heaven



open above us, and our Father's loving words resounding in our hearts:

*Take from the fullness that Jesus is giving;
His hands are open with blessings anew.
Grace upon grace He gives for daily living,
Not by your merit, but since He loves you.*

6. Geography

Even geography is included in God's curriculum. God's Spirit directs our thoughts far beyond our comfortable home circles. We see our needy neighbor as a fellow pilgrim and see God's wonderful blessings in our own lives. We rejoice that we have brothers and sisters in Christ around the world who are on the way to heaven with us. We can encourage, comfort, and strengthen one another.

7. Homework

Our heavenly Teacher also gives us homework. But He will never overburden us with it, as He has promised: "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13). The following piece of poetry describes God's care in this matter:

*Our burdens are all measured, weighed,
The pressure finely tuned
To form us to God's will.
But what we cannot carry,
What goes beyond our strength,
He'll never let come near us;
His promise He'll fulfill!*

8. God Will Discipline Us

God has the ultimate right to discipline us. However, the very fact that He does so is proof that He has not given up on us. His Word says, "My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives' . . . Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:5-6, 11).

We've looked at a few elements of the curriculum in God's school. God has many other lessons we must learn. Why don't you spend some time thinking about what they may be and ask God to teach you what you need to learn. Promise Him you'll accept His leading. Pray with the writer of the following stanzas:

*Speak Lord, and let Your child listen;
My heart and ears be opened wide;
May my spirit glean Your wisdom
As Your voice in me resides.
Reveal Your will, o Savior holy,
I long to be Your student wholly!
Touch my heart by what You say,
Make me willing gladly to obey.*

*Speak Lord, give us all Your Spirit
As a Teacher right and true,
So that if Your Word we hear not
He remind us of our due.
Spirit, make our hearts secure,
Make Your Word so strong and sure,
That no doubts can shake us
From Your path, nor break us!* ■

Blessing in Temptation

The letter to James was written to demonstrate that belief in Jesus Christ plays an integral role in all experiences of Christians. James is very practical. He particularly emphasizes active belief. It is often said that this contradicts what Paul wrote to the Romans and Corinthians. But a thorough study shows that Paul and James are looking at the same problem, just from different points of view.

The Jewish Christians to whom James wrote had to go through many trials and difficulties due to their faith. He therefore encouraged them not to be downcast, but to “count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (James 1:2). Peter once said, “Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you” (1 Peter 4:12).

We cannot advance in our faith without going through various trials and tribulations. God does not allow these things into your life to discourage you. Instead, we are to become more spiritually mature in order to serve Him better. We can definitely pray, “And lead us not into temptation,” but if He does allow it, we know that it is good for us. Temptations can be a blessing.

Paul writes in 2 Timothy 3:10-12, “But you have carefully followed my . . . persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me.” He does not say here that we are saved from temptations and trials. The Lord, Who loves us so much, does not let anything come into our lives that is not used for good. He wants to help us be victorious in a time of testing.

The Purpose of Temptation

Every true Christian experiences trials and temptations. James says, “Count it all joy when you fall into

various trials.” Have you ever noticed how difficult it is to keep a happy heart during times of temptation? But we have to learn to regard it with joy, and remember that someday we will discover the purpose for our suffering.

Temptations and Trials Reveal the Depth of our Faith

James speaks of this testing’s impact in James 1:3, “knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.” In temptation, we see how firmly our faith is grounded. If we have never been under pressure, we will not be able to recognize our true character.

When a boss wants to test his employees, he observes their behavior when they are under pressure. Many people make a good impression as long as everything goes smoothly. But as soon as difficulties arise, they fail in their work and no longer get along well with others. Trials and temptations often reveal the true state of the human heart. Tension, caused by unexpected problems, often shows weaknesses in character that would otherwise not have come to light.

Trials and Temptations Lead to Patience

It is natural for us in our human condition to oppose the will of God. Only when we have learned to submit to God’s commands will we have the precious virtue of patience. However, this patience is not a tottering submission but means that we keep our peace of mind in the hottest temptations and trials of life.

Anyone can try to avoid trials and difficulties, but it requires strength of character to endure them silently. Our natural instinct looks for someone to blame for our troubles, either God or others. This is a major cause for trouble, discontentment, and strife in families, congregations, and missions. We are too quick to find someone to blame instead of searching for the real

reason. However, it is always best to examine ourselves if there are troubles, and ask whether the problem lies within ourselves.

Trials Contribute to Moral Perfection

James says in verse four, “But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lack-

ing nothing.” The word “perfect” means sinless, spiritually mature. A Christian who has never been tested lacks resistance and energy.

My friend, have you recognized that God has a purpose in testing you, that He wants to reveal the true depth of your faith, giving you patience and spiritual maturity? ■

How Do We Learn *Obedience?*

We are tempted to think that absolute obedience, obedience unto death, is something that can only be learned gradually or step by step in our Christian walk. This is a huge mistake. Gradually, we have to learn the practice of obedience in new and more difficult commands. But fundamentally, Christ wants total obedience in our hearts when we begin our life with Him.

A five-year-old child is able to obey just as an eighteen-year-old. The difference between the two is not in principle but in the nature of the requested task. Although Christ really showed His obedience by dying on the cross at the end of His life, the nature of His obedience was the same from the beginning. Sincere obedience is not the end but the beginning of our life in God’s service. The goal is becoming equipped for His service once obedience has made us completely available to God. A heart surrendered in unreserved obedience to God is the one condition necessary to advance in our walk with Christ and grow in the spiritual knowledge of God’s will.

Dear friend, give everything to God, and He will give you everything. Sanctification is of no use unless you offer yourself as a living sacrifice to only do the will of God. Our willingness to be completely obedient

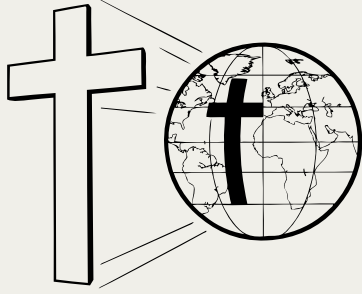
is the entry fee for those who want to be accepted into the school of obedience, to be taught by not just any teacher, but by Christ Himself.

We are enabled to receive instruction and guidance about the will of God only by being unreservedly obedient, the first condition for entering Christ’s service.

There is a universal will of God for all His children, which we can clearly learn from the Bible. But there is also a special, personal application: God’s will for each one of us, taught by the Holy Spirit.

For this reason, many prayers asking to know God’s will go unanswered. Jesus said, “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17). If a person is really determined to do God’s will, and he does it to the best of his ability, he will also know that God will continue to teach him.

This is no different than what applies to every student in the subject he is studying, to every apprentice in his trade, to every person in his profession: effort or practice is one condition of real knowledge. Similarly, obedience is doing God’s will as far as we know it. For us to do His will fully as He reveals it to us is the spiritual element that helps us understand what God’s will is for each of us. ■



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

He Explained the Word to Them

“Scripture—the Bible—is a closed book to many today, either because it is not read or is not understood. In many cases, people only take out what suits them or what they like. But we can only become truly free if we recognize the full truth of God’s word.”

In Acts 17, we read how Paul, Silas, and Timothy came to Thessalonica. They were men of faith, called by God to do missionary work. They carried out this important purpose in holy earnestness, with a full sense of responsibility.

Several centuries before Christ, Thessalonica apparently had quite the golden age. Paul went to the synagogue, according to his custom. The inhabitants of this city must have been partly of Jewish descent. Now it says, “Then Paul . . . for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures” (Acts 17:2-3). This was no small thing. But the apostles followed their divine mandate. The Scripture states that a large crowd of Greeks comprised part of the audience, as well as some distinguished members of the nobility. These people and the apostles were unknown to each other, but the apostles’ primary concern was that people should become familiar with the Scriptures.

The little sentence, “reasoned with them from the Scriptures” is important. How did Paul reason with them, and how would we do so today? Paul just explained the message of Jesus Christ. Our text says he was “explaining and demonstrating that the Christ

had to suffer and rise again from the dead, and saying, “This Christ whom I preach to you is the Christ.”

This fact was presented so convincingly that some of the Jews and a large number of the Greeks believed. However, in verse five, we read, “But the Jews who were not persuaded, becoming envious, took some of the evil men from the marketplace, and gathering a mob, set all the city in an uproar . . .”

The New Testament repeatedly reported these repercussions, because the majority of the religious leadership of the Jewish community at the time rejected the message of Christ. This led to great resistance and hindrance in the missionary work of God’s servants. Nevertheless, the Jewish leaders had to concede, “These who have turned the world upside down have come here to” (verse 6). The Word preached by God’s messengers was indeed powerful.

Their mission was associated with great hardships, struggles, and suffering. But they knew how to “reveal the scriptures” to people. They introduced their listeners to the whole truth of the Bible and into the full light of God. Every one of us must recognize the will of God, anchored in Scripture, and we must learn to see



ourselves as God sees us. This is the vital beginning of an authentic life with Him.

Today, many pastors are very careful when interpreting Scripture. Sometimes speakers attempt to draw their audience to themselves, rather than introducing them to the full counsel or standard of the Bible. Often, people attending Sunday services are not made familiar with the full truth of the Bible.

John writes, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (3 John 4). Only those who have experienced the truth can walk in truth. Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). This tells us that without full knowledge of biblical truth, we can’t really be free.

This is precisely what Paul experienced in his personal life. As a former Pharisee, he was familiar with the Old-Testament writings. He knew the Scriptures of the prophets well, and he knew what the law taught. But he did not know Christ, of Whom these writings clearly spoke. However, when he met Christ personally, his eyes were opened, and from that time on, he

clearly affirmed everywhere that this really was the Christ. In this sense, he also revealed Scripture to the people of Thessalonica.

Preaching the Word in Thessalonica resulted in a flourishing, exemplary church. The two letters to the Thessalonians prove this. Paul describes the church as a church “in God” (1 Thessalonians 1:1a) revealing that these people were led into grace, peace, full light, love, God’s will, and all the riches of God. Paul could say, “For our gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit and in much assurance” (1 Thessalonians 1:5).

“He opened up the Word to them.” That was exactly what these people needed, and what our world needs today. It isn’t just about speaking from Scripture, but about the necessity of really opening up the Word. Even Jesus’ disciples needed this. We read about Jesus opening up the Word after His resurrection. “And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself” (Luke 24:27).

We also need the “opening of the Word.” ■

I Lift Up My Eyes to the Hills (4)

4. Mount Tabor—Spiritual Height as Preparation for the Spiritual Fight

How can I be a victorious and successful Christian? If you've been pondering this question, if you feel cast down or powerless against the temptations in your life or even endangered, look upwards to where your help comes from (Psalm 121:1).

The people of Israel felt similarly during the time when Deborah was their judge. They cried out to God during their oppression by Jabin the Canaanite. Jabin oppressed them with 900 iron chariots for 20 years (Judges 4:3). Militarily speaking, the Israelites had no chance against this power.

Deborah urged Barak, the military leader of the Israelites, to climb Mount Tabor (v. 6). This mountain, 588 meters high (1,929 ft), is located in the Jezreel Valley, and can be seen from far away. Every walkway and road in the valley below can be seen from the mountain peak.

Deborah was certain God was on their side and that He would grant them victory and success with their plan. Read for yourself the victory that Israel had in Judges 4:12-16.

To be a victorious Christian, we need to be willing and ready to work to climb to spiritual heights. If you strive to constantly live in the presence of God (Colossians 3:3), to be connected to Him like a branch to the vine (John 15:4), and to let your behavior be guided by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16), you will be able to reach a position where you can be victorious. You will be able to look through Satan's intentions and agree with Paul: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

A quick look into the Bible, a short mindless prayer at the beginning of the day, or a little media will not bring us to the spiritual heights we want to achieve while climbing Mount Tabor. The opposite is true. If we do not withdraw ourselves from the pressure of the Zeitgeist and climb the mountain, we will not be able

to withstand the "iron chariots" of Satan and will always be caught under their wheels, leaving us discouraged and cast down in our faith.

Therefore, go. Be confident and thankful. God will give you victory! ■

Andreas Schell
Hetzerath, Germany

Verse of the Month

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' says the LORD" (Isaiah 55:8).

Many times, I have experienced God's answers to my prayers to be completely different than I anticipated them to be.

In that moment, when our ideas and plans for our lives seem to pop like a bubble, it will seem quite difficult. Doubt, impatience, and uncertainty creep into our thoughts. Sometimes, pressure builds up within us to take things into our hands and do something about it. However, in times like these, we can be sure that God's thoughts are higher than our thoughts and that He has thoughts of peace for each one of us.

If we focus too much on our own ideas or life's wishes, it can cause us to overlook the open doors God has waiting for us.

Looking back, we can only stand in awe at how wonderfully God solved big and small problems in our life. We can trust God entirely, even if our own plan does not pan out and we do not know how to keep going. God will not disappoint us, and He will reward our trust.



Which Heart's Desire Directs Your Life?

It is in our human nature to have desires. Throughout our lives, each one of us has smaller and larger dreams and goals. Some of these desires come true, while others may remain a deep heart's desire for many years. Sometimes, a desire within our heart impacts our entire life. Many decisions are made revolving around this one desire. The paths we choose in life will be determined by our wishes. Therefore, a desire can impact our entire life. It can either lead to great blessing or great destruction. Do you have a great desire in your life? Maybe it's a heart's desire that only you know of.

In our modern world, in which almost every wish can be fulfilled or almost every goal is achievable with some effort, it is important to stop and examine our hearts. We need to have a clear picture and ask ourselves, "What guides my actions and decisions?" Especially during the years of our youth, we are required to make many life-impacting decisions. We also live in a society in which career and success seem to dictate our lives.

King Solomon had one desire at the beginning of his reign. He asked for "an understanding heart to judge Your people, that [he] may discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:5-9). God granted him wisdom and insight. Above that, he received riches, treasures, and honor like no other king before or after him. Although he had grandeur and wisdom, we only read a limited account of Solomon. In contrast, we read about his father David more extensively into the New Testament. David was

by no means a perfect man. He also fell and sinned against God. But what was his secret to being considered a man after God's own heart? (Acts 13:22).

He also had a heart's desire in his life: "One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple" (Psalm 27:4). David rejoiced in his relationship with God. He loved the Lord and had many encounters with Him throughout his life. He longed for the Lord's presence and waited for His help time and time again. This made him one of the greatest kings of Israel. To this day, he is still a great example for God's children.

God created us to have a relationship with Him. He doesn't want to be only a part of our lives, but wants to fill our lives entirely. He wants to guide us in His love and wants to form our lives in a way that glorifies His name.

If our greatest desire is to live a life pleasing to God, He will lead us and fill us with His grace. Then He can guide us through our lives, turn our hearts to His desires, and fill us with His happiness, even in the darkest hours of our lives.

What moves your life? Do you want to live a successful life here on earth, or do you want a fulfilled life in daily communion with God?

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

Patricia Günter



The Ruins

“Uncle Eric, please tell us a story,” Monica begged her uncle.

“Oh yes, please! An exciting one!” added Stephen, Monica’s brother.

“And it has to be true, it has to have really happened,” said Peter, a friend of the siblings.

Uncle Eric settled himself into his armchair. The children gathered around him at his feet. Their eyes rested expectantly on their uncle.

“It has to be exciting and true,” Monica reminded him one more time.

“Alright, I will tell you about an adventure that happened almost 35 years ago and that was instrumental in my future life. At that time, I was right around your

age, when one day, a new student came into my class. We boys put him through his paces, as they say, and found out that he was different—yes, very different from us.

Samuel—that was his name—was a quiet, pale boy. He grew up in an orphanage. His parents had been killed in a car accident.”

Uncle Eric was silent. His eyes gazed into the distance.

“Why was he different from you, Uncle?” asked Stephen.

“Samuel could never be persuaded to take part in the pranks which we concocted as boys. When we asked him why, he said he was a Christian and followed Jesus. His conscience would not allow him to be responsible for the pranks

we played. Of course, we laughed and scoffed at him a lot. One boy was particularly bad. Wherever Samuel showed up, he mocked and annoyed him. This boy’s name was Eric Berger.”

“You, Uncle?” Monica asked in astonishment.

“Yes, me,” the uncle replied sadly. “I’m sorry for it now. But at that time it was very exciting to me to keep tormenting and torturing Samuel. ‘Prove that there is a God!’ I often sneered at him.

“With a laugh, I banished all of Samuel’s explanations into the wind. For me, there was no God. And if there was one, I didn’t want to know anything about Him.

“But the very thought that everything Samuel told me about



God and His Son Jesus Christ could be true really tormented me. I didn't want to hear anything about it. I didn't want to think about it.

"Then the summer holidays came. I stayed home that summer and just hung around the area. One day, in the ruins of an old abandoned house, I discovered a well-preserved cellar vault.

"First thing the next day, I went with Samuel, whom I had met on the way, to examine the ruins more closely.

"Samuel cautiously scrambled on the rubble while I poked with a stick around the walls of the still-preserved basement.

"Better not do that,' warned Samuel. 'You don't know how se-

cure the rocks are; the wall could collapse.'

"Go home if you're scared,' I replied, gouging into the cracks in the wall.

"Samuel was standing close to me. 'Please, Eric, stop! This could go wrong,' he kept begging. And then . . .," the uncle stopped and placed a hand over his eyes.

"Go on, Uncle Eric, go on!" Stephen urged impatiently.

"What happened next took place in a split second. I felt a powerful blow to my chest as I stumbled back. And then I heard a rumble of collapsing stones. I ran headlong toward the exit. Once outside, I noticed I was alone. Samuel was missing. My heart threatened to stop beating. What should I do? Go get help or check on him myself?

"I chose the latter. Carefully, I went back inside. 'Samuel!' I shouted, 'Samuel, are you still alive!'

"An agonized groan was the answer. Heart pounding, I groped around to get closer. When I became accustomed to the dim light, I saw that part of the wall I had been poking at had collapsed. Loose mortar and sand continued to trickle down. Then I discovered Samuel. He was on his back. Several stones had fallen on him. I started to clear them away with trembling hands.

"Jesus, oh Jesus!' Samuel groaned. I leaned over him. His eyes were closed.

"Samuel, say something . . . just say one word!' I begged, my voice choked with tears. No answer.

"Again, I tried to roll away a heavy stone that had fallen on his legs. No matter how hard I tried, the stone would not budge.

"In my whole life, I have never again suffered such fear and anguish as in that hour. My conscience accused me. 'It's your fault; you wanted to show off. You didn't listen to Samuel's warnings. If he dies, it's your fault. You are a murderer!'

"Oh God, if you exist, please help! Don't let Samuel die!' Loudly I cried out to a God I had never wanted to believe in.

"At that, Samuel stirred and opened his eyes. Never, never in my life will I forget that look. His eyes shone with an unearthly glow.

"Eric,' Samuel's voice sounded weak and soft. I had to lean close to understand him.

"Eric, I know I must die.—But I am not afraid. I am going home, home to Jesus. He is waiting for me already.'

"No!' I cried, sobbing loudly, 'no, you aren't allowed to die!'

"Eric, don't cry,' Samuel pleaded quietly. 'I am not in pain. Soon I will be standing before God and then, Eric,' Samuel groped for my hand, 'and then I will wait for you. Don't let me wait in vain, Eric.' He was silent. Exhausted, he closed his eyes.

"I gripped Samuel's hands tightly. Tears streaming down my face, I vowed, 'You will not wait in vain, Samuel!'

"Then he opened his eyes one more time. 'Eric, I'm going . . . home.' These were his last words.

"Down there in the ruins of that cellar vault, I knelt at the side of my dead classmate and was able to experience that God lives, and that He can make new people out of us.

"Now I know with certainty, I will see Samuel up there again someday." ■



A Winding Road

When I see the traffic sign “Curves Ahead,” I have to think of those who experience many twists and turns on the road of life. Without a refuge in life, we are left in a tough spot in this world and for eternity.

Two men were riding on a packed bus. There was no seat to be found. During the drive, they started a conversation. It turns out that one man was a believer and the other a committed atheist, who proceeded to ridicule the man of faith. “Now, please stop talking about your faith. In our sophisticated time, we can’t believe in God anymore. Long ago, when we didn’t know as much, people could be easily fooled. That’s no longer possible. We have to be self-confident, find strength within ourselves.”—To that, the other man replied, “Great. Let’s check that out right away. When the bus rounds the next curve, you can try it out, since you feel we need to find the strength within. You will hold onto your tie—and I will hang onto this handrail. Then we’ll see who has the better ride.”

We all need a foundation in life, a rock that grounds us and carries us. When the bus is driving on a straight stretch, that may not seem so necessary, but in the twists and turns of life, it becomes essential.

Let me remind you of the life of Moses. He looked for a source of stability in life, and he found it. The letter to the Hebrews captures this thought: “By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27). He made the decision to find his foundation in life in the unseen but living God.

Moses was born into a hopeless situation. Upon his birth hung a death sentence. It was enacted by the pharaoh of Egypt with the intent of limiting within its borders the growth of the Israelites. Therefore, it is understandable that his mother carefully hid little Moses in a basket, placing it in the reeds along the shore of the Nile. There he “happened” to be found by Pharaoh’s daughter who had gone to bathe. Hence, he came to be named Moses, “drawn out of the water.” This event brought him to the royal court, where he was guaranteed his special “place in the sun.” A splendid future awaited him.

Years passed by. At some point, Moses came to the realization that his life was on the wrong track, forcing him to make a momentous decision. Fully aware of the implications, he joined his people, the heavily-oppressed Israelites. This decision goes on record:

“By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward” (Hebrews 11:24-26). From this point on, he focused on God, Whom he did not see, “for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible.”

When you look at Moses’ life afterwards, you can truly say it was a winding road. Later, when God called him to lead the Israelites and to bring the enslaved people out of Egypt, Moses was faced with a series of challenges. How many problems did these people cause him? How often did he stand there helpless and at his wit’s end? Let me remind you of just a few events. The people grumbled and rebelled, wanting to return to Egypt. They forgot their God and created a golden calf. The situation escalated to the point where Moses realized it wouldn’t take much for them to stone him. In all these circumstances, he found his security in the LORD. His God, “Who is invisible,” was close beside him, helping him and causing him to reflect in Psalm 90:1, “Lord, You have been our dwelling place in all generations.”

Some of you may see your life through the illustration of a winding road, marked by many trials. Isn’t it a winding road?

- Do you need to take 25 medications on a daily basis and the side effects are almost intolerable?
- What do parents do when their baby is born with health problems or if they lose a child through a tragic accident?
- What about a couple who is denied the joy of becoming parents?
- What do you do when death suddenly tears your spouse from your side?
- How do you cope when you did not wish to become a single parent?
- What do you do when you are overwhelmed with depression and everything looks dark and hopeless?
- What do you do when you are burdened with illness and help seems out of reach? I recall a letter in which

someone requested prayer while awaiting their 26th surgery. How does one cope with such situations without losing heart?

During such times, phrases like “you need to find your inner strength” are misplaced. How can it help someone to hear such advice, when he or she doesn’t know how to make it through the next day? Rather, times like these make us realize we need a refuge, a foundation that is secure and carries us through the next bend in the road. Someone who helps us carry on and not give up despite troubles, distress, and heart-break.

Moses sought refuge in God and totally depended on Him. According to the Bible, that also means trusting and expecting help from God. Invisible, and nevertheless present. He banked on Him. The awareness of the Invisible One was so ingrained that it made no difference if He was seen or unseen.

The God of Moses offers to be your refuge as well. With God, the “drive” will be better, and you will safely reach the destination. Have no fear. He is holding you. Just hang on tight. He wants to be your “handrail.”

In the following lyrics, Julia Sterling expresses this implicit trust and security despite all lack of feelings, and describes the gift of being carried by “Him,” the invisible God:

*Please take my hand, O Father, and lead me on;
Through life’s hard toil and danger, lead Thou me on.
Alone I would not wander, not e’en one day;
Where Thou dost walk or tarry, there let me stay.*

*O cover with Thy mercy my weary soul;
May I, through calm or trouble, Thy name extol.
Permit Thy child in anguish rest at Thy feet,
And firmly grasp Thy promise, in faith complete.*

*E’en when I am not feeling Thy love or might,
Still Thou art safely leading though dark the night.
So take my hand, O Father, ne’er let me roam,
Till life’s long journey ended, and I’m at home.*

Why don’t you do likewise and place your hands into God’s Hands, and let them hold and guide you throughout your life? These hands will bring you safely “Home,” even if the road is winding. ■

Harry Semenjuk



Burning Hearts

During one of the darkest times in the people of Israel's history, there lived a faithful servant and prophet of God, Elijah the Tishbite. Nearly 3000 years have passed since that time. However, whenever we read the account of his life, starting in 1 Kings 17, we notice again and again a special zeal, a clear and visible fire in the heart of the prophet for his God, the God of Israel.

Elijah's zeal led to persecution by King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel. However, the God of Israel, Whom Elijah served and loved with all his heart, protected him from their hands. In response to the testimony and prayer of Elijah in front of the king and the people of Israel, the Lord let fire fall from heaven, causing the people to recognize the true God. They fell on their faces and cried, "The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!" (1 Kings 18:39).

The Need for Godly Fire in our Hearts

This event shows us the lives of the people in Israel. The Bible tells of their attitude and their worship but also about outward influences that negatively impacted their faith. King Ahab's godless government suppressed the clear preaching of God's Word. In addition, various associations with heathen nations led to a general indecisiveness and indifference in their faith.

We do not read that they cared about the persecution and murders of the prophets of the Lord. Hardly anyone was interested in the preaching of God's Word. On the contrary, they lived in a state of apathy and indifference in regard to their own souls. The long-lasting drought was blamed on the prophet Elijah.

During those days which men of Israel could protect their living faith? Only those whose hearts burned in love and zeal for the God of Israel and His laws. But

this attitude was missing greatly at that time. No longer did the people know on which side they should stand: on the side of the living God, or on Baal's side.

Dear reader, the fire of God in our souls protects us from indifference. The love of Christ has sparked this flame in us. Thought of Jesus' sacrifice given on the cross of Golgotha should stoke the fire with love and gratitude.

Elijah's Burning Heart

How did the prophet receive this zeal? How was he able to preserve it in the most difficult circumstances? Elijah loved his God. He loved nothing more on earth and nothing was more important to him than the living God of Israel, Whom he served with all his heart.

A message from God was also more important to him than anything else. Nothing could distract him from that. Earthly treasures, a powerful position with the king, or the like, could not influence him.

Elijah's heart was pure before God and man, and he lived in God's favor. Such a pure heart is also critical today if God wants to ignite His fire in it.

Elijah's zeal did not begin during this dramatic situation on Mount Carmel. It was burning in him long before his God-given task of confronting Ahab. God was able to send him because He saw Elijah's love, faithfulness, and complete obedience.

Elijah could freely say, "As the Lord God of Israel lives, before whom I stand . . ." (1 Kings 17:1). Elijah saw himself standing before the great God. This does not merely mean we should make a habit of being present at worship services on Sundays and prayer meetings on Wednesdays. In fact, it brings across the deep conviction that the living God completely knows me; every little corner of my heart is exposed before Him. It indicates the readiness to serve Him with all devotion, to live and die for Him, to be zealous and to burn until the last moment of life. This burning love for God is the true driving force so we do not become tired and inattentive. Our hearts and lives become consumed in devotion and love to our Master.

Does Your Heart Burn for the Lord?

First, this godly spark in our hearts must be ignited. For this to happen, God must purify our hearts so He can pour His love into them. Then He begins to use us as His children in His hands. The experiences and blessings in the service of the Lord cause our love and

zeal for God to increase. God leads us farther on and develops us so we can become more useful and steadfast.

In great love, He allows us to recognize that the total dedication of our hearts and lives and the complete consecration to His service will cause our love to grow complete (Romans 12:1). As a living sacrifice on the altar, when we are then touched by the flame of the Holy Spirit, like the disciples were at Pentecost, we will be powerful witnesses of Christ, as Elijah was.

This burning in our hearts changes us. It allows us to become people who do not take notice of difficulties and obstacles when it comes to carrying out and furthering the work of the Lord. The fire of God makes us prayer warriors and people who can be a witness to others with the zeal of Elijah. Through the fire of God, we become useful tools of God in His church and can encourage other believers to joyfully serve God. The fire and working of the Holy Spirit in our souls will make the fruit of the Spirit visible in our everyday lives (Galatians 5:22). We will become guides for other people.

Dear reader, do you have this burning in your soul? We sing in a song, "Is the Spirit glowing in your heart? O my brother, can you say you feel the burning love of God?" Can you truly testify of this today? The blood of the Lamb has the power to erase all guilt and to create a pure heart. Allow all impulses of your heart to glow with the godly fire of the Spirit, and then you will be able to stand steadfastly in the service of your Lord until your victorious end.

How long can we preserve this burning heart? How long did Elijah's heart keep burning? How long did the hearts of the apostles burn for their Lord? How long did the hearts of the martyrs glow for their Savior? Wouldn't you also like to stand with the thousands, with the throng of overcomers, before the heavenly throne, with those who did not spare their lives for their Master? However, in order to join in the song of the Lamb with them, we have to be worthy of it. Each one of these victors burned with zeal and love for their Lord during their time on earth.

Dear reader, allow yourself to be enveloped as a living sacrifice by this godly fire so you can stand unwaveringly in the service of the Lord. The Lord Jesus Christ wants to preserve you and help you. ■

*Otto Schall
Weil am Rhein, Germany*

Tested in Difficulties

We often encounter adversities, problems, unpleasant people and situations in life. Oh, that we would learn to see them from the divine perspective, and thankfully receive them from God's hand! Then He can be glorified through our lives.

Often when we speak of living a victorious life, we hear, “Yes, I would gladly live such a life, but in my circumstances, I am unable to. My situation is so difficult, it’s just impossible!”

A number of years ago, a business owner commented to me, “Yes, Pastor, it’s easy for you to talk. You constantly have the Bible in your hand to prepare for sermons and Bible studies. But me? You just wouldn’t believe what kind of trouble my six employees cause me.”

“Well,” I told her, “if I have it so much easier than you, let us trade positions. I will take over educating your six employees, and you can have the responsibility of teaching the Christian faith to my 120 students.” That is how many I had at the time. When she heard “teaching the Christian faith to my 120 students,” she changed her tune. She said, “No, we better leave it as it is.” That was a better idea.

It is useless to think I would be able to lead a victorious life if my circumstances were not so difficult. It is precisely in these circumstances that a victorious life must be proven and revealed.

Let us just think about the requirements for the word “victorious.” Victory is only experienced if a battle has taken place. Therefore, a victorious life will not be experienced without struggles and difficulties. It is only possible to live a victorious life when we have victory over the daily battles in our life. Therefore, the daily struggles are necessary. This is the only way we can achieve a victorious life.

If we would be able to choose our path of life, I am afraid many would do this foolishly and wish for a comfortable and pleasant walk between fields of flowers and shady forests. We would not climb steep elevations nor wander through deep, dark valleys. Do you really think we would achieve something if our path of life would compare to such an easy and comfortable walk? I doubt it very much.

*If everything so smoothly went
The way that you would like it;
If God took nothing from your hands,
No loads on you submitted,
What would the end of your life be
Once time on earth is done?
Your soul would quickly perish, since
to the world you have been won.*

Very often, parents are so concerned about their children having a “good life” that they try to prevent them from facing any difficulties. God does not do things this way. He leads us directly into trials and struggles. Here we are toughened and forged; here we become steadfast and strong, courageous, and victorious.

Paul writes in Romans 8:28, “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God.” And in the following verse, he states why this is important: “To be conformed to the image of His Son.” Thus, all things, without exception and disagreement, work together for this one purpose: to be conformed to the image of His Son. How would we describe the “image of Jesus”?

He is the image of a lamb. In the Old as well as the New Testament, Jesus is called the “Lamb.” And all the lambs that were slaughtered in Israel, beginning with the Passover lamb in Egypt, were symbols and examples of the Lamb of God.

This is the great plan of God, done with a purpose and goal in His mind: to form us in His image.

All things must serve for this purpose, and that includes the unpleasant and troublesome things, not only the afflictions and sicknesses that come from God but also the tribulations and trouble imparted by people.

Those displeasing people of whom you have often sighed and complained, they also belong to “all things.” Yes, they specifically belong there. These displeasing



and unsympathetic people deserve our thanks. They are our benefactors.

Would we have the opportunity to learn how to be friendly and humble, to bear and persevere, if these displeasing people would not confront us? Just look at these unsympathetic people and realize that God is using them to form you in the image of Jesus. Can you allow yourself to get angry and upset at them? Instead, learn to accept it from God's hand, and thank God for these people.

Yes, as soon as we begin to give thanks always for all things, as we read in Ephesians 5:20, these people will no longer be displeasing to us. We will no longer suffer but will rather be free from hard feelings. We will have victory!

Now continue reading beyond Romans 8:28 to the end of the chapter. What a story is revealed here regarding battle and victory! Paul had to deal with tribulation, anxiety, distress, persecution, and troubles of all kinds. Did he say, "I cannot live a victorious life in my circumstance?" Oh no! A bright light was shining directly into the dark shadows of his troubles and suffering: "Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us" (Romans 8:37). And

further, nobody and nothing can "separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:39).

No, the difficulties are to bring us nearer to God and give us valuable opportunities to glorify Him.

And we owe this to the believers. There are so many weak and fainthearted souls among them who need a stronghold on whom they can lean and an example to whom they can look up. Paul wrote to young Timothy to be an example to the believers. This is also our job and our duty. It would be greatly beneficial if in the congregations of the church of God there would be more examples and pillars of victory.

We are indebted to our crucified and resurrected Savior, Jesus Christ, to make victory visible in the lives of His own. We also owe it to the entire world. In Romans 8:19, Paul writes, "For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God." The entire world is waiting for God's children to step forward as the overcomers.

May we realize our responsibility toward God and our fellow men. Everyone is waiting for us to lead a victorious life. Should the world wait in vain? ■

Ernst Modersohn



An Unusual Soul-Winner

| *Samuel Hebich—served in India from 1834-1859*

Samuel Hebich always aimed straight at his target—a person’s heart. With relentless goodwill, he showed people their errors and sins, without wasting time on trivial issues. Straight as an arrow, he directed his questions at those who crossed his path. Shortly after his arrival in India, he was at an English church service. After the conclusion of the sermon, with the help of an officer who translated, he asked the person next to him, short and to the point, “Are you a child of God?” After his enthusiastic “Yes,” other officers gathered around, to which he proclaimed his great joy of finding uniformed members of the military who had found the Lord.

Bosinger, a Man from the Basler Mission, Recounts:

One day, while out for a stroll, we passed by the country cottage of an engineer. “Come,” said Hebich, “let’s go see this man.” Since I didn’t even know this man, I unwillingly followed him into the house. As soon as Hebich saw the owner, he said to him, “I’ve come to tell you that you should be ashamed of yourself, dishonoring God and your country by your sinful lifestyle.”

The man replied, “That is none of your business!”

Hebich, however, replied in a loud and indignant voice, with ardent fervor, “It is my business. As

a servant of Jesus Christ, I must expose all sin and unrighteousness. In the name of the Righteous Judge, I implore you to repent of your sins!”

This accusation made the engineer furious.

“Leave my house, Mr. Hebich,” he shouted. “I did not call you and never want to hear your intrusive tirade of words in this house again!”

“No, never,” replied Hebich. “I won’t leave till you confess your sins and ask God for forgiveness on your knees, that such a dishonorable life should cease. You are a terrible person and should be ashamed of yourself! Kneel and confess your sins, or you will go

to hell to the demons which you serve. I will not leave here until you heed my message!”

The man jumped up, greatly upset, and shouted, “If you won’t leave, then I will!”

He ordered his servant to saddle his horse and, without another word, left us. A short while later we saw him madly galloping away. We then left the house as well.

I felt troubled about the harshness that Hebich displayed and said to him, “Now you have ruined everything with your severe words! Was it necessary to barge into his house head-first?”

The older man only smiled and said, “I have him on a fish hook now, which he will never let go of.”

He was right. Before Hebich visited such a person, he obviously spent much time in prayer for him. Only when he had gained assurance of victory in prayer and by the Holy Spirit did he approach that person. But then he went as a victor!

Three days after that turbulent visit with the engineer, the missionary Hebich received a note from him.

“Dear Mr. Hebich, for the love of God, please come see me. I have not slept a wink since you were last here. I am lost. I cannot find peace, nor rest. My conscience condemns me. I am in hell. What can I do to be saved?”

Next, Hebich brought Jesus Christ to this man and, consequently, this man to Jesus Christ. Before long, the engineer acknowledged the Savior Who died on the cross. He was able to grasp that the Redeemer’s blood also flowed for him, which also cleansed him from all his sins.

In the following years, this engineer proved by his consistent, honorable, and humble living that he truly had repented and become a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

A Former Chaplain in Kannur Recounts:

While in Madras, Mr. Hebich paid a visit to St. Thomas-Berg to preach the gospel to the soldiers. As the older minister walked along the street, an Army Major noticed Hebich coming in his direction. Immediately, he called to his servant and said, “If that Padre makes his way over to my house, do not let him in. Tell him that I am not home.”

It appears that Hebich did see the Major and started toward his house.

The servant stood in the doorway of the house and stammered, “Padre Sahib (teacher), do not come into the house. Master (the Major) is not home.”

“Oh yes, he is here!” countered Hebich.

“No, no! He is not at home. Padre must not come in!”

Brushing the lad aside, Hebich entered the house. The room was empty. The Major was not there. He entered the next room, but he

was not there either. He walked into the bedroom and then into the dining room, but the man was nowhere to be found. Eventually, he circled back to the first room he had looked in. There stood a large couch, bordered with a fringe of long tassels hanging down to the ground. Crouching down, he peered underneath the sofa and found the officer hiding there.

“You coward, come on out!” he called to him. The Major crawled out from under the sofa and stood before the dreaded man.

“Sit down, coward!” he commanded. Hebich’s mysterious influence caused him to sit down.

“Now listen to God’s message, you coward!”

He began to preach earnestly to the Major, telling him how utterly impossible it is to hide from the all-seeing eye of God.

“Where Adam didn’t measure up, you surely have no prospect of escaping. You must be converted and set free from all your sins.”

It wasn’t long before this man kneeled down together with him and called out to God for forgiveness. He became a courageous confessor of his faith. ■

Wilhelm Jörn

Announcement:

Cancellation:

The Fest in Seminole, Texas (USA)
from September 26-27, 2020
must be canceled due to
the spread of the coronavirus.

In the Master's School

*What do you want to teach me, O Teacher, from on high?
Please tell me, I beseech Thee. I really don't know why;
Why did You think it folly, when I did what I pleased?
Why did You stop and call me, just when I felt at ease?*

*"My child, I had to lead you here to this lonely place,
Or else I couldn't reach you and meet you face to face.
In all the noisy land, dear, so restless every day,
You could not understand Me and what I had to say.*

*"You were in so much danger, more than you'll ever know;
You listened like a stranger to what I tried to show.
I know that now you're suff'ring, but it is not in vain;
My silent voice is off'ring to help you once again.*

*"So, look into My eyes now, and please do not depart;
You should not be surprised how I draw you to my heart.
Be humble and be patient, endure My discipline;
The sweet fruit of the Spirit will then be evident."*

*I think I understand now, my Master and my Friend;
I know that You have planned how my suffering will end.
And patiently I'm learning the lessons You've prepared;
Soon You will be returning; Your glory I will share.*