



Foundation of Faith

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Be Thankful!

Lost Blessings

Matter of the Heart

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

We have a song of thanksgiving, a psalm, from King David. He testifies, "You have turned for me my mourning into dancing; You have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, to the end that my glory may sing praise to You and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks to You forever" (Psalm 30:11-12).

We, too, should all thank God today, tomorrow, throughout our lives and even into eternity. There is so much for which we should thank and praise God. I would like to mention one thing which became very important to me personally.

One of Jesus' most beloved disciples, John, testifies of his Savior, "And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace" (John 1:16). Yes, we have sought and prayed for grace, and then accepted and received it. This stream of salvation flows from Jesus, the Son of God. He offers all spiritual and heavenly gifts and blessings to lost souls. Through His sacrifice on the cross of Golgotha flow streams of grace so that salvation and peace can reach thirsty souls.

At the well of Jacob, the Savior told the sinful woman about a well that contains living water, and springs up into everlasting life. About 700 years before Christ Isaiah already prophesied, "Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3).

O, how thankful we all should be that we can approach God in faith, and each day take and receive from the unfathomable, wonderful kingdom of love and grace. Perhaps you may say that we are living in the end times, when trouble and godlessness are only increasing, and there is so much rage, hate, and murder. This is true. However, we have a word of comfort and hope: "There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved" (Psalm 46:4-5a).

O, let us all praise God and thank Him for His wonderful love and grace!

H. D. Nimz

Be Thankful!



The Holy Scriptures encourage us to be thankful. Thankfulness demonstrates our love and respect for God, Who has done so much for us. If we appreciate what He has done and continues to do, we will give thanks to Him. Our gratitude will increase by simply contemplating how much we have to be thankful for. Many of us give no thought whatsoever to how much God does for us and how dependent we are on Him. Living our lives often on auto-pilot, we seldomly think about what we owe to God—perhaps we are thinking only of ourselves, or have never really stopped to think about it. In this state, we cannot find true joy in life and are not moved to give thanks.

Everyone wants to be happy, but most people do not want to take the only way to real and lasting joy. The Bible says, “Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God” (Psalm 50:23).

When the apostle says, “In everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18), he is talking primarily to children of God. We know this because the letter was originally addressed to Christians, and only someone who has recognized the might and majesty of the Giv-

er and is fully dependent on God can be truly thankful. Children of God have cause to be grateful because they were saved at great cost through the blood of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave His life so we may live. He allowed His blood to be spilled to blot out our sins. That is certainly cause for thankfulness! What are all earthly blessings worth in comparison to the great blessing of salvation from sin through Jesus Christ, our Savior? To achieve what the law could not, God sent His only Son into this world to suffer and die for us, who were deserving of death and hell. Innocent of any transgression, the Son came to Earth and let Himself be agonizingly tortured and nailed to the cross in order to save the guilty. Who can still be ungrateful in light of all this?

Yes, we should be thankful that God set our feet on the path of peace. If we have peace in God, we are also at peace with ourselves and with others. Peace is precious, and children of God have a sweet peace in their hearts, even in the midst of the world’s strife and unrest. The world does not know the peace that Jesus gives; we who do should be all the more thankful for it.

We have cause to be thankful for the truth that made us free, if we have truly recognized, accepted, and adopted it in our daily lives. Pilate did not understand anything about the truth Jesus preached. But the Lord said to the Jews, “You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Before God’s freeing truth can take hold of us, we need to acknowledge our bondage to sin and ask the Lord to free us of it. He is glad to do so if we ask Him sincerely, from the bottom of our hearts, to be made free so we can live and walk in the truth.

Afterwards, we need to thank the Lord for what He has done for us. If we do not thank God with all our hearts for the truth that has set us free, this is a sign that we do not appreciate the freeing truth as much as we should. And if we fully appreciate the truth, we will do what we can to share it with others.

We can also be thankful we have a God we can tell anything to. When we pour out our hearts to Him, He is willing and able to support us with His limitless power in any situation, as long as we trust Him and ask for His help and support with a simple, child-like faith. Many people call on God in times of trouble, but few thank Him for His help after He provides it. Let us be thankful for the privilege of calling on Him in times of trouble, and let us be even more thankful for His gracious help.

Although children of God have the most reason to be thankful, and although the apostle’s command is directed especially at them, everyone has great cause to give thanks. Even if non-believers know nothing of God’s blessings or of the joy His blessings give to children of God, they still have cause to thank God for the life He granted them and for the grace they still enjoy. Someone who recognizes the gratitude owed to God will not wait any longer to accept the grace offered through repentance and faith.

Whether saved or not, if all of us look back on all the good things we have experienced at the hands of God and people, we will find cause enough to be thankful. As children of God, let us heed the apostle Paul’s words when he writes, “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8). When we focus our thoughts on what is good, it is not hard for us to be thankful. ■

Prayer of Thanks

For ev’ry day that You give me, oh Lord,
For ev’ry promise I find in Your Word,
For all the love that You show on my way,
And all the sunshine You give ev’ry day,
For all the comfort when I’m in distress,
Accept my prayer out of deep thankfulness.

Since I don’t know what the future will be,
You give me hope and have comfort for me.
And when I’m weighed down with worry and care,
You lift my burden when I come in prayer.
You’re always with me, You speak through Your Word,
For these great blessings, I thank you, oh Lord.

For every song that a singing bird brings,
For nature’s beauty and wonderful things,
For every problem that challenges me,
For every joy that I constantly see,
For every cloud, for the sunshine and rain,
I thank you Lord, and I praise Your dear name.

For ev’ry greeting a friend shares with me,
For ev’ry flower whose beauty I see,
For ev’ry heart that my suffering shares,
For true believers who love me and care,
For full salvation, which You have prepared,
For all your blessings, I thank You in prayer.

Luise Haisch-Rolf

Lost Blessings

| *“For God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).*

Many of God’s children are missing a special blessing for their souls. They have been granted the privilege in God’s kingdom to “distribute to the needs of the saints” (Romans 12:13). Why are they missing this blessing? They have not made it a habit to regularly give an offering. They may not be greedy; they may not even love the things of this present world. However, they are not conducting themselves as good stewards of their possessions and income. They are behaving as though they are proprietors. As a result, their short life on earth goes on without allocating their resources to do what they could have for the Lord.

Someone may ask, “How can I best utilize my resources for the Lord?” Here is my answer:

1. Remind yourself that Jesus Christ has redeemed us with His precious blood. Therefore, we no longer belong to ourselves but to Him. Everything we are and everything we have belongs to Him. We must manage our resources as faithful stewards, to whom many riches have been entrusted.

2. We should offer on a regular basis. If possible, we should do this weekly, as 1 Corinthians 16:2 states, “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.” This is a clearly stated biblical principle. If certain circumstances arise that make this impossible, we should always determine to give according to our income a certain amount for the Lord’s work or for the needy.

3. Paul’s instructions guided by the Holy Spirit do not state that certain people should do this, but that everyone should do this: the rich, the middle class, and the poor as well.

4. Regarding the amount an individual should give, no hard and fast rule may be established since our giving should not occur in a legalistic manner but rather from a heart of love and thankfulness to Him Who died for us. We should let Christ’s love lead us.

But, be watchful that you don’t miss out on the blessing, dear reader, just because you are not told to give a tenth, or a fifth, or a third, or half, or three-quar-

ters of what God has given you. I have resolved for myself to be a good steward for God and say, “Lord, all I have is Yours; use it as You please.” God has given me grace to live by this principle for forty-four years. My words cannot describe the unspeakable joy of the blessing given to me as a result of this effort.

If, however, the reader says, “I cannot do that,” my answer is, “Then ask for grace and do as much as you can. Give according to the amount of light and grace you possess to give at this time. But establish an amount of your income, even if it is minimal, that you will donate on a regular basis. Do this regularly. When God blesses you with an increase in your income, increase your giving accordingly. If you neglect this consistent, habitual, principled, and scriptural giving and only rely on your emotional, impulsive, or circumstantial giving, you will surely regress. The smallest fixed amount may often be exceeded, but it is better to set this small amount than to give nothing, or almost nothing.”

I have worked in the Lord’s service for many years. In the last forty years, I have become acquainted with many thousands of believers, many of whom I have gotten to know well, and have learned of their circumstances. What have I learned? “There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. The generous soul will be made rich, and he who waters will also be watered himself” (Proverbs 11:24-25).

I have seen many examples of God’s children who “scattered” and yet received more; some who liberally scattered and received abundantly more. However, more often I have seen many save more than was right, and sadly, to their own detriment.

If you have been negligent in your giving, would you consider taking this matter seriously? I want to direct you to the will of God, as He has revealed it to me through His Word. May you receive grace to do His will with your whole heart and remember that “God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7). ■

Georg Müller



The Salt of Thanksgiving

How tasteless some foods are when they lack salt. And how tasteless our lives must be to the Lord when they have lost the aroma of thanksgiving. As the people of God, we should surpass the world in this virtue. God has always required such from His people. Much of the Israelites' worship under the Law consisted of thanksgiving and thank offerings. I believe giving thanks is one thing God values most in His people. We cannot give God anything that could add to His wealth, but we can at least show our thanks for His gifts.

It is a good thing to continually thank the Lord for all that is good. This salt of thanksgiving saves us from gloom and pessimism. As the magnet finds the steel and pulls it out of the rubble, so will the grateful mind find something to praise and be thankful for, even in vexation and difficulties. Thanksgiving saves us from discontentment that may arise in us because of the troubles in life.

A seventy-year-old man was lying on his sick bed. Some of his friends asked him if he had any reason to complain. "No," said the pious old man, "I thank

God for the many years of health I have enjoyed." Thanksgiving for past blessings is a powerful anchor in present tribulation. It enables us to receive greater blessings. God gives more abundantly when past gifts are properly esteemed and valued. Think, for example, of Paul and Silas, how they were freed from the dungeon at Philippi and won the jailer and his house for Christ. Wasn't this in large part the result of their singing, praising, and giving thanks on a night when everything seemed dark and discouraging?

Thanksgiving is our duty, a kind of payment owed to God Who has poured out so many blessings on us. Through it, we testify that we recognize God as the sovereign owner of all things and willingly admit our dependence on Him. It spurs us on to active and pleasing worship. It cultivates contentment. It enriches our influence on our fellow man. A happy heart will bring joy to others. The truly grateful person will be a faithful person, and his service will be a service of love.

How often do we come to God with prayers that are full of requests, as a beggar might make them. ►

However, they can be made much sweeter and more attractive to God if they are lightly seasoned with this good salt of gratitude. A prayer without thanks is like a flower without a fragrance. Gratitude is an element of real greatness. It creates and shapes good character. If we have not already learned to sing songs of thanks here on earth, how will it be for us at the end of our lives, when the gates of heaven open before us and we are to join the choir of angels?

Jesus set a wonderful example for us in this virtue. He taught us to give thanks for what we eat every day. The first thing Jesus did in the miracle of feeding the five thousand was to thank the Father for the loaves and fish. He also gave thanks at the last supper, before the bread and wine were distributed among the disciples. Perhaps

at this time He also gave thanks for the fellowship His death would bring about among Christians. On another occasion, He thanked the Father for the truth He revealed to babes. Oh, how grateful we should be for the truth that is revealed to us today!

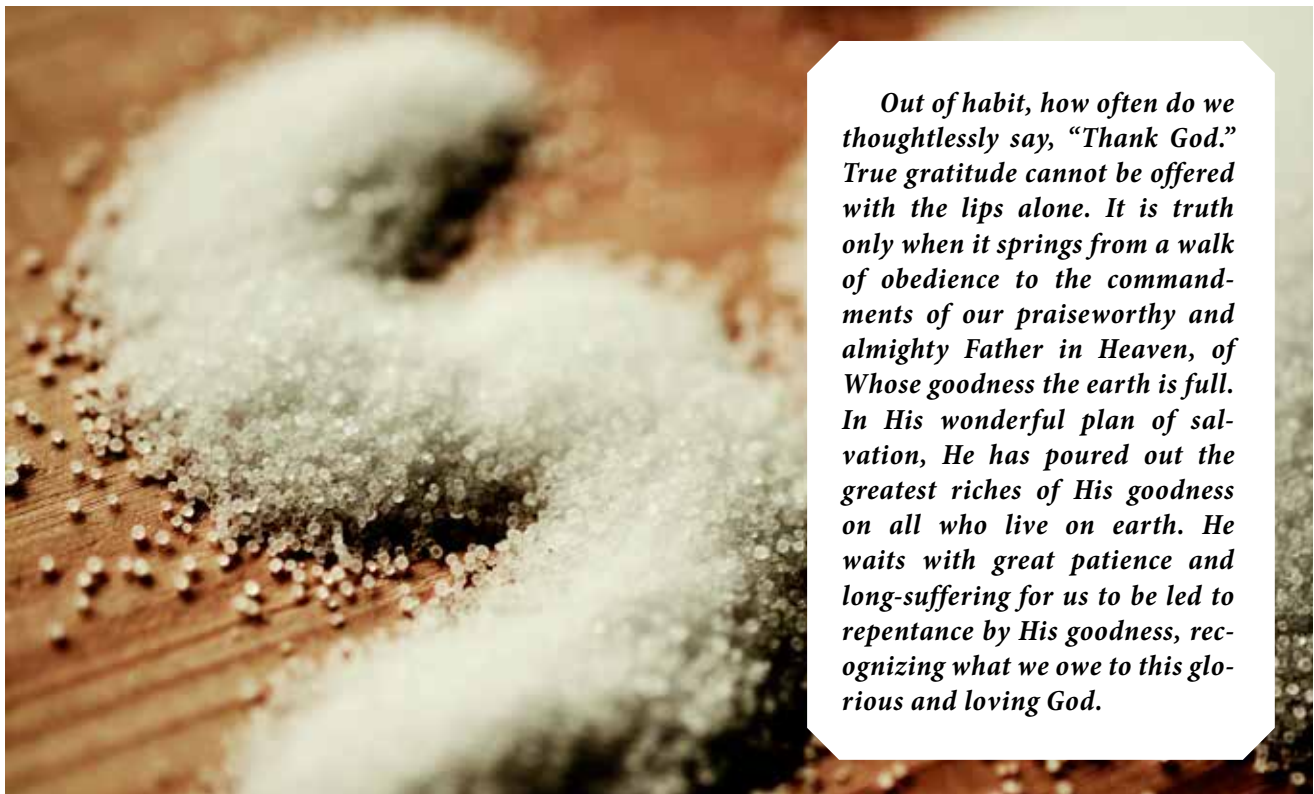
Love will find many ways to express the virtue of thankfulness. How do we give the impression of gratitude for the Word of God if we never read it? Or that we appreciate the Holy Spirit if we never take His advice? Thanksgiving will manifest itself in the proper application of the gifts and blessings of God. It will cause us to put our whole tithe into His granary and to support God's work with what has been received, rather than just using it for our own selfish gains. That virtue will be expressed by loving and serving others. We can

only serve God as we serve our fellow man. The Lord told us, "Inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me" (Matthew 25:40). Can we expect God to take our expressed words of thanks at face value as we quietly watch millions of people remain removed from the gospel simply because we rob the Lord to fill our own storehouse?

Thoughtlessness is often the cause of ingratitude. If we thought more about God's goodness, we would thank Him more for it. We cannot list all of His favors, but we can at least thank Him for some. Perhaps there is no Christian virtue more neglected than cultivating a spirit of gratitude.

"When you have eaten and are full then beware, lest you forget the LORD" (Deuteronomy 6:11-12). ■

W. Waurich



Out of habit, how often do we thoughtlessly say, "Thank God." True gratitude cannot be offered with the lips alone. It is truth only when it springs from a walk of obedience to the commandments of our praiseworthy and almighty Father in Heaven, of Whose goodness the earth is full. In His wonderful plan of salvation, He has poured out the greatest riches of His goodness on all who live on earth. He waits with great patience and long-suffering for us to be led to repentance by His goodness, recognizing what we owe to this glorious and loving God.

How Great is the Goodness of the Almighty!

I would yet like to see God's glory in Switzerland, and then I will cease traveling," a dear brother from abroad once said. He wanted to take the opportunity to return to his homeland through Switzerland, in order to see the glory of God there.

Year in and year out, thousands travel to the wonderful alpine world. Yet how few of them can see or know, "the glory of God" there. The heart of many remains unaffected at the sight of all this glory.

It is a special privilege to see much of this earthly glory. Not only the mountains or the sea, but also many other beautiful places on earth show us the glory of God in a special way. "Whom God wants to show true favor, he sends into the wide world," sings a poet. But not everyone enjoys this privilege. It is also not so much the glory and beauty of creation itself that satisfies and makes the heart happy, but rather recognition of the powerful force that created all of this for humanity. It is the love and goodness of God that offers us such glories, irrespective of who we are. Immersed in the wonderful work of the merciful God, overwhelmed by the Almighty's goodness and faithfulness, the psalmist exclaims, "The earth, O Lord, is full of Your mercy" (Psalm 119:64a).

Can you also agree, "Yes, Lord, it is your goodness that gave us all this, which surrounded us so lovingly from childhood on!" What would have happened to us if He had withdrawn His hand? Take a look at your life, your immediate surroundings, and see if you don't have every reason to be grateful. We are allowed to take from His fullness in every way, grace for grace. We depend on His kindness. We live on it and cannot be without it.

So many people go through this life and take wonderful daily encounters for granted, be it outdoors, through parents or siblings, through children or other people. Only when they lack this or that do they learn to appreciate what they had.

Dear friend, if you cannot see the love and goodness of the Heavenly Father, you are really a poor person, lacking the best and are to be pitied. Then no word of appreciation and thanks can come from your heart, and you cannot lift your hands up and say, "Abba, dear Father!" If you cannot find the goodness of God in all the good that comes your way, how will the various adversities of life grieve your poor heart and empty it of joy!

A fable tells of a noble prince who didn't like spiders and flies. He couldn't understand why they were created. One day while on the run from his enemy, he found a cave with an entrance just big enough to let him in. Here he spent the night. In the early morning he heard the voices of his pursuers outside. "Now I'm done for," he thought. Then he heard one of them say to the other, "He can't be here, otherwise he would have had to tear this spider's web to get in." Overnight a spider had spun a large web in front of the entrance, which saved him. On another occasion a fly woke him from his sleep just in time for him to be able to escape his pursuers again.

While this is just a fable, how often is this actually the case for many of us? Too often it takes us too long to recognize the goodness of God, and to allow gratitude to well up in our hearts. When one recognizes God's great goodness from the bottom of one's heart and gives thanks from the heart, then one will recognize the earnest plea of Psalm 119:64: "*Teach me your statutes.*" ■

W. Berle

I Thank God for You

Some things we take for granted are nevertheless of the greatest importance in our lives. We so quickly get used to what is good and helpful. But are we truly grateful?

During this season of Thanksgiving, we are reminded of the many blessings God bestows on us, not just during this time of year, but every day of our lives. We depend not only upon God's blessings, but also those people God has placed in our lives. God wants us to be particularly thankful for one group of people: our spiritual family, His church. We see this kind of thankfulness in the actions and words of the Apostle Paul. Of his thirteen letters included in the New Testament, Paul begins ten of them by expressing his thanksgiving to God for his brothers and sisters in the Lord. In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul thanks God for four things God had done for, or through the believers in Corinth.

Paul begins by thanking God for the greatest gift the Corinthians received from Him: grace. He says in 1 Corinthians 1:4, "I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus." It is natural and important for every Christian to thank God for the grace he has personally received in Christ. Yet, Paul went a step further and thanked God for the grace His spiritual brothers and sisters received. Scripture says in Luke 15:10 that the angels rejoice over every soul that is saved. If the angels rejoice, God's children have even greater reason to celebrate when a brother or sister has been added to their family. I imagine congregations today would look very different if all of God's children would invest more time thanking Him for one another.

Secondly, Paul was thankful for the spiritual gifts the Corinthians had received from Him. He writes in verse five, that he is thankful "that you were enriched in

everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge." He continues this thought in verse seven, "so that you come short in no gift." According to Paul, the believers in Corinth were gifted in various ways and he thanked God for them. Being thankful for the gifts of others is beneficial to all believers. It helps prevent Christians from becoming jealous of others' gifts, and from becoming proud of their own spiritual gifts. Along with thanking God for the gifts received by fellow Christians, it's also important that Christians pray for one another, that God would help His children use their gifts correctly and for the furtherance of His Kingdom. Paul elaborates on this thought in 1 Corinthians 12. He reminds the believers in verse seven, that spiritual gifts are the manifestation of the Spirit "given to each one for the profit of all."

Thirdly, Paul thanks God for the testimony of the believers in Corinth. He says in verse six, that "the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you." The testimony of believers is displayed through the Holy Spirit working and leading in their lives. Hebrews 2:3-4 states, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?" By observing the believers' lives in Corinth, it was clear to Paul that they had accepted Christ and His teachings. Obviously, there were issues within the local church at Corinth, but there were also those who truly loved God and were filled with the Spirit. When Paul

thought of these Christians, he thanked God for their good testimony.

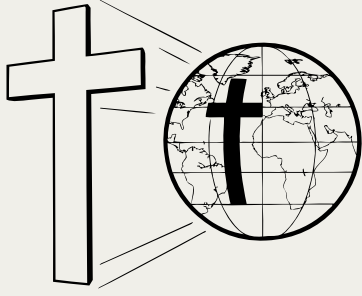
Lastly, Paul thanked God for those of the Corinthians who were “eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ” (verse 7b). These Christians not only lived exemplary lives, they lived each day as if it were the last. Paul, in his letter to Titus, describes what such a life looks like: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” Living a life ready for the Lord’s return not only includes a life of holiness, but of faithful and joyful service (Matthew 24:45-46). The Corinthians wanted the Lord to find them diligently working when He returned, and Paul was thankful for their eagerness and preparedness for that day.

As children of God, we have so many reasons to be thankful. God bountifully provides for all our daily physical and spiritual needs. Perhaps one God-given

gift too often overlooked and not thanked for enough is our spiritual family. Paul thanked God every time he thought of his brothers and sisters in Christ from the various congregations. When we think of our church family, do thoughts of thanksgiving to God fill our hearts? We thank God for the grace we have received, but have we thanked God for the salvation of those who serve and worship alongside us? We thank God for the gifts He has given us, but are we just as thankful for the gifts others have received? We thank God for helping us live victorious lives, but should we not thank Him when we see our brothers and sisters live victoriously as well? We thank God that we are ready for His return, but should we not thank God for those who are just as ready and eager for that Final Day as we are? When Paul thought of His spiritual family, he thanked God for them. How different our lives would be if we had to serve God alone. Let us thank God for one another, and the opportunity to serve Him together during this lifetime, and all eternity. ■

*David Knelsen
Seminole, Texas*





Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Back to the Bible

Much more terrible than global environmental pollution is the dramatic moral decline and increasing alienation from God. Is there still a way out of humanity's spiral of destruction?

“Back to nature!” This is the call we hear around the world. Nature is our living environment. Unfortunately, our environment is no longer healthy. The pollution of forests and fields and the increasing pollution of the air and water have become alarming problems. But nature is not sufficient to sustain us.

The strength and health of our soul does not come from nature but from our Creator. Therefore, the important appeal must be made to all mankind, “Back to the Bible! Back to the Word of God!”

Is this appeal necessary? Yes, because humanity, detached from God, is heading for chaos. We will have far more to regret than the pollution that affects our natural lives. Let us think of the cultural problems, of ethics, of pure good sense, of respect, of reverence, and morality. Aren't these losses far greater? Does our odd race to ruin begin here? The need has long been recognized, the danger has been spotted, and it is widely known that something needs to be done.

It is about the redemption of mankind from temporal and eternal ruin, the salvation of the moral and spiritual life. The only solution to the mass of moral problems is getting back to the Bible. God's Word is

the fundamental doctrine of all justice, morality, and cultural learning for mankind. Everyone can find their way back to a moral, respectable standard of living if they find their way back to the Bible.

A return to God's law is described in Nehemiah. This was not an isolated incident in the history of Israel. Many times, the Israelites had gone astray and suffered serious setbacks. It is important to note that turning away from the law or God's Word always included turning away from God. In Judges 2, we read that after the death of their fathers, a generation arose that did not know the Lord. They “forsook the Lord God of their fathers” (v. 12).

Eventually, God raised up the faithful priest and prophet Samuel who succeeded in leading all Israel back to the law. And with that, a decisive turnaround occurred.

The prophet Elijah once again found the people in confusion and alienated from God. Employing all his strength, he too tried to win the people back to God (see 1 Kings 18 and 19).

Soon afterward, things disintegrated again, and the punishment of long captivity came to pass. Under



Ezra and Nehemiah, the people were led back home. A large assembly of the people gathered together to listen to the reading and interpretation of the law of God. The people were so gripped by the power of the Word, to the point of weeping aloud. We read, “And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra, the priest and scribe, and the Levites, who taught the people said to all the people, ‘This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep.’ For all the people wept when they heard the words of the Law” (Nehemiah 8:9). This led to a God-inspired revival, sincere repentance, submission to God, and very visible changes. This was a return to the Bible, to order,

to the fear of God, and to right morality among the people.

A turnaround like that is also possible in our time. The needs are great, the dangers of total devastation are visible. Yet there is a way out of this all-encompassing chaos: We must return to the Bible; we must return to God. Every clear-thinking person knows that the time to repent is running out, but the human heart does not want to go back.

Would you like to be the exception? Your salvation from temporal and eternal forsakenness is certain if you turn back to God and His healing Word. Do it today! ■

I Will Lift Up My Eyes To The Hills (5)

Mount Carmel—Evidence of God’s Omnipotence in Your Life

King Ahab reigned over the people of Israel and introduced idol worship and the cult of Baal through the influence of his wife Jezebel (cf. 1 Kings 16:29-31). The people were caught in an inward battle. On one side, they were clinging to God; on the other, the king wanted them to worship Baal. This caused many to question if Baal was the true God.

Elijah called the people of Israel and all prophets of Baal and Asherah to gather on Mount Carmel. Elijah asked the people of Israel, “How long will you falter between two opinions?” (1 Kings 18:21a). He prayed to God on the mountain, “Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that You are the Lord God, and that You have turned their hearts back to You again” (1 Kings 18:37).

God answered unmistakably and clearly. Against all physical laws, He let stone, mud, and water catch fire. The people fell down and cried out, “The Lord is God; the Lord is God!” (1 Kings 18:39).

Many people search for true joy in their lives, and, indeed, there are many ways that appear to be the best strategy. Various possibilities and practices are often tried. Far Eastern, African, Oriental religions, esotericism, or other worldviews are spread through literature or the internet. Whoever gives in to such influences opens themselves up to wavering faith in the one true God.

A divided heart is restless and without peace. It needs clear direction. Only when it recognizes what brings true salvation of the soul will it be able to breathe freely. “Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:12).

If you are caught up in doubt, look for Mount Carmel. Remember how God has answered your prayers personally, how He has given your life meaning, and

what an incredible miracle He did when He saved you. You will be able to join the people of Israel in their prayer and say, “The Lord is God!” He is still speaking to His people on Mount Carmel. ■

*Andreas Schell
Hetzerath, Germany*

VERSE OF THE MONTH

“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Philippians 1:3).

Without a doubt, you probably have people around you for whom you are very grateful. How would you fare without these precious people who are particularly close to you? Whether it is your parents, your siblings, or childhood friends—they (often unconsciously) give you support and enrich your life. How grateful we can be for brothers and sisters in the faith with whom we share the same spiritual goals and serve God together! We should never take it for granted if we have someone we can trustingly and openly talk to about everything.

Like Paul, we want to joyously and thankfully include in our prayers those who love us and are there for us. Ask God to help you deal with people around you in such a way that they are blessed and can also thank God.



A True Friend

In our digital world, friendships through social networks are quickly established with only a few clicks. A business model has even developed from this. Perhaps you have hundreds of such friends by now. But do you also have a real, true friend? Someone whom you know so well that no one could replace him or her? True friendships have become rare.

When I think about friendship, David and Jonathan come to mind. There is probably no better example of true friendship. How did they develop such a deep friendship? What can we learn from it?

Jonathan met David after his victory over the giant Goliath. How must Jonathan have felt about it? He was a prince of Israel, the heir to the throne. And more than that, he was a famous hero. Together with only his armor-bearer, he slaughtered the Philistines' garrison (read 1 Samuel 14). And now a simple shepherd boy had come and dared to do something Jonathan himself hadn't dared to do: he had defeated Goliath. There were many reasons for Jonathan to be jealous of David, but he was anything but jealous. His heart united with David's heart (1 Samuel 18:1).

Why was Jonathan so selfless? The reason for it was his trust in God. He knew and saw that David, too, had achieved victory only with the help of God. It was faith, zeal, and courage for God and His people that united the two of them. They made a covenant of friendship that was meant to last until the end.

True friendship runs parallel to true love (read 1 Corinthians 13:4). It is kind, it does not seek its own, it does not envy,

it does not make any social distinctions, it shows true interest, and it is selfless and honest.

In all friendships that exist between people, mistakes can be made. Misunderstandings and circumstances can cool down friendships or even ruin them. Certainly you have experienced this too. When friends change for the worse, and disappoint you and walk away, that can really hurt. For some, their world falls apart.

Disappointed, you may ask yourself, "Is there such a thing as a friend who will always remain loyal to me?"

A friend . . .

. . . who has time when I need him/her?

. . . who stays, even when all others walk away?

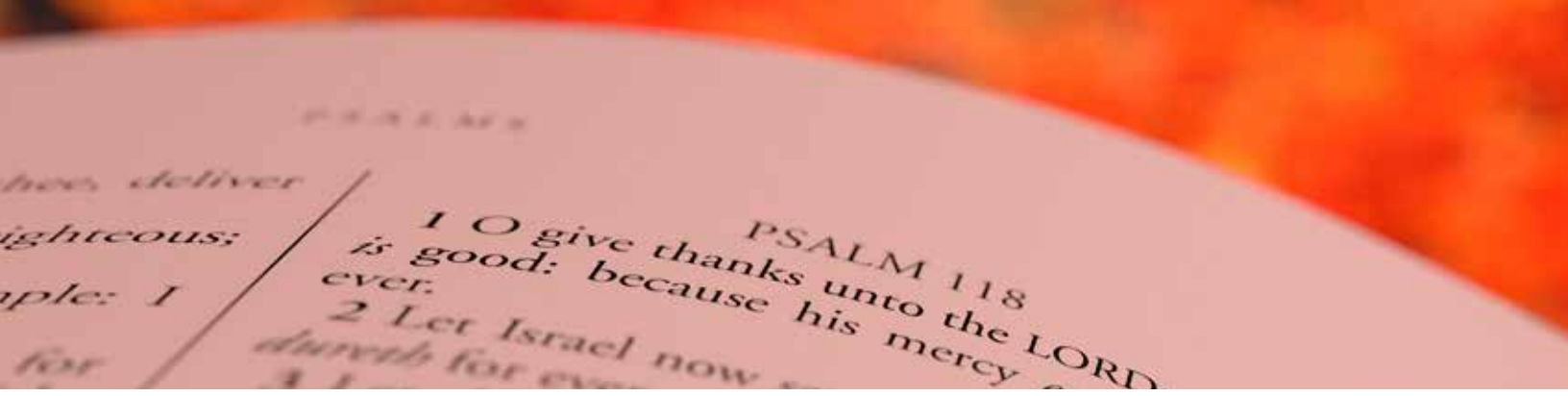
. . . who understands, when no one else understands me?

. . . who loves, when it feels like the whole world hates me?

Imagine: such a friend really exists. Even more, He is mighty and willing to help when you are in need. You know Who I'm talking about. But do you believe it? Do you believe that Jesus wants to be your friend too? He gave His life so you have someone on whom you can depend. He Himself wants to be your greatest friend. He proved this by His death for your debt.

"Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). ■

*Willi Albrecht,
Eppingen, Germany*



Thankful

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

There is a story traditionally attributed to John Tauler, in which he met a beggar at the church door. In part, the story explains that the beggar “was in a miserable plight, his feet covered with mud and all his tattered clothes not worth three pennies.”

Tauler said, “Good day, my friend.” To which the beggar responded, “I never remember to have had a bad day my whole life long.”

Tauler replied, “May God grant thee prosperity.” To which the beggar replies, “I never have known adversity.”

“Well,” Tauler says, “then may God make thee happy.”

“I have never been unhappy,” said the beggar.

“At any rate, may God save thee,” said Tauler. “And I beg thee to speak more plainly to me, for I do not catch thy meaning.”

The beggar replied, “Thou didst bid me good day and I answered that I have never had a bad one. In fact, when I am hungry, I praise God; when I am cold, or it hails, or snows, or rains, if the air is clear or foggy, I praise God. If I am favored by men or despised, I praise Him equally. And all this is why I have never known a bad day. Thou didst wish me prosperity, and I answered that I have never known adversity, for I have learned to live with God, and I am certain that all that He does can be naught but good. Therefore, all that happens to me that is pleasing, or the contrary—sweet or bitter—I receive from Him as being very good for me. Thus I have never been in adversity. Thou hast wished me happiness, and I answered that I have never been unhappy, for I have resolved to fix my affections only on the Divine will. Hence it comes that I desire only what God desires.”

A thankful heart is pleasing to God. I have known believers who were in dire distress, and when God freed them from their calamity, they praised God and could not find words enough to thank Him and honor Him for His wonderful help. No doubt God is pleased with such an attitude, but I would like to go one step further.

We are obligated to give God thanks, not only when He has helped us out of all kinds of trouble but also during times when all is going well. Especially when all is well, we should guard our hearts and bring God praise for His goodness out of genuine thankfulness. If you have a business and you have successfully closed a profitable deal, does your heart overflow to God in thankfulness? Or do you give yourself credit for being a shrewd entrepreneur? If you have a job and get paid your salary or wages, do you thank God for His goodness, since He gave you health and the opportunity to work? Or do you feel that since you worked hard for your money, there is no need to thank anyone? If you are a homemaker, are you thankful God gives you joy and the ability to provide for your family? Maybe God would not need to lead some people through times of trouble if they already possessed a thankful heart beforehand.

Let us cultivate a heart of thankfulness towards God. The world shows less and less concern for the things of God, but as God’s children, let us all the more live thankful lives. It is certain He will bless us for it, and His strong hand will lead us. We can then walk in His ways with confidence. Praise, thanks, and honor be unto God! “In everything give thanks.” It is the will of God that we be thankful in good times and in bad. God loves a thankful heart. ■

CHILDREN'S
CORNER



Enjoying All Things

I don't like oatmeal!" exclaimed Jack, looking at his mother.

"And I don't like prunes," added Jean daringly, as both children knew they were not allowed to complain about their food.

But this time their mother only smiled and said, "Your heavenly Father gives you prunes and oatmeal to enjoy."

"How do you know He wants us to enjoy them?" asked Jack, who always wanted to know the reason for everything. "It doesn't say anything about our eating prunes or oatmeal in the Bible."

"No, the Bible doesn't mention them," answered his mother. "But it says He 'gives us richly all things to enjoy.' And since the food He provides is part of all things, then we ought to really like them. You like candy and ice cream, don't you? Think how nice it would be to enjoy everything you eat as much as you enjoy them."

"It surely would be nice," said Jean.

"I like oatmeal better already. Let us see how many things we can find today to enjoy that we didn't like before," suggested Jack.

"I'd love to," replied Jean, who almost always agreed with her brother's plans. He was two years older than

she was, and she considered him very wise.

"An excellent plan," said their mother. "You'll want to make a list of them, because you'll find so many things if you try hard enough. You can put them in this box," she called as she placed a small covered box on the sideboard.

Several times during the day Jack and Jean put slips of paper into the little box. At bedtime their mother opened the box.

"Let's read Jean's first," suggested Jack as he stood on the side of his mother's chair and Jean on the other.

"Jean likes spinach, dusting the chairs, and doesn't mind so much if Lois brings her little brother to play. Great!" said Mother approvingly as she picked up Jack's slips.

"Jack likes cabbage better, pulling weeds, sweeping the walk, and picking up his clothes."

"Excellent," said Mother, "and now aren't you glad that God gives us everything to enjoy?"

"I certainly am," said Jean. "Let's play this game every day, Jack." "Let's do that," said Jack. "We can have much more fun if we learn to enjoy all of God's good gifts." ■

A. M.

On the Road of Salvation

Part 20

Finally Home!

Ron Taron

God's Plan of Salvation in the Story of Israel

“Now it came to pass after these things that Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being one hundred and ten years old. And they buried him within the border of his inheritance at Timnath Serah, which is in the mountains of Ephraim, on the north side of Mount Gaash. Israel served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders who outlived Joshua, who had known all the works of the LORD which He had done for Israel” (Joshua 24:29-32).

Every journey has a beginning and an end. Joshua's pilgrimage on the Road of Salvation began in Egypt and ended at his inheritance in Canaan. Like Aaron and Moses before him, now it was Joshua's turn to step into eternity. Somewhere along his journey God had called him as a servant, and then after proving himself, as leader of God's people. Faithfully, he had fulfilled his many obligations. At the end of his life we find him an old man, encouraging his people, urging them to serve God with all their heart. And now he was about to be relieved of his great responsibilities. God had decided that Joshua had completed his life's work and had run his race. Finally, he could go home.

The fruit of Joshua's service and faithfulness is evidenced by the fact that the following generations, who had experienced God working among them during Joshua's time, served their God. Sadly, God's Word reports that the people turned away from God, forcing Him to repeatedly judge and discipline them. But under Joshua's leadership their firm commitment had been to “serve the LORD.” Are those in your circle of influence likewise resolved?

Finally home! Joshua was already living in Canaan on his inheritance which God had given him. He had fought for it, and with God's help been able to secure it. But everyone knows we don't have a permanent home here on earth. We're looking for an eternal abode. The

life we know here on earth is just a time of preparation and testing, after which our real life will begin. And there we will remain forever. Consequently, it is so important how we live here and now, since that will determine our eternal destiny.

Dear reader, are you on the Road of Salvation? Is your eternity secured and assured in Jesus? To be lost and in unending agony, without God and without hope, with self-recriminations and regrets which will greatly intensify the torture of hellfire, is just too overwhelmingly mind-boggling to even grasp! And that even more so because God Himself created and finished the plan of salvation on Calvary. Today we still live in a time of grace and God appeals so lovingly, “let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely” (Revelation 22:17). Dear friend, at all costs ensure that you have made use of this opportunity and that you are hurrying heavenward on the Road of Salvation.

Finally Home!

Joshua had ended his earthly pilgrimage and reached the goal. What would have been waiting for him there?

God's Word is silent about most of the details of what awaits us in eternity, yet “finally home” must mean to be present with God and experience the fullness of His glory. Joshua had often been in the Tabernacle, where God was so near, and witnessed God's glory. But now he is present in Glory and sees things quite differently with the perspective of eternity. His “eternal eyes” can perceive in many more dimensions than our three-dimensional ones can. One thing is certain: the reality of God's glory will greatly exceed our ability to imagine it . . . exponentially! And Joshua is at home, in eternity and in the presence of God, who will forever continue to overwhelm His redeemed. How our heart longs to be there already when we contemplate these things!



Joshua's eternal inheritance was waiting for him in Glory. Here on earth, God helped him procure a temporal inheritance in Timnath Serah in Canaan, where his body was later buried. But in eternity Jesus had prepared a place for him perfectly designed for his satisfaction. Try to imagine what such an inheritance looks like. Timnath Serah means a "left-over portion," some land that had been available after the others had chosen theirs. This hero of the faith had been satisfied with that. He had served God with a thankful heart on the portion allotted to him. But now, consider his inheritance in eternity. How his Savior would have lovingly rejoiced as He personally prepared a special place for His servant! Finally he was at home, filled with astonishment, wonder, praise, and thanks to the God Who had loved His child so much.

"Finally at home" means seeing again our loved ones who have already finished their race. Try to imagine what Joshua and Moses, Aaron, and Caleb would all have had to reminisce about there. How about later, when Jesus was sent down to earth to suffer and die as the Lamb of God? Were they able to follow along as He redeemed the world? We read in Luke 9 that on the Mount of Transfiguration Moses and Elijah conferred with Jesus about His imminent death in Jerusalem. Somehow these Old-Testament heroes of the faith already in eternity had access to the suffering and dying of Jesus as Savior here on earth. We can't imagine anything else but that all heaven was watching. All of God's works are of intense interest to those in Glory and will continue to be so as eternity progresses.

And then, the pinnacle, Jesus! The Lamb of God! We don't know how much Joshua, having lived in the Old Testament, was able to understand about Him, but let's consider it from our perspective. Joshua was familiar with the Paschal Lamb and knew that this innocent life had been sacrificed for him. In his life-

time, Joshua didn't know it represented Jesus, the Son of God, but we are privileged to understand all these things. Let's try to imagine arriving in the presence of the Almighty and seeing One sitting on a throne Who somehow resembles a lamb that was slain. We see how all those around us fall down and worship at His feet, and we're overwhelmed by the fact that Jesus is God, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe, but also our Savior and Redeemer. He is the fulfillment of the Passover, the Law, the system of Old-Testament sacrifices, and the whole plan of salvation. How our hearts will be flooded with love and thankfulness! Without a doubt, we too will join all the others there, throwing ourselves at Jesus' feet, and worshiping our God along with them. Joshua did not know Jesus as Savior of the world during his life here on earth, but we can know Him, love Him, and serve Him. There in eternity, we too will proclaim with unending praise and thanks, "I am finally at home! This is what my soul longed for so long!"

Finally at home. Do you joyfully anticipate the moment when you will end your pilgrimage on earth, will lay down your cross with all its burdens and responsibilities, and can be with Jesus? Only if you are on the Road of Salvation do the following concepts have any meaning: redeemed from Egypt, passed through the "Red Sea" of the new birth and added to the church of God by God Himself, been found faithful on the Way of Faith, entered into the rest of passing through the Jordan into the Canaan of entire sanctification, having sought an inheritance there and now working and waiting for the moment when God calls you home. The apostle Paul describes this: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). That must be our goal: to finally come home! My journey on the Road of Salvation completed! ■



Testimonies

“We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed—always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).

From an early age God showed me my need for His salvation. Although I sometimes stumbled in my teen years, He was faithful and patient with me, willing to forgive and set me back on His path. In following Jesus, I have learned many lessons, including a better understanding of His will and what being obedient to His call looks like. At times, God’s will is perfectly clear, like when He called my husband and me to teach in Bolivia in 2011. Other times, circumstances in life made it harder to understand His way for us.

Two years ago, I was pregnant with our third son Benjamin. A week before his due date, I discovered that his heart had stopped beating. It was truly my worst nightmare as a mother—to deliver a stillborn baby. The months that followed were full of grief and pain. Until then, I had never really understood sorrow and suffering. Benjamin’s death raised many questions and sent me on a search to find answers. I do not believe God allowed him to die in order to teach me these lessons, but as a result of his death I have come to two significant conclusions. The first is that choosing to trust God despite our circumstances is the only good choice. The other alternative is to wallow in bitterness and despair. Trusting God in hard times is not easy, but we can choose to believe that God still loves us, is still the same, and will continue to be faithful. I also learned that as beings created in God’s image, we have the capacity to experience opposing emotions simultaneously: joy and sorrow, hope and despair, peace and pain. Jesus Himself demonstrated this in His death on the cross. Isaac Watts summed it up beautifully in the hymn “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross,” where he wrote of Jesus, “See from His head, His hands, His feet, Sorrow and love flow mingled down! Did e’er such love and sorrow meet, Or thorns compose so rich a crown?”

The reality is that suffering is a part of our human existence. We cannot escape it because we live in a fallen world. As children of God we have the privilege to continue to bring Him glory, and to comfort others with the comfort we receive from Him. ■

Karina Knelsen
Seminole, Texas

“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you,
and you shall glorify me” (Psalm 50:15).

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,
With a joyful and thankful heart, I would like to share my testimony of what the Lord has done for me. I thank our mighty and faithful God for His grace and for the privilege of being a child of God, and that I can say it is well with my soul.

“Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me” (Psalm 50:15).

Unfortunately, I did not grow up in a Christian home, hear of Sunday school or attend worship services until I was 20 years old. In January 1987 when I started dating my now-husband Jake, he took me to the Church of God in Steinbach, Manitoba. I noticed the people there had a kind of joy that I longed for. Jake give me a Bible and I started reading in Matthew. I came to chapter five verse eight where we read, “Blessed are the pure in heart for they shall see God.” I paused and thought, is that even possible? A pure heart?

We got married in 1988 and started attending the church of God. Shortly after, when the Lord called me by name, I followed and received this pure heart that I was longing to have. I was baptized a few months later, for which I praise the Lord! I would like to share with you the many times the Lord has

helped me when I was in need and so very sick, even to the point of death.

In April 1983 I had to go to the emergency room. I was in so much pain. After talking to the doctor and doing different tests, he told me they would have to do surgery during the night; if not, I would die. My appendix had ruptured three days prior and even though at that point I hadn’t experienced salvation yet, the Lord had a purpose for me and spared my life.

In October 1985 I woke up with a lot of pain and extremely high fever. I attempted to take a pill while my family slept, but I ended up unconscious on the kitchen floor. We went to the hospital where they took my temperature. When they learned I had already been unconscious, they were shocked that I even woke up with the temperature that high. They informed me that I could have died. Again, the Lord spared my life.

In August 2013 I woke up one morning with a lot of pain and very high fever. My husband took me to the emergency room. After being in the hospital for a week, they did surgery and removed my gall bladder, but it didn’t make any difference. Three weeks later the doctor came and told me he had given up on me. He tried so hard to get me better but without success. The

only thing he could do was send a specialist to my room to see if he could help me. We kept on praying for the Lord’s help. He heard our prayers and after more tests were done, they determined that abscesses caused the infections and high fever. After treating them, I got better. I was told I had been on the edge of death, and again the Lord healed me. We read in Matthew 19 verse 26b, “with man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.”

In October 2018 I had a thermography done, knowing there was a possibility of bad news. Three days later I got a call from the doctor’s office saying that I needed to go and have a biopsy done. The results showed that I had fast-growing breast cancer. The very first doctor who came to mind was Jesus. In faith I was able to lay it at the feet of Jesus. In March of this year 2020 I had all the tests done, and all the tests were clear. I cannot thank the Lord enough for healing me so many times, and I’m so thankful for our church family. Hearing them pray for me in every service meant so much to me. I will serve the Lord all the days of my life. ■

Your sister in Christ,
Lisa Wieler
Seminole, Texas

Matters of The Heart

The surgery went well! Your husband is resting in the recovery room.” This message, conveyed by the cardiac surgeon, was the outcome Doris had been anxiously seeking from the Lord as she prayed in the family waiting room of the Hamilton General Hospital. “How many bypasses did he have?” she asked. “Six.”

It had come so unexpectedly. It seemed unthinkable that he, of all people, would require open-heart bypass surgery. She had known him her entire life. He had run marathons. He had been a competitive swimmer. He competed in track and field. Not only in his youth, but throughout his life he had maintained a physically active lifestyle. Even last year, the year before his surgery he had bicycled more than 3000 kilometers (1864 mi), and each time he went out, it seemed that it was a new race.

“Dr. Chu,” she said “You have given my husband a new heart. Will the new heart love me as much as the old one did?”

Often, when I went on a bike ride, Doris would ask, “Do you have identification? Do you have your cellphone? You could be lying in a ditch somewhere, with a heart attack, and I wouldn’t know where you are.” “Doris,” I assured. “We all must die some day. But one thing I can say, I will not die of a heart attack.” Of course, that was foolish talk, for we do not know what tomorrow will bring (James 4:14).

And then in September 2018 towards the end of a typical ride, it felt as if an ice pack had been placed on my chest. It was merely a feeling of discomfort, which recurred in subsequent bike rides. In May, the following year, an angiogram revealed multiple blockages—30% up to 100%. And nine months following the initial episode, I was having open heart surgery. Never has the privilege of being a child of God become so vivid to me as during this time of crisis.

Not Alone

First, we are not alone. Alone, and isolated is one of

the great lamentations in the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike such feelings, I felt surrounded, supported, and not alone. In a telephone conversation with a relative, I heard, “We are praying for you every single day.” Among the many emails I received, one arrived shortly before the surgery, “We are praying!” Just three simple words. Nothing more. Yet what a message of comfort and support! “And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it” (1 Corinthians 12:26). Not alone.

A few days before the surgery, following a worship service, a sister in Christ, visibly moved, shared with me her struggle with God. In her right hand, she held a quivering sheet of paper. On it were listed eight reasons why God could not take me home yet. Just as King Hezekiah had done when he spread out before God the threatening letter from the King of Assyria (2 Kings 19:14), she had spread out this sheet before God, praying for a successful surgery and recovery. What a privilege to be a member of the family of God, and I include in that my own family who fasted and prayed. “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” (Philippians 1:3). Not alone.

Comforting as it is to be supported by the family of God, of even greater comfort is God’s assurance that He is with us in the midst of life’s hottest fires. He so vividly demonstrated this by informing us, in Daniel chapter three, of three young Israeli men living in exile under King Nebuchadnezzar. The king had given the order that all should fall down and worship the golden image he had created, but they refused to worship any god but the one true God. They were bound and thrown into the fiery furnace. When King Nebuchadnezzar peered into the fire, he was astonished and leapt to his feet saying, “Did we not cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? Look! I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire; and they are not hurt, and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Not alone.

“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with

me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4). Not alone.

Peace

Inner peace took preeminence in this crisis. This peace is not something we earn. It is a gift of God. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27). Peace.

At a church convention in Aylmer, chatting at the lunch table with a dear friend, he wanted to know, “What thoughts go through your mind as you consider that in two days you are having open heart surgery?”

“I am totally at peace in God’s will” (Philippians 4:6,7). “I am 80. I have had a good and long life. If I were to die now, I would see Jesus, my Savior. I would be reunited with my parents, and all those friends who have persevered and gone before me. For many years now, my prayer has been that God would call me home before I would become a burden to anyone. And, so it would be. Can you imagine a more favorable outcome?”

Tapping me on the shoulder, Doris protested, shaking her head. “I don’t like it when you talk this way.” Ashamed of my selfish perspective, I added, “I believe God will add a few more years to my life, and that the surgery will go well. But, no matter what happens, in life or in death, I am in God’s care. And God is good! As God’s children, are we even able to fully comprehend the privilege of being a child of God?” I continued.

“How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1). Like a birth certificate, we receive the Word of promise. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:19). Truly, this is the genesis of our peace. Peace with God. The outcome—“the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). Peace.

To know God is to love Him. “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28). And “to love Him is to keep his commandments” (John 14:15). And, “if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God” (1 John 3:21). Peace.

How Could I Have Been So Wrong?

Two controllable factors for good health are exercise and a healthy diet. I adhered diligently to both. The seat of my strength and my stamina was my heart. Had I not taken the stairs, as was my habit, rather than the elevator to the fourth floor office of my cardiologist? Never did my heart fail me, nor would it ever fail me, so I thought. And then two days later, the angiogram. How could I have been so wrong?

Spiritually, the Bible uses the metaphor of man’s heart as the seat of his thoughts and actions, and warns, “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 4:7). It warns of lip service to God—“These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me” (Mark 7:6). It reveals true service to God—“You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30,31).

Jesus, speaking of judgment, warns that there will be many who will have deceived themselves with the condition of their hearts. “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:22,23). How could they have been so wrong?

King David requested an angiogram from the Lord. “Search me O God and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23,24). There will never be a better time than now to ask the Lord for an angiogram. And if that should highlight issues with your heart, the Great Physician declares Himself ready: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26). ■

With heartfelt gratitude:

A new Heart.

Not Alone.

Peace.

*Hartmut Sonnenberg
Hamilton, Ontario*

The Truth Will Set You Free

Thoughts about the Reformation

Jesus said, “And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:32). Truth stems from freedom and manifests itself through consecrated willingness to walk in the pathway of truth.

Birth of the Reformation

Imagine for a moment just what it was that awakened the Protestant Reformation. If you study Martin Luther’s life, you realize he was a product of his time. The entire political and religious climate of the early sixteenth century was an atmosphere of revolt and resistance and a desire for independence. People who had previously taken public declarations at face value and accepted them as truth, now began to demand facts, testimonies, and validity. With respect to free thinking and freedom of expression, the Renaissance raised this to a new height.

New Powers at Work

A new spirit arose with a call for new life in the church. The people resented the political aspirations of the church and sought change. Then, an economic revolution was in the works. A fatal blow was aimed at feudalism, which only served an end in itself and was falling out of vogue more and more. New social classes emerged; old standards were questioned and called to account. The Reformation likely would have happened without Luther. In no way did it happen singlehandedly through his effectiveness, intellectual ability, and personality.

Luther Sought Truth

Martin Luther was a unique personality. A battle had raged in his spirit and soul for many years. He was filled with a spiritual agitation, combined with a genuine pursuit of truth. He was not satisfied with his relationship with God and lived with a constant feeling of

unatoned guilt and condemnation. Luther had fought these battles of the flesh and spirit for a long time. In essence, one of his greatest concerns was his inability to have victory over sin and to find peace. Apparently, it was the yearning for and pursuit of peace that caused Luther to disappoint his father by renouncing a lucrative career. Instead, he entered the monastery—disconnected from the world—where he hoped to be immersed in close communion with God, thereby escaping despair. With Paul he cried out, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24).

No Relationship with God

However, Luther’s search for peace in the monastery did not result in inner peace or the assurance of forgiveness of sins. One day while washing his hands, he cried out, “The more I wash them, the filthier they get!” With or without religion, Luther lacked a relationship with God, and his soul craved peace. He had done all the church had taught him to do. Instead of achieving peace and rest from the ceremonies, his soul became more and more burdened. In his spiritual hunger, Luther read through everything, from the writings of Augustine to the German mystics. There, he finally found the secret that led to the transformation in his life. This was the secret: religion that satisfies must be a religion of the heart. From Augustine, he learned the sense and meaning of sin and grace. From a priest named Staupitz, he learned that godly sorrow is not awakened by fearing God but rather by loving Him.

Only Christ Forgives Sins

Now Luther began a deeper and more intensive study of the Holy Bible than ever before. He became more and more convinced that forgiveness of sins can only happen through Christ, and that the feelings of con-

demnation weighing on a guilt-laden soul cannot be assuaged by gifts and offerings. The Apostle Paul declared that salvation in Christ is a free gift from God. Then Luther asked himself, “How is this possible if salvation can be purchased with a gold coin?”

Luther was totally honest in his heart in his questioning and search for truth. After he realized that his revelation of truth was contrary to what he had been taught all along, he proclaimed the nature and essence of his new faith to all who listened to him. His courage and unwavering defense of truth inspired and encouraged thousands to follow in his footsteps. Luther said, “My conscience has been captured by the Word of God; to act against my conscience is neither right nor reasonable.” This was the Spirit that launched the reformation of Luther, and the same Spirit Who frees people of all times and all ranks and keeps them free.

Luther’s Theology

What key points of Luther’s theology are best applied to our current world?

1. God’s forgiveness cannot be purchased with money.
2. Salvation cannot be achieved through good works.
3. Salvation comes only from faith and through faith: “The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).
4. The repetition of memorized prayers brings no one into heaven.
5. Taking communion does not change your relationship with God, nor does prayer for the dead change their ultimate destination.

Through Jesus Christ, the only Mediator, everyone can approach the throne of God. As John said, “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Christ Is More Important

For Martin Luther, this was the first time he understood that Christ was more important than the church. From this moment on, Jesus Christ became Lord of his life. He realized the Bible was more important than the church with its power, and revelation from God was far greater than all human doctrine. Even today, nothing is more dangerous than to consider the New Testament as the teachings of men. Jesus Christ is Lord. Christians cannot consider the rules and regulations of men as spiritually binding if they do not match the teaching of the Holy Bible.

The Need for a New Reformation

In our current unsettled, ungodly world, it appears we need another reformation. At certain times, religious movements begin with power and splendor, but after a few generations they fade away.

Every generation requires another Luther, another Wesley, another Warner to direct the church’s attention to truth. Otherwise, truth is lost in the overall lack of love among people. We need people who warn of the danger found in the shallow waters of compromise and spiritual blindness. We need evangelists who proclaim saving biblical truth, the truth that sets all people free.

Works Must Match Faith

“But the just shall live by his faith” (Habakkuk 2:4), if there is spiritual life. It’s not enough to say, “I believe in Jesus Christ.” We must prove our faith by our works. Although salvation does not come through works, the gospel must be proclaimed through our character and actions. Your responsibility, and mine, is to keep the church alive, consecrated, surrendered, and vibrant. Are you doing your part? ■

Testimony

“He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds”
(Psalm 147:3).

God has done so many miracles for me and my family during the past year. My heart is overflowing with thankfulness as I ponder His goodness and mercy on us.

“He Heals the Broken-Hearted.”

In June of last year, I had my third major anxiety attack. I had experienced two miscarriages within six months prior to June and my heart was overwhelmed with grief. I was not able to sleep well and therefore my mind and body stopped working properly. This time my anxiety got so bad that I had to be brought into a Mental Health Care Center.

During my time at the Health Care Center, I went through extremely dark moments. I felt like Satan had been let loose to come and just pound me with doubts, extreme fear, and hopelessness. These thoughts went continuously through my mind: “I will die and be lost forever. Life will never return to normal and I will never be able to be blessed with a family with children of my own,” and many more. Oh, how wrong Satan was! I have first-hand experience that Satan is nothing but a liar.

My whole immediate family, as well as my church family and many other children of God across the globe were praying earnestly for me. God answered those prayers and in just over a week I was released from the Health Care Center. God continued to heal my body and mind.


In the month of August, my husband and I had the opportunity to visit a church retreat in Germany. The opportunity was given to be anointed and prayed over for healing. I felt the call from God to be anointed. As a pastor anointed and prayed over me, I felt a wonderful peace coming into my heart, knowing that God would glorify Himself through my life in a wonderful way. The healing was not instantaneous, but slowly God brought healing to my body and mind so that today I can say I am healed!

I have not had an anxiety attack since that day. God has also blessed us with a beautiful, baby boy exactly one year later. He is healthy and thriving. My heart is overflowing with joy and happiness. God is so good! All praise and honor be to Him.

If your heart is broken, go to Jesus, and He will heal you. ■

*Maria Günter
Steinbach, Manitoba*





A Psalm of Thanksgiving
Psalm 100

A Psalm of Thanksgiving.
Make a joyful shout to the LORD,
all you lands!

Serve the LORD with gladness;
Come before His presence with singing.

Know that the LORD, He is God;
It is He who has made us,
and not we ourselves;
We are His people and
the sheep of His pasture.

Enter into His gates with thanksgiving,
And into His courts with praise.
Be thankful to Him, and bless His name.

For the LORD is good;
His mercy is everlasting,
And His truth endures to all generations.

His Kingdom is Forever!

*The Bible is still God's dear Word,
Proclaim it loud with one accord:
His Kingdom is forever.
In evr'y place, though Satan mocks,
A mighty fortress is our God.
Our union none can sever.
Into vic'try He will lead us, for He freed us.
None defeats us; He gives life and He will feed us.*

*We will not fear, for God has willed,
Though were the world with devils filled,
His truth must triumph through us.
For He is God and none beside,
In Him alone we will abide;
Before the world He knew us.
Resurrected, He depleted and defeated
Satan's greed and pow'r forever, as was needed.*

*By faith this truth we surely know,
His faithfulness remains below
On earth, as up in heaven.
The gates of hell cannot prevail,
The church of Jesus will not fail,
It's under God's protection;
And though the storms are raging still, we know He will
Calm the weather; we are safe under His shelter.*

*The Word of God is here to stay,
Though heav'n and earth will pass away,
His precepts are eternal.
In all the world, and unashamed,
The gospel truth must be proclaimed,
This fount of life, supernal.
Amen! Amen! All else is vain; in Christ is gain.
Failing never, Jesus is our light forever!*