



Foundation of Faith

The background of the page is a photograph of a sunset. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright orange and red glow. Silhouetted against this sky are three crosses of varying heights on a hill. The largest cross is in the center, flanked by two smaller ones.

The Greatest Victory!

He Died for Me
Jesus is Alive!
Conversion

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

When someone speaks of the greatest victory, what do you think of first? A sports fan thinks of the Olympics or of soccer, tennis, boxing, golf, etc. However, when we speak of victory, we cannot forget the defeats as well. Although we loudly cheer for a victory, it is much harder to accept the disappointment of a defeat. Take the example of the battles and wars of the nations and how terrible, catastrophic, and devastating the defeats are: thousands, even millions, dead, injured, homeless. Often, the sentencing of the “guilty” follows with long prison terms or death.

Dear Reader, we also see the themes of victory and defeat in God’s Word, as well as eternal gain and eternal damnation.

After creation, God placed the first humans in the Garden of Eden. He had created the garden beautifully for them. But then came the terrible fall of man: disobedience, separation from the Creator, and the spiritual death of the soul. Rather than blessing came the wrath of God, strife, godlessness, and enmity. Without God, all people are lost and on the path to damnation, including you and me.

Despite everything that had happened, God, in His love and mercy, gave the wonderful promise in the Garden of Eden, that the serpent’s head would be crushed. It was written about One who would come: “And He shall stand and feed His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God” (Micah 5:4).

Yes, dear Reader, the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was prepared to give His life for the salvation of humanity through His own sacrifice at Golgotha. His suffering and death on the cross brought reconciliation and victory, and His resurrection on the third day took away the sting of death. Yes, Jesus Christ is the victory. He won the greatest victory of time and eternity. Praise God that we too can be victors with Christ!

H. D. Nimz

Twelve Hours Before His Execution

Martin Gensichen (1842–1927), long-time director of the Berlin Missionary Society, relates a life-altering experience from his student days.

Entering the crowded lecture hall, I pushed past throngs of students and found a seat near the front. The room soon settled as Adolf Stoecker, the man we had all come to hear, opened his lecture with John 15:9–16, beginning, “As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.” In his unique and powerful way, Stoecker addressed the greatest subject of all: Jesus and His love for His disciples, including us young people. Stoecker explained this wonderful love using the following example:

The son of a missionary stationed in India was studying medicine in the German city of Würzburg. One day, halfway around the world, his father received the sad news that his son had gone astray. Wasting no time, the missionary requested leave from his post and started on the long journey to see his son in Germany.

The son was sitting at his desk when a knock suddenly sounded at the door to his room. Not expecting anyone, he opened his door and was shocked to find his father there.

“Father, where did you come from?”

“India,” came the only reply.

With no further explanation, the father settled into his son’s routine, waking him every morning, attending medical lectures with him, going through the lesson materials afterwards, and taking long walks together—all the while letting not a single word of reproach cross his lips. This went on for four weeks.

Finally, the son could not stand it any longer. He grasped his father’s hands and cried, “Father, how could you abandon your work in India to come here and spend so much money just to see me and help me with my work?”

“Because I love you, Son!”

This was too much. The student broke down, fell

into his father’s arms, and cried, “Father, I am not worthy! I’ve been a bad son, and I have sinned against you!”

“Not only against me but against God,” his father replied gravely and kindly, “but you can be forgiven by your Savior, Jesus Christ, Who died for you.”

They both fell to their knees, and the young man surrendered his life to Jesus.

Having told this story, Stoecker continued, “This missionary travelled halfway around the world for his wayward son, but the Son of God came even further, down from Heaven, to rescue you dear young people from all your pain and sin.”

Growing more intense, his voice began to tremble with inner excitement. I, too, had been moved by his words and sat spellbound, my heart open to what he would say next.

Stoecker then came to verse eleven, reading, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”

“To whom was Jesus speaking?” he asked the room before answering, “To His disciples—knowing that one would betray Him, another would deny Him, and the rest would leave Him to His fate. How can He speak of joy in this moment? And when was it, exactly, that He spoke these words? I’ll tell you: Twelve hours before His horrible death on the cross. It was Thursday evening, around 9:00 PM, and by 9:00 on Friday morning, He was hanging on the cross.”

The pastor was deeply moved. I was amazed to see tears coursing down his cheeks, but Stoecker forged onwards, not letting his sentiment distract from his subject: the glorious person of Jesus Christ. He continued speaking with incredible energy, the only clue to his deep emotion a gentle trembling at the corners of his mouth.

In Berlin, Stoecker had a reputation as a fearless opponent of godlessness in politics. This suggested a certain severity and rigidity of character. And this hard-as-nails man cries like a child when he talks about Jesus and His love? How is that possible?

The preacher's emotion took root in my heart, opening it wide to receive his message of the wonderful love of the Son of God.

"The very next morning, He will suffer the cruellest death ever devised by man, the epitome of human cruelty, and still, He is talking about joy. In fact, He has so much joy that He can afford to share it with His followers, saying, 'that My joy may remain in you' and 'that your joy may be full.' How can this be? This man speaks of complete and lasting joy only twelve hours before His execution? What manner of man is that?" With a loud voice, Stoecker called this last question out into the room.

I was transfixed, speechless. Every word had gone straight to my heart, inspiring my mind's eye to see the awesome glory of the crucified Christ before me. I recognized Him, the Savior of the world, as my personal Savior. God's hand reached down inside of me and turned my heart around. I was being transformed; it was as though the ground was falling away beneath me, leaving me freefalling into a bottomless pit until, suddenly, I was caught by two arms. It was Jesus's arms, spread on the cross, that now embraced me.

Lost in thought, I made my way home and knelt down at my bed, in my cold and dark room, initially unable to find the words to pray. Eventually, I was able to admit my sins and my godlessness. Then, I heard a voice in my ear, like bells ringing, "Everything will be alright!" Yes, I had found my Savior! I was saved, for all of time and eternity. Now, my life could not be anything but blessed. ■

He Died for Me

It was a beautiful morning. The sea lay calmly before the two sailors, who were sitting on a bench on the shore. They contemplated the peaceful play of the waves. During the night, it had been otherwise. A violent storm had raged and claimed many victims. The evidence of the night's disaster was scattered all over the beach. Then one of them began to tell this story:

"Many years ago, a stormy night such as this one became a blessing to me. The ship on which I was sailing was tossed about by the heavy seas like a nutshell. Despite all our efforts, we could not prevent it from being hurled onto a rock. The ship sprang a leak and we had to disembark.

"We launched the lifeboats. Two of them smashed against the ship's side and fell away. There was now not

enough room in the remaining boats for the whole crew. Who was to be left behind?

"The captain cast lots to decide. It fell on me. Next to me stood Klaus, a joyful sailor and a devout Christian. How often had I teased and ridiculed him for his faith. He had drawn the better lot; he could climb into one of the lifeboats. Suddenly, however, he grabbed me by the shoulder and said, 'You get in that boat. I have peace with God, and I will die confidently. Seek this peace, too, and let Jesus' blood, which He shed also for you on the cross, set you free!'

"I was saved; my comrade found his death in the waves. He died for me!

"I was deeply shaken and overwhelmed by the love of my comrade who had laid down his life for me. I began reflecting on this and finally also found Jesus, my Savior!"

Jesus' Struggle in Gethsemane

"Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.'" (Mark 14:32-36)

In this short excerpt, we see Jesus Christ in Gethsemane as one who looked to the things to come with great trepidation and dread. Before Him stood the difficult battle with the prince of darkness, whose head He was to crush. Moreover, He would endure the punishment of mankind, for the curse of sin had to be lifted. He knew the last stage of His mission had to be fulfilled. Much earlier, He had said: "I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!" (Luke 12:49-50).

According to the law of Moses, the great Day of Atonement took place annually. There, the high priest went into the holy place and behind the veil, which was called the Holy of Holies, with a bowl of blood and sprinkled it on the mercy seat and in front of the ark of the covenant, thereby making atonement for the people.

Symbolically, it represented that death for sin took place and that the law, which condemns the sin, had been satisfied. This cere-

monial atonement, however, could not in reality cancel sin, for a better sacrifice had to be made. This sacrifice was found in the body of Christ, which He was to offer. He, the pure and holy One, was to suffer death for all so that the sinner's condemnation might be removed. Only in this way could reconciliation of man before God take place.

Now, Christ was in the Garden of Gethsemane and in the spirit saw the terrible and gruesome way which He now had to go. The three disciples were eyewitnesses of how troubled and distressed He was. They heard His mournful pleading: "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch." They also saw how He fell down a stone's throw away from them, and they heard Him pray: "Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will." Meanwhile, they had fallen asleep, and the Lord fought a difficult battle alone against the powers of hell. His strength waned, and His sweat fell like drops of blood to the ground. The dominant powers

seemed stronger, but He wrestled for the victory regardless. It was a struggle for life and death.

In the gospel of Luke, it is written: "And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly" (Luke 22:44). There is only one explanation: The powers of darkness wanted Jesus to die here so that He couldn't die on the cross as a substitute for mankind.

It will never be possible for us mortals to understand the magnitude of this battle. However, we can be thankful that the Lord secured the victory in Gethsemane. Christ "who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death . . . was heard because of His godly fear" (Hebrews 5:7).

We look now to Gethsemane and beyond it to Golgotha. At both of these holy places, the greatest victory was won that history has written. His love toward us was pivotal. Therefore, bow down before Him, give Him your life, and humbly worship Him! ■

G. Sonnenberg

The Glorious Victory Shout

“O, death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?” 1 Corinthians 15:55

In life, we all face obstacles of various degrees. Many we overcome and others, perhaps, we can sidestep. Yet, everyone will at some point face the sobering reality that he, too, will go the “way of all the earth” and face the certainty of death.

Most of humanity shrinks at the thought of death. Yet there is one whom God raised up, who “loosed the pains of death.” He emerged as victor and conqueror of death and destroyed him who had the power of death (see Hebrews 2:14-15).

Paul, in his letter to Timothy, writes, referring to Jesus Christ “who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Timothy 1:10).

Death has been vanquished and life and immortality has been brought to light! If only more would begin to see the blessedness of this living hope that the death

and glorious resurrection of Jesus Christ has brought us!

This was already spoken of by Isaiah the prophet in the Old Testament. “He will swallow up death forever, and the Lord God will wipe away tears from all faces; The rebuke of His people He will take away from all the earth; For the Lord has spoken” (Isaiah 25:8).

Surely the Apostle Paul had the words “Death is swallowed up in victory” in mind when he described to the Corinthians the victory over death, in that “this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:53).

It is in this that the victor shouts: “O, Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?”

Death to the christian is now swallowed up in victory. The pangs of death can grip him no more, for on those celestial shores

“there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying” (See Revelation 21:4).

Moody has been quoted as saying: “Some day you will read in the papers that D. L. Moody of East Northfield, is dead. Don’t you believe a word of it! At that moment I shall be more alive than I am now. I shall have gone up higher, that is all; out of this old clay tenement into a house that is immortal—a body that death cannot touch; that sin cannot taint; a body fashioned like unto His glorious body.”

“Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and rose and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living” (Romans 14:8b-9).

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). ■

Jake Wiebe, Waterloo (CA)

It Is Finished!— The Greatest Victory Ever!

“When he had received the drink, Jesus said, ‘It is finished.’ With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.” (John 19:30 NIV)

I believe that we all have heard, and perhaps have used the phrase, “It is finished.” We may have started a rather large project, and after weeks of hard work, we could say, “It is finished.” Or perhaps we were energetic enough to build our own house. Months of planning and hard work went into this project. Then, after perhaps six months we finally do the final clean-up, and with an occupancy permit in our hand we can proudly say, “It is finished.” Or perhaps we as a church body took on the task of building a new facility with volunteer help. This project took many, many hours of planning and hard work, but then came that special day where everything was cleaned up and we were able to secure an occupancy permit, and as a church body we were able to dedicate that building to the glory of God. O, what joy and excitement were evidenced that day, when that building was dedicated for generations to come! Yet how faint are these examples, when compared to the event that our text is speaking about.

That day, when Jesus cried out, “It is finished,” the greatest event ever known to man had taken place. Never in the history of humankind did something of equal significance take place. Never would anything that great take place in the future. Jesus had just finished the mission he had set out to complete. I would like to draw our attention to three things that were finished that day.

The time of suffering for our Lord and Savior was finished!

With that statement, His earthly pilgrimage as we know it was finished. Certainly, He would still be seen here and there for 40 days after His resurrection, but in a different sense. He didn’t seek the lost in the same way as before but was busy comforting, strengthening, and equipping the saints for the task that lay before them.

He would no longer have to endure the pain of being flogged, having the crown of thorns pressed on His head. He would not have to carry that heavy cross

again, or die on it as a criminal. He would not have to feel the pain of those nails being thrust through His hands and feet. His physical suffering was finished.

His emotional pain had come to an end as well. Consider the emotional pain He had to endure. The pain of rejection went all the way back to His birth. No room for the King of kings! He had seventy disciples leave Him at one time. Then, just before His apprehension, when He needed the twelve most, the Bible says they all forsook Him. And then, hanging on the cross in tremendous pain, His scoffers call out, “If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.” They would no longer mock Him. This emotional pain was finished.

His spiritual pain had now come to an end. Going to the cross, He carried your sins and mine. The sun did not shine, and the Father turned His face from Him and He cried out; “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” He felt the weight of our sins as He died on the cross. But now He knew it was finished.

There on the cross the plan of salvation was finished!

He knew that the prophecies regarding the salvation of all humankind were fulfilled. The oldest prophecy of the Bible was fulfilled. God had promised Adam and Eve a Savior who would crush the head of the serpent. This promise was now fulfilled. That promise had remained alive through 4000 years. Isaiah writes of this event as though he was a live witness. See Isaiah 53:3-7. The words regarding His coming to earth, His life and death were now fulfilled.

There on the cross the Old Testament sacrificial system had come to an end. See Hebrews 10:11-18. The Old Testament system was flawed. It could not set free from sin. Every time, before the high priest entered the holy of holies, “he offered for himself and for the people’s sins.” Jesus brought one sacrifice, once for all humankind, so that all who believe in Him should not be lost but have everlasting life. For that reason He said; “If the Son make you free, you are free indeed.”

There these promises—prophesies—were fulfilled, finished. He carried our sins. It is finished. It has been completed. We can now be free from all bondage. The prophet says He also carried our sicknesses, our pain, our suffering and infirmities. Jesus purchased a full, complete, and eternal salvation. It is finished.

There on the cross Jesus finished the battle with Satan.

He was victorious over Satan and sin (Colossians 2:13 – 15). Between us and Satan stands that old rugged cross. Jesus said, “Now the prince of this world will be driven out” (John 12:31). Beloved, Satan’s power has been broken. We are dealing with a defeated enemy because Jesus was victorious. He could truly say; “I have overcome the world.”

Satan must now let the captives go free. See Isaiah 61:1. We were captives and could not free ourselves, but He broke those chains and we can be free. Those who had no hope—no reason for living—now have hope in a victorious Savior. Even Barabbas was able to physically go free because Jesus took his place. Since that day, millions have been able to be spiritually free because Jesus brought us the victory.

He was victorious over death. There on the cross He could say “it is finished” because He knew that the Father would raise Him on the third day. See Matthew 12:40 and John 2:19. On that third day that rock was rolled away without the help of man and Jesus arose victoriously, never to die again. He is alive and well. He sits at the right hand of the Father and intercedes for us. He now controls all things with His mighty Word because He was victorious.

There on the cross, some 2000 years ago, He was able to say “It is finished.”

He was victorious, and with Him we can now be victorious as well. See 1 John 5:4.

Let us ever be grateful for the greatest victory ever recorded in history. ■

H. Elke, Kelowna (CA)



Jesus is Alive!

After the long, dark winter days, signs start appearing that spring will come. These signs are evident long before nature begins budding with new life. The days start to get longer. Something begins to stir within the seemingly lifeless vegetation. Trees and shrubs start to bud, and leaves begin emerging. Life! Joy seems to spread throughout all the land. Life triumphs and produces growth and prosperity.

In a similar way, in the Old Testament dispensation there were already signs and indications of the Resurrection given through the servants of God, who beforehand proclaimed the joyous news of the Messiah. Jesus lives! He conquered death, and new life is brought to light. “For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” is what David prophesied in Psalm 16:10. David said this in regard to the eternal King who is to come from the house of David. And Isaiah, in the middle of his prophecy, when speaking of the suffering and sacrifice of our Lord, burst forth proclaiming: “He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation” (Isaiah 53:8). And, once again, in verses 10-11, Isaiah said: “When You make His soul an offering for

sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.”

The promise of the resurrection was even made clearer by Jesus Himself. He did not just speak about the grain of wheat falling into the ground and dying (John 12:24), but He also spoke of the resurrection. “From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day” (Matthew 16:21). As Jesus came down from the Mount of Transfiguration, He turned to those who were with Him and told them not to share what they had seen with anyone “until the Son of Man is risen from the dead” (Matthew 17:9).

To those Jews who demanded a sign, Jesus told them the only sign they should expect is the sign of Jonah. “For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth” (Matthew 12:40). To Martha, Jesus said: “I am

the resurrection and the life” (John 11:25). And to His disciples, just before His passion, He declared: “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me” (John 16:16). And then the moment came! The disciples did not expect it; they thought it was all over. Mary was at the tomb weeping. Yet, the tomb was open! The powers of heaven and earth were moved. Christ is risen! “The angel answered and said to the women, ‘Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead, and indeed He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him. Behold, I have told you’” (Matthew 28:5-7).

As they went, Jesus Himself appeared to them and said, “Rejoice!” He said, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me” (Matthew 28:9-10). “Rejoice!” Can you feel this resurrection joy as well? The song of rejoicing is a song of triumph. It is the song of salvation, a salvation complete through the sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord. For “if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you

He is not here, He is risen!

are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Indeed, if Christ were not risen from the dead, the Father’s seal on the sending of His Son into the world would be missing. But it was impossible that the shackles of death should hold Him (Acts 2:24). “But now Christ is risen from the dead” (1 Corinthians 15:20). The proclamation of this Easter message resonates throughout the whole earth, over land and sea. Death has been conquered. “Christ is risen. Rejoice and sing. Life is given. Gone is death’s sting.” And we can face the future triumphantly because He lives.

Dear friend, how do you celebrate Easter? Does a heavy stone of worry yet weigh you down? Listen to the Easter message! “Do not be afraid” (Matthew 28:5). This message is for you. All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him (Matthew 28:18), and He gives eternal life to all who come to Him. The victory belongs to Him “who was delivered up because of our offenses, and was raised because of our justification” (Romans 4:25). He is extending to you His nail-pierced hands. Grasp them firmly. The message of Easter is relevant today. Christ is risen. Because He lives, you too shall live (John 14:19). That is the joy of Easter. ■

P. M.

That was the glorious message of the angels on that glorious Easter morning. Christ, the living Savior, is risen as victor over death and the grave!

Let us take our minds back to Golgotha and focus on Christ’s suffering. We see the brutally martyred Lamb, hanging on the cursed wood between heaven and earth, His precious head crowned with thorns, the blood streaming down from His wounds. He suffered for us, just for the unjust. When the end of His suffering was near, even nature seemed to be drawn into the struggle: the earth shook, the sun lost its shine, the darkness enclosed all of earth, the stones broke, and the veil in the temple tore. The Son of God wrestled with death. He died for the sins of the world—yes, for yours and for mine.

Then He exclaimed, “It is finished!” Yes, what the prophets had prophesied was finished. The great work of salvation was finished, and the way to God’s throne of grace was now open for everyone who desired access.

Following that, Jesus hung His head and died. His suffering was complete and overcome. He was loyal and obedient until death. Take a moment to be still, dear soul, and observe this solemn scene. All of this was for you! Your Savior died out of love for you! Have you given yourself to Him?

He was buried in a stone tomb. However, in death He remained the victor. At the break of the first day of the week, there was a sudden earthquake. The angel of the Lord came down from heaven and rolled the stone away from the tomb’s door. God Himself extended His hand, scattered the chains of death, and raised His Son out of the night. Death could not keep Him. As victor, He came out of the grave. Praise and glory be to God for all eternity!

Jesus is alive! He is the Living Savior, the One who reigns over the dead and the living. Everything is in His power. Confident of victory, He was able to say before His death: “Because I live, you will live also” (John 14:19). Yes, He overcame. He lives, and everyone who truly believes in Him with all of his heart will live with Him in eternity!

Do You Know the Powerful Joy of Easter?

“*And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.*” (Acts 4:33)

In some places, you can observe how trees or shrubs have grown out of the hard rock masses of very old fortress walls, high above the ground. They green, grow, flourish, and bear small but tasty fruits. I have sometimes contemplatively looked at these wonderful plants. Who planted them on this steep wall? Where do they get the strength to grow in this barren environment? And yet their branches reach for the sky. Oh, perhaps the wind carried a tiny seed into a small crack in the wall, where it settled in a bit of soil and some loose mortar. By joining with the soil, it slumbered, gave up its own life; but then it sprouted to new life. Powerfully, it burst from the narrow space and revealed its vitality in a new life. But what does this have to do with the joy of Easter?

From Easter on, Jesus’ disciples received a whole new proclamation, never heard before. They did what the Lord had called and chosen them to do from the beginning. Now they understood the word that Jesus had said to them: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24).

Now they also received great power for their ministry to witness. The main theme of their message was the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. It was only a small group who went among the people with this new proclamation. In addition, they were people of no reputation: fishermen, tax collectors, and others. But with great power, they bore their testimony, in spite of all opposition from the secular and ecclesiastical rulers.

The power of the Risen One, the power of personal experience and conviction worked in them and drove them to share themselves with others. The disciples had gone to school with Jesus. For three years, they listened to His discourses, learned His wisdom, saw His mighty deeds, experienced His love and care in all things of this life—and then? Yes, then they went with Him to Gethsemane where He wrestled with death, where He was betrayed and arrested. Shortly thereafter, they stood on the hill of Golgotha and saw Him, whom their souls loved, crushed, reviled, mocked, and ridiculed on the cross, pale with death. They witnessed His bruised body being laid to rest in Joseph’s tomb. And their hearts threatened

to break with sorrow and pain! Oh, they could not know that the cry of death on Golgotha would not be the last. They could not have known what miracle of God’s power would follow! But there, after an anxious, dark night full of deep mourning, just as the new light of day was dawning, another sound reached their ears. It was the greeting on Easter morning, a greeting from the mouth of an angel: “He is risen!” And the news increased and spread: “The Lord is risen indeed.”

Jesus did not remain in the grave. He really rose from the dead. He was rejected by men, but the Almighty God had our Savior witnessed and vindicated before the entire world. Joseph’s garden tomb, where Jesus was laid, was empty and open. We can imagine something of the Easter joy the disciples experienced! They never said that Jesus Christ only lived on in their memories through His words and deeds. No, they saw the Risen One. It is true that people have always tried to dismiss the resurrection of the Lord Jesus as a matter of pious feelings. But it is a fact!

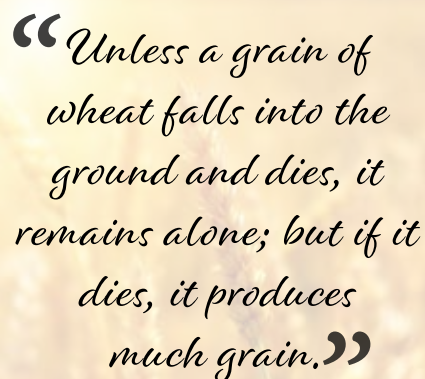
It is also foolish to try to understand and explain the resurrec-

tion of the Lord with the mind. It is precisely a miracle of the hand of God, which cannot be evaluated by human or historical standards. It is infinitely greater than anything human beings can conceive. The disciples also never tried to explain the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. This was their experience and, therefore, their testimony. Yet this great reality was the focus of all the attacks of the unbelievers and the world that was hostile to Christ from the first day it became known.

How divinely great Easter actually is, can, of course, never be seen in people who are Christians in name only. But where the life of the living pulsates in a heart, there life is also proclaimed continuously. It reveals itself, becomes visible, and wants to be active. In this living testimony for Him, the true powerful joy of Easter is experienced and also expressed. "The Lord is risen," is what resounds on Easter in the camps of the saints all over the world. Easter joy fills our hearts and moves our souls. Easter joy pulses our hearts in joyful adoration and deep thanksgiving. It is the eternal joy of life that sounds from the disciples' Easter song: The

tomb is open, the tomb is empty! Jesus is alive!

Easter is not a feast day for historians, but for the believer who confesses that true life has appeared. Yet, the resurrection is the most wonderful and significant event in all human history: Jesus lives forever! No fact is really so great and as important as this!



“Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.”

(John 12:24)

However, there is only one way to the open tomb, and that is through Golgotha to where the Prince of Life emerged victorious from the tomb on Easter morning. All followers of Jesus have gone this way in spirit. They have stood on Golgotha and then on the resurrection morning at the open grave, and seen the rolled-away stone and joined in the victory song: He is alive! He is truly risen! The resur-

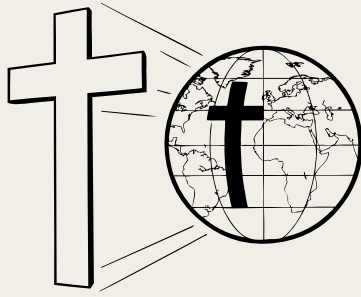
rection of Jesus Christ comprises victory in life, the victory of the eternal over sin and death.

Your eternal destiny in life and in death, and mine, is included in it. Oh, how poor our lives would be without the knowledge of salvation, which Easter brings us to. How poor are all those who deny it.

Many live superficially and thoughtlessly in this world. That is why many spiritual truths remain obscured to them, including the reality of the Lord's resurrection and that of the dead in general. But God has given us the wonderful gift of reason and understanding above all other creatures, and we should use these in the right way. Oh, if only foolish people would keep in mind the fact that without the resurrection of Christ, they are only facing the horror of death. Must not our existence make us sadder and gloomier with every day and year that we grow older, if death and the grave were the last station of our lives?

But the fact remains: Christ is risen! He lives, and we may live with Him, because He says to us:

“I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live” (John 11:25).



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

“But Now Christ is Risen from the Dead.”

Thank God for the witnesses who saw the Risen One, and powerfully and irrefutably proclaimed that fact to all who would listen!

This verse from 1 Corinthians 15:20 is a word of victory and life, comfort and joy! Truly the world can now rejoice! And with this poet we can, in faith, join in saying:

*Risen, risen is the Lord,
and in eternal robes of light He walks restored.*

*No one tremble! The Exalted One calls out to you:
“I was dead, and behold, I live; and so you shall live too!”*

*O ye graves, no, before you I do not run in flight,
For the gift of life on high illumines you with His light.*

*Resurrection, resurrection! I, too, shall rise! The Risen
One will wake me, I will see Him with my eyes!*

As Good Friday, with its horror of death, fills us with sadness, so the Easter message revives our hearts with new hope and life! This is a celebration of joy! Every year, Easter reminds us of spring, new life, and new vitality! The dense winter clouds have disappeared, the frost is gone, the sun shines sweeter and warmer, awakening new, emerging life. The whole of nature brightens and delights the human heart with newly

awakened life in the air and from the ground. Man is released from winter’s dread and trouble. He emerges from the darkness of winter and goes out into the mild spring air and the promise of new life!

Similarly, the women, the first visitors to the tomb, and the disciples experienced the resurrection day of their Lord. On Good Friday, sorrow, pain, and deep sadness had filled their hearts. A darkness had settled over the whole land like a shroud. In the midst of this darkness, their Master had passed away, and they yet heard His last cry of pain and death. But on Easter morning, there was a tremendous earthquake. No wonder that “the guards shook for fear of Him and became like dead men.” The invisible hand of God became visible through its powerful work. Someone commented:

“Whoever encounters Easter contacts God’s ‘power current,’ causing one to reel down!”

Naturally, the women were also frightened, but at the same time, they were filled with great, unspeakable joy. According to Matthew, the first word their risen Lord called out to them was, “Do not be afraid”!

Jesus’ resurrection brought about a world-changing event: The fundamental reason for all deep-rooted fear had been eliminated. With Easter, the power



of death was taken away, and the power of hell was defeated!

With certainty of faith, Paul wrote: “But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57). And with certainty he could exclaim: “Death is swallowed up in victory. O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?” (verses 54-55). Easter wants to remind us that not death but the risen Christ has the victory and the power.

Physical death has not been purged, and dying is inevitable. At some point, we will die, but death has no power to hold us. Easter gave us the faith through which we can be certain of eternal life! We may now already live the life that remains eternally. Knowing we have eternal life, we can serve and work with joy. While children of God knowingly go towards their death, their grave, and eternity, the living Christ will meet them there with a great word of comfort: “Do not be afraid”!

Jesus met John on Patmos with the same word of victory, as John reports: “And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead; but He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, ‘Do not be afraid: I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I

am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death” (Revelation 1:17-18).

“But now Christ is risen.”—“How do you know?” a reporter asked a fisherman who had so enthusiastically talked about it. “Sir,” the fisherman replied, “do you see the little houses up there on the rock? At night, when I am out at sea, I know the sun has risen by the reflection in those windows. Believing that Christ has risen is the same. I see His light in the faces of Christians and feel it in my life as well. Now, just as you cannot claim that the sun has not risen when its light is seen, neither can you claim that Christ has not risen.”

For two thousand years, the triumphant message of the resurrection of Jesus has been preached throughout the world. And again and again, we can proclaim it with complete assurance of faith and joy: “But now Christ is risen”!

*Easter—day of life, day of joy!
How will it be when God’s great light
breaks clear through our grave’s dark night?
Oh, what glories we will see
when night and darkness ’round take flight,
and the light of heaven shines bright!* ■

. . . Notes from School (14)

When the universities closed due to COVID-19, I quickly realized that I had a problem: in order to complete my final examination, I was missing one more practicum. Although it had been promised to me, it was then cancelled due to the circumstances, and now time was running short. Finally, I decided to share this problem with a certain head doctor at the hospital. He is known as a peculiar fellow who tends to care very little about other's opinions, which made him an ideal person with whom to discuss my issue. I explained my dilemma, and he exuberantly promised me that I could start the next morning. I was very happy; however, I couldn't shake the feeling that everything wouldn't go without problems. The next morning, I received a fax from the administration stating that due to COVID-19 no students were allowed to be accepted for practicums. However, the head doctor took this as a personal insult and confronted the administration about their arbitrary decision, explaining that it was not proper. I went home, as I did not have official permission and was therefore not insured. That afternoon, the head doctor

called me quite happily, saying that the administration had agreed to let me work and that I could start the next day. It turned out that he found an ally in the head anesthetist, and both assured the director of the clinic that my attendance was necessary to the successful running of the department. I was able to experience a wonderful and diverse practicum on several units, as well as one week travelling with the emergency response physician. As the only student now working in the hospital, I enjoyed several privileges. As our hospital was caring for far less patients than anticipated, it was a quieter time. I was under constant watch by the doctors and was able to learn things which I would not have had time to learn otherwise. Rarely before did my job inspire me so much as now. After talking to several of my other school colleagues, it turned out that no one else was able to get a practicum position at that time due to the circumstances, but God took care of me. It was not even the emergency solution that I prayed for, but the best practicum I have ever had! ■

Corinna Kowalski, Hamm (DE)





It All Turned Out Quite Differently

They had expected great things, and now? Jesus had been crucified. Instead of a glorious victory, they had suffered a deep defeat. On the day after Good Friday, all the dreams and perceptions of Jesus' disciples seemed shattered. I imagine that after the crucifixion, the disciples felt deeply sad, anxious, and unsure of what to do next. Did all that they had previously experienced with Jesus even count anymore? Now the eleven remaining men were deeply insecure and far from realizing what a great thing was going to happen on Easter morning.

We are often not different from the disciples. Sometimes, God throws a wrench into our plans. He allows us to fail, to lose our jobs, to fall ill, or to get into some other difficult situation. And then what? Do we trust Him to turn everything around? Can we wait patiently for Him to intervene? God has promised in His Word that for

those who love Him and are called according to His purpose, everything will work out for good (Romans 8:28).

Just as the disciples experienced that Jesus had risen from the dead on Easter Sunday and something completely new began, so children of God can be quite sure that their Father has good things in mind for them, despite hardship and suffering. "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope" (Jeremiah 29:11). We may entrust our lives to God, even in times when we do not understand His actions. We can be sure that His love will carry us through.

Is your faith perhaps being tested right now? Don't throw away your trust in God! ■

From "Life is More", 2008

The Path of Life

A few decades ago, a youth meeting was held in a German industrial city. The young people had come with great expectations. They wanted to experience something. That is understandable. Everyone came with their own idea of what they wanted to experience.

It was a good start to the meeting. The youths' singing captured the assembly. Singing the song, "Where do we find the life for which God created us?" they sensed that the core question of the day was being addressed here. Then the answer came in a moving service in which they realized that true life is present in Christ and that He wants to permeate all areas of life. By raising the Lord Jesus from the dead, God threw open the door to eternal life. The Psalm

writer David—although still living in the semi-darkness of the Old Covenant—was right when he confessed: "You will show me the path of life" (Psalm 16:11).

There are many signposts in this world that promise great things. But those paths they point to end in death. Jesus is not a guide. He Himself is the Way that leads to the complete fulfillment of life in time and eternity. In view of Him, many young people on that youth day experienced:

*A death, upon a cross,
Jesus Christ, the sacrifice.
His vict'ry and resurrection
Calls us to joy and new life.* ■

TESTIMONY

“Oh, give thanks to the LORD, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” (Psalm 118:1)

I am grateful with all my heart to my heavenly Father for His love, grace, goodness, and mercy. I am so happy to be His child and to serve Him. I also thank my Savior Jesus Christ for dying for me and giving me salvation and redemption. God has led and guided me wonderfully in my life. He has always taken care of me physically as well as spiritually, and has blessed me richly.

From the bottom of my heart, I am grateful to God for the beautiful and joyful hours in my life but also for the difficult and dark ones, because it was precisely these that became hours of blessing for me. I was allowed to cling tightly to God; He was my fortress and my refuge. It took me some time to learn to lay my burdens at His feet and to leave them there. I look back in amazement at how He carried me when I could not walk alone. Praise and glory be to my Lord!

It was a special joy for me to be able to attend the camp meeting in Blaubeuren. Since vacation time during the holidays was reserved for my colleagues with school-age children, I only got three days off each year. I wished so much to be able to attend the whole week at least once, so I put the week in my vacation requests, prayed, and believed that God would answer my prayer. My boss was not pleased, of course, but the Lord directed hearts, and the vacation time was approved. I was grateful to Him from the bottom of my heart.

Two days before the camp meeting, I started having severe back pain. Because it was not the first time, I knew that I could not possibly sit for long with the pain and that it would not go away quickly. The next day, a sore throat was added, and I pleaded to God, “Lord, you have heard my prayer and given me vacation time. Please help me now, because I so much want to go to the camp meeting.” And—thank God! The next morning, the back pain was gone, and the cold didn’t get any worse. So I could go to the camp meeting

and was richly blessed.

At the last camp meeting, I had pain in my hip. God did not take this pain away from me. But He gave me strength to the extent that I could attend the meetings.

The Lord has also helped me wonderfully at my workplace. Over the years, my strength and health have decreased, making it increasingly difficult for me to do my work. Often in recent years, I went to work only trusting in God. To His glory, I can say that He always gave me the strength I needed. I was able to work until the end of February 2020, and in March I was allowed to retire. Even then, He gave grace that all the conditions were met, and I was allowed to retire earlier. Every day, I thank God for that.

For many years, I had a gallstone. The stone became bigger and bigger, and the discomfort increased. About 1½ years ago, I was in pain almost all the time and could no longer eat many things. The stone needed to be removed, but I wanted to wait for the surgery until after I ended my career and had therefore set the date for it for March 10, 2020. But on short notice, all surgeries were canceled because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of course, I was very disappointed because I was already counting the days until the surgery. But I took this from God’s hand, and, in retrospect, I am even grateful to Him for His guidance. The Lord was my helper and stood by me the whole time. After six weeks, when surgeries started again, I got an appointment very quickly and was operated on. God gave His blessing, everything went well, and He also helped me recover. To Him be praise and glory!

God often answered my prayers and also helped us as a family. Sometimes it was small, everyday things. But He has also done great things, impossible from a human standpoint. To my great God alone is due all honor, praise, glory, and worship! ■

Milita Diegel, Pforzheim (DE)

Marie Learns About Easter

Anne came rushing in from school with pigtails flying and her sweet little face all smeared up with dirt and tears.

“Mama!” she cried.

“Whatever is the matter?” asked her mother, drying her hands on her apron.

“It’s Marie!” Anne wailed. “She’s going to have a new dress and new socks and new shoes and new everything!”

“Why, Anne,” Mother said. “I think that’s fine. Aren’t you glad Marie is going to have nice things?”

“Yes, but . . . yes, but . . .” Mother found a hanky to wipe the tears away.

“She’s going to have them all to wear on Easter Day. And I won’t have any! And she laughed at me. And . . . and she said that’s what Easter is for. And . . . and . . .”

“Poor Anne!” Mother said. “Marie has got you all mixed up, hasn’t she?”

“She’s mean!” wailed Anne.

“No,” Mother said, “I don’t think she’s really mean. She’s just got Easter backwards. Sometimes we have new clothes for Easter, but Easter is not especially for wearing new clothes.”

Anne dried her tears and washed her dirty face.

“I’ll tell you what,” Mother suggested. “You ask Ma-

rie to come to supper tomorrow. Then we’ll get Daddy to read about the Easter story for our devotion.”

The next day everybody was seated around the supper table with bright faces and clean hands. Daddy put on glasses and cleared his throat. He opened the big Bible carefully and started to read about Easter.

Anne smiled at Mother and sat very quietly to listen. She loved stories.

When he had finished reading, Daddy closed the Bible and began to pray. “Dear Father in heaven, look down on us tonight and bless our little family and our little friend. Thank you for this food You have given us. Thank You, too, for Jesus who died in our place. Help us to love Him as much as we should and to keep His Easter with all our hearts. Amen.”

After supper Marie and Anne went out to play, but Marie didn’t say anything about the Easter Story. Anne was disappointed. But that night when Marie went home, she told her mother: “I had the most wonderful time, Mother. Before we ate supper, Anne’s father read a story in the Bible and said a prayer, just like in church. And you know what? Easter isn’t for candy, toys, and new dresses at all! Easter is because Jesus died in our place and then arose. The story is right in the Bible!” ■

The Three Tenses



It likely was a long time ago, but surely you went to school sometime, somewhere, for a longer or shorter period of time. The school system back then was probably not as advanced as it is today, but nevertheless you learned a lot. Many things that we take for granted today we learned in school. I'm thinking, for example, of spelling, writing, or even the grammar rules for the three main tenses.

When we speak (or even write), we use one of these three tenses. By doing so, we communicate something that has either already happened, is currently happening, or will happen in the future.

Let me look at our lives from the perspective of the three tenses: past, present, and future.

Past –

If you look at your birth certificate and compare it to today's date, you know not only how old you are but also how much of the past is behind you. It is interesting what thoughts cross your mind when you think about the past. Just think of all you have experienced, undergone, and endured. There have been mountain-top experiences and then again descents into deep valleys. Some events were difficult to deal with. And then you also think about the hopes and dreams you had that were never fulfilled. We call them disappointments. And then there are the hurts one has suffered. Whether people have hurt us intentionally or unintentionally, we remember them. We realize some things should have been done differently. We remember that,

too. And whether you want to admit it or not, you have failed at times.

It is possible to spend a lot of time in the past, to practically live in it. You fail to notice that spending the energy needed for today on the past cannot change a single fact. One constantly thinks about what once was, deals with issues that may be decades old, and broods over the past. Thus, day after day, one carries the same burden and gets nowhere.

You must make "peace" with the past. If it is about your guilt and failure, you must acknowledge this before God and those affected. Through forgiveness, we receive peace and tranquility. If people have hurt us, we should forgive and let it go—and not only for their sake but for our own. Disappointments and every other burden may be released to the Lord—and left there. He knows how best to deal with such things.

He who has put his past in order can say with Paul, "one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind" (Philippians 3:13a).

Present –

When the past has been dealt with, it is much easier to live in the present. When everything is in order, it is much easier to focus on today. And "today" is what it's all about. It is the only time at our disposal to do something for the Lord.

The opportunities available yesterday are gone, and we don't know what tomorrow will bring. We have no



guarantee for tomorrow. So we have today, with its 24 hours, to be a blessing.

Today, I could say a kind word, make a phone call, visit someone, invite a person for a cup of coffee, run an errand for a shut-in, recommend a book, subscribe to the *Foundation of Faith* for someone, include a hurting person in my prayer, comfort someone who is sad, send a card with a Bible verse, etc. There is no lack of possibilities.

Why not pray early in the morning and report for duty? One could simply ask the Lord if He has something for me to do today. And while waiting for an answer, the Lord reminds us of a sick person, someone who is sad, an elderly person, or even a young person whom we could help. You will be amazed at how much there is to do, and rejoice that God also has a place for you in His service. And when the day draws to a close, you can look back with gratitude and realize that you have brought “light” here and there into the world of your fellow human beings today. Wouldn’t that be a desirable way to live? And when you go to bed, tired from work, you will surely be able to sleep well.

Future –

The future is about what is coming, what lies ahead. And at this point, our eyes should light up. There is a book in front of me on my bookshelf: “The Best is Yet to Come!” The subject deals with the future of believers. Using the Bible, the author tries to explain what

the Lord has prepared for us and what awaits us. Once you look at the passages of Scripture that address the future of God’s people, you really have to agree with the author: “The best is yet to come!”

Just imagining the place I will call home in the future fills me with an indescribable joy. The things that make life difficult for us here on earth will be totally unknown there. John writes: “And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be with them, and be their God. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying; and there shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.’” (Revelation 21:3-4). And, “We shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

Paul wrote to the church at Philippi, “reaching forward to those things which are ahead” (3:13b). Likewise, he wrote to the same brethren, “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21).

With the past sorted out, we are able to live today. Trusting in the Lord and in His power, we can complete our tasks and be a blessing. This “living in the present” includes anticipation and joy for the future.

Three tenses: past, present, and future. How do you actually feel about these three tenses? Is everything about the past in order, do you live joyfully in the present, and are you hopeful for the future? ■

Harry Semenjuk



It Didn't Add Up

It happened a long time ago, when I was still a young assistant preacher in a town in northwest Germany. Although I have experienced much since then, I cannot forget that strange encounter one night.

There lived in my district at that time a man in his middle years who, at every opportunity, cruelly blasphemed and ridiculed Christianity, the church, and also me. When I heard about it, I decided to seek him out.

Rarely have I experienced such an unsuccessful and sad home visit. The man was unable to have a calm conversation. Laughing, he said, "Don't bother with me! I have long since seen through the scam. You are either stupid yourselves or else you are employed by some powers to make people stupid."

"God is alive!" I replied. "And you yourself will stand before Him one day."

Loudly, he laughed at me: "That's such a lame joke of yours, scaring people with what comes after death."

"Well," I replied, "that is also a serious question. You too may understand that one day when it comes to dying."

Then he suddenly became quite solemn and declared, "Listen carefully: never, once again, never will I need you. I am not one of those miserable people who will suddenly call out to God as they're dying. I can and will die without you. Dying is the most natural thing in the world. Every plant has blossomed once. And it is the same with human beings. Natural processes don't need such talk about dying as you like to make."

I left. This man was ironclad in his determination to live without God and die without God. My ministry here was over.

But I was wrong about that. A year later, my doorbell rang in the middle of the night. This man's wife was standing outside, agitatedly asking me to come with her. Her husband had been ill for some time, and now the doctor had no more hope. The end of his life was coming.

I refused: Dear woman! Your husband expressly told me that he did not want to see me at his deathbed. I would not have thought at that time that he would need to die so soon. But I can't go to him if he doesn't want to see me under any circumstances."

Then the woman cried with trembling, "Come quickly! After all, he sent for you himself. He keeps saying, 'The man was right after all! The man was right after all!'"

So I quickly got ready and went along, but I was too late. The man was already unconscious and did not wake up again. I said some Bible verses quietly into his unconsciousness about "the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). But I did not have the impression that he heard these words. That is how he died.

Towards morning, I went home. As I mentioned, I was still very young, but that is precisely why it shook me so. This man had figured wrongly. His life did not add up. A life lost! Lost!

And we only have this one life! Therefore, dear reader, take account of God in your life! ■

The Right Hand of the Lord

Psalm 118:15-16

Throughout the Old Testament, the strength and authority of God is often personified as “the hand of the Lord.” This is especially true in describing instances of God delivering His people from various threats or enemies. For example, in Exodus 15 we find a song that Moses and the people of Israel sang to the glory of God after He defeated the Egyptians in the Red Sea. In verse six, the people sang, “Your right hand, O LORD, has become glorious in power; Your right hand, O LORD, has dashed the enemy in pieces.” It is possible that the Psalmist had this song in mind when he wrote Psalm 118:15-16, which state, “The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly. The right hand of the LORD is exalted; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.”

Moses and the people of Israel saw with their own eyes how God intervened in their lives and provided a great deliverance through divine means. They saw the right hand of the Lord do incredible things and they rejoiced greatly. The mighty leading of the Lord in our lives is not always as evident as the military victories outlined in the Old Testament. At times, the Lord’s power and leading are very difficult to see. But that does not mean we should doubt God’s working and leading in our lives today.

Although it sometimes seems as though Satan is winning certain spiritual battles in our lives, it doesn’t mean that he will have the victory. This is most notably seen in the greatest victory of all history; Jesus’ defeat of sin and death. Critics of Christianity might claim that Jesus’ being taken captive and put to death refute His claims of deity. A closer study of Scripture, however, proves the opposite. God’s right hand was most certainly active in the events leading up to Christ’s crucifixion.

While still approximately two miles from Jerusalem, Jesus gave two of His disciples detailed instructions regarding preparation for His entry into the city. He instructed: “Go into the village opposite you, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring it here. And if anyone asks you, ‘Why are you loosing it?’ thus you shall say to him, ‘Because the Lord has need of

it” (Luke 19:30-31). These words reveal to us the omniscience of Jesus, illustrating His divinity and His complete control over the events that were about to transpire. Luke continues in verse 32 by stating, “So those who were sent went their way and found it just as He had said to them.” Jesus was aware that the people who were about to welcome Him into Jerusalem, would also allow Him to be crucified less than a week later. He knew, and He allowed it. All of these events were in His control.

Furthermore, Scripture states that when Jesus was brought before Pilate prior to His crucifixion, Pilate asked Him, “Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?” Jesus answered, “You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:10b-11a).

If Jesus had the ability to control these events, why did He allow them to happen? We find the answer in Matthew 26. There we read how Peter tried to prevent Jesus from being captured in the Garden Gethsemane by pulling out a sword and defending his Master (Matthew 26:51). However, Jesus says to Peter in verses 52-54, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?” John, in his gospel, includes the words of Christ, “Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?” (John 18:11b).

Jesus could have prevented His capture, but He didn’t because He knew it was part of His Father’s will in order to ransom mankind from their sins through the blood of His only begotten Son. Through His sacrifice, Christ would triumph over sin and death for all those who believe in Him and His atoning work. Christ’s victory echoes the words of the Psalmist, “The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tents of the righteous; the right hand of the LORD does valiantly.” Dear reader, the next time you feel as though you are being defeated, do not lose heart. Wait on the Lord, for His right hand does valiantly! ■

David Knelsen, Seminole (USA)

Conversion

If someone desires to build a sound house, he first concerns himself with laying a solid foundation. In the same way, conversion is the first step to a successful, genuine Christian life. If conversion is not of the right kind, the person concerned has acquired nothing more than a declaration of faith.

So, what is true conversion? Conversion means repentance. The sinner must stop his sinful course and turn to God. Conversion to God means turning from darkness to light. It means breaking away from the power of Satan and taking refuge in God.

Conversion to God is not a gradual change in our lives, as many teach, but an instantaneous transformation when God and man come together. Saul, who was later called Paul, was on his way to Damascus to persecute the followers of Jesus when Jesus suddenly appeared to him and, thereupon, a sudden transformation took place in him.

The conversion of man to God is a “rising from the dead,” a coming alive by the Spirit of God. The unconverted man is dead in sins and transgressions. To him, God’s Spirit and Word call out: “Awake, you who sleep, and arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light” (Ephesians 5:14).

There are people who claim that they repent to God every day or every Sunday. It is good when one repents before God when having been overcome by temptation and sinned. However, such a back and forth does not bring the true benefit of the work of grace to the person who seeks conversion, nor is God glorified or pleased by it. Jesus was greatly grieved by the fall of Peter, and Peter was almost on the verge of despair at having denied his Lord and Master. But later, when Peter repented, we see that he was steadfast, as any convert should be by the grace of God.

A person who converts every Sunday shows that he becomes a sinner every week. If a person is a sinner, he is separated from God or without God. Scripture says, “As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wick-

ed turn from his way and live” (Ezekiel 33:11). Such a person is like a plant that is planted today and uprooted tomorrow. Such a plant will never grow or reach its full size.

Everyone who has repented before God must remember a time in his life when he encountered God. He may not remember the exact hour or day, but he knows that his life has changed because of that encounter with God. Man must turn to God, and God will convert him if done earnestly, for with God there is much forgiveness.

As for the manner of conversion, it may vary among people. However, everyone must repent of his sins, whether they have been small or great, few or many. Some may not be the greatest sinners, but they are suddenly shaken from their God-alienated lives, realize their lost condition, and seek mercy and forgiveness from God. Their transformation may not be quite as apparent as those who have publically lived in deep sin.

The conversion of the eunuch from Ethiopia was quite different from that of Apostle Paul. On the road to Damascus, God caused a light to appear from heaven to bring Paul to the realization of his sinful condition to experience true conversion to God. The eunuch went on his way cheerfully, having obeyed the word of God that Philip had preached to him. Paul was a man who said of himself, “Old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17). From the hour Christ appeared to him, Paul was no longer zealous for the law of his fathers; instead, he became an apostle of Jesus Christ.

God meets people in different ways because He does not desire anyone to be lost. He has made every provision through His Son that all may be saved. And yet, sometimes He must speak to people through extraordinary ways so that they may humble themselves remorsefully and repentantly before Him, seek His forgiveness, and obtain salvation and redemption from Him.



To some, God must draw near with sickness. For others, God allows them to go so far into sin that they detest themselves. For yet others, despite all their efforts, God does not allow any earthly gain because He knows best that this will harm them. Jesus Himself said: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (Matthew 6:33). Jesus is implying here that the most important thing for us human beings is that we are born of God. To some, God speaks through a Bible passage learned in childhood or a song that his mother often sang. He reminds him of his mother’s prayer, of the walk of some true Christians, of the forbearance of a true child of God, of a gospel messenger whose heart was completely absorbed in the salvation of immortal souls. God leads ways that are not as we often wish them to be. Friends, father, mother, wife, and children

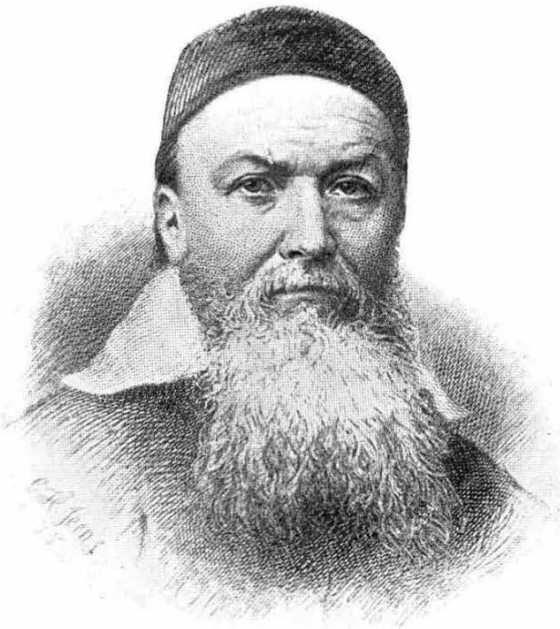
are taken from man. And very often it serves to bring him to repentance before God.

If we desire to go to heaven one day, if we want to have peace and rest for our sorrowful heart right now, let us take our refuge in God right now. Jesus says, “The one who comes to me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37). If you turn to God with complete sincerity of heart, you will find a peace that the world does not know. No one can rob you of this peace because you are safe in the arms of God.

Thanks be to God that in His love He speaks to people in different and special ways to bring them to repentance. But do not wait to repent until you become ill, but rather, do it now, and you will be happy now and one day attain eternal life. ■

O. Lemke

In Great Danger



Samuel Hebich

Samuel Hebich reported on his first season of mission work in India:

These were tremendous and monumental years for us. The struggles were very different than what I envisioned back at home! I believe that if anyone could imagine the actuality of them in advance, and then consult with others, no one would willingly take up this occupation. I shudder when I think of the dangers with which the old wicked enemy in a thousand ways seeks to seduce, unceasingly, the servants of the Lord in order to ruin them in body and soul. But oh, how faithful is our Lord, and His word: “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.” “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen.” Hallelujah!

Preaching in the busy commercial streets of Mangalore, Hebich reported:

I often do this joyfully, but I am often also very down-cast. However, my motto is this: the more the people rage, the more I must preach to them in the power of the Lord. The beginning is always the hardest. We are like soldiers who are to go into battle. At first, we writhe like worms; but once we have commenced, it becomes easier. When I was forced to minister alone while Malachi (the assistant) had gone out, a voice inside of me often said, “Oh, why don’t you go another time?”

Finally, in my great vulnerability, I arose with fear and trembling, and in the name of the Lord went to the main square of the bazaar. As I stood there and took off my straw hat, I covered my face to silently send up a few more pleas to my crucified Savior. I then laid



my long bamboo stick (which was always with me), along with my hat, aside, opened my Testament in the Kannada language and read Hebrews 9:27: “And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment.” Based on that text, I proclaimed the earnestness of God and His holy Gospel. The next day, the Ganapati Festival was to begin, which set an unusual amount of people in motion. An exceedingly large crowd, such as I have never experienced before, gathered around me. The Lord was my strength even in my weakness. As I was leaving, a voice calling “Hoho!” could be heard. But, at the same time from others, a strong “Hst!” was returned, and with this I was dismissed unscathed. Another day, however, they enforced their ‘Hoho!’ and accompanied me a good distance amidst shrieks, as well as sand- and stone-throwing.

On another occasion, things did not go so well. This time, the stones, sand, and cow dung flew more closely, and their aim was better too. Naturally, the pursuers only achieved the opposite of their intentions. Hebich wrote: “We all got our share; but Joseph bore the most distinguished mark of all as his eyebrow was split open by a stone. However, after moving to a different location, I preached like a whole new man. It became a day of praise and prayer for us. Never have I seen my young assistant more joyful. We sang God’s praises and prayed all day.”

Hebich reiterated on his reflection of March 15, 1851, the date of the “customary stone-pelting:”

The devil wanted to make me very wise this time. He said to me, “You have preached a lot already. This morning, you better stay in the safety of your home with your people; you can always go out later again.” I would

have been very glad to agree to this and even prayed that the Lord would give me assurance about it. “What is required? You must go!” was the answer! Now I was sure that I was heading into certain death, and that did not feel good. The next morning, after a restful sleep, I got up at 4 o’clock. Inside the house, everything was dark, my people full of fear. Nevertheless, we got ready, went out, and preached on the edge of the hillside. But, lo and behold, everything remained quiet. What was I to do? Was I also to go down the hill as well? We went down with firm steps but with trembling hearts. And that is where we were met with frightful war whoops. “Didn’t I tell you not to go down?” the devil whispered to me. Well, then I decided to climb onto the earthen wall. Suddenly, a strong man, the Rajah’s brother-in-law, tried to break loose and shouted, “Let’s drive the Padre away!” But the official heard it and punched him to restrain him. The rebel tried again, and in their altercation, they grabbed each other by the ponytails and collars, wrestling with one another. Soon, others joined in, some helping this one, others helping his opponent. Pretty soon, all the people were drawn to the fight. I told the Pium (officer), who seemed to have lost his head, to drag the culprit into the nearby temple where the service people could help. And so it happened: like a beetle being dragged by ants, the nobleman finally arrived at the temple and was consequently locked up for several days. I then continued to calmly preach to my heart’s content. Returning to my dwelling, I was so overwhelmed by the glory of the Lord that I had to stop myself from shouting: “O what love!” How truly shameful it was for me to have been so afraid! On a future occasion though, a volley of stones would still rain on me. ■

He Lives!

They roll a large stone in defiance
To craftily seal the tomb.
Since soldiers now watch with reliance,
It's over now, they assume.

The cause of their strong opposition
Is crucified, dead, and gone.
How hatred has blinded their vision,
The light extinguished by wrong.

They thought they had conquered forever.
Yet life breaks through seal and stone.
The Prince of life they could never
For long confine to a tomb.

But many oppose this salvation
And bury the truth once more,
Attempting with false accusations
To entomb it like before.

The truth of our Lord's resurrection
Will triumph despite the wrong.
The message may meet with rejection,
But it can't be stopped for long.

The cross, sin, and judgment for many
Are things they would rather not hear.
But all o'er the world there are plenty
Proclaiming the truth without fear.

Christ Jesus, our Lord, King of glory
Lives and His triumph is sure.
All hail the resurrection story!
The truth is simple and pure.

Christ lives and He will reign forever
Though heaven and earth pass away,
And from His love nothing can sever,
For He is life, truth, and the way.

Gertrud Tarutis