

Foundation of Faith

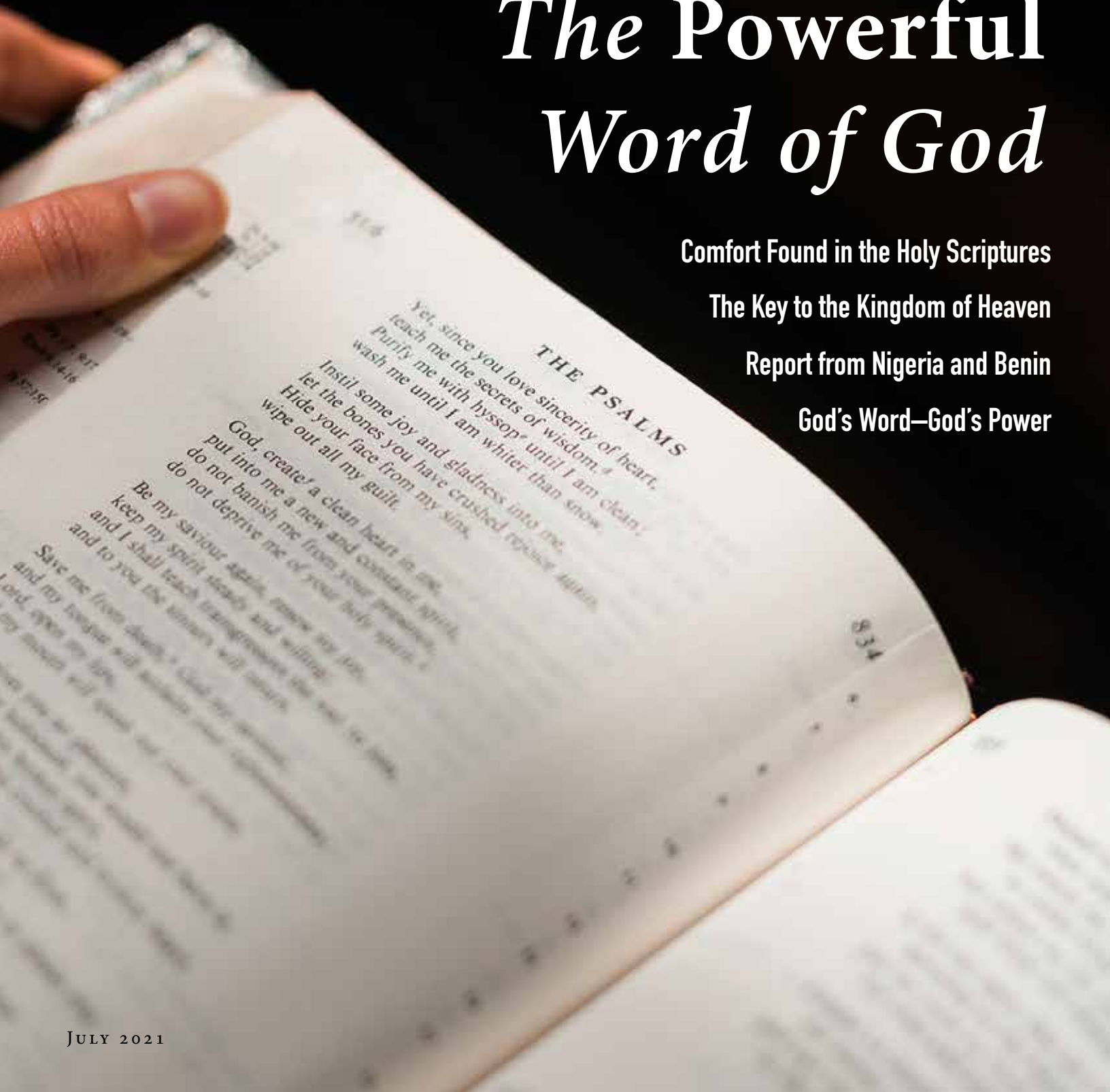
The Powerful Word of God

Comfort Found in the Holy Scriptures

The Key to the Kingdom of Heaven

Report from Nigeria and Benin

God's Word—God's Power



Content

THE POWERFUL WORD OF GOD

4 The Immeasurable Value of the Bible

Many people, even the famous, have realized that the Bible is greater than any other book in the world.

6 God's Word—God's Power

7 The Power of the Gospel

8 Your Word Gives Me Understanding!

9 The Bible

What is the Bible and what can it do for us?

10 Comfort Found in the Holy Scriptures

11 Two Characteristics of the Word of God

12 The Key to the Kingdom of Heaven

RADIO PROGRAM

14 Healing Revelations through God's Word

What you do with these revelations, determines whether they benefit you or not.

3 Editorial

16 YOUTH PAGE

19 Study Notes (13)

**"What Touches You
Becomes Part of You!"**

SAMUEL HEBICH

18 Simple Worship Services and Divine Results

CHILDREN'S CORNER

19 God's Light

SOMETHING FOR THE FAMILY

20 Those Three Little Words

22 Report on the Work of the Church of God in Nigeria und Benin

25 A Congregation's Report

26 Two ways to Read Your Bible

Good advice to read the Bible profitably.

POEMS

28 The Word of the Lord

FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

Many people in the world are concerned with honor, power, and prestige. We see this in the economy and especially in politics. Who and which country will take power in the future, increase its influence and position, and force the others to their knees? Military expenses will increase more and more! And where and how will it end? This question has been asked many times.

Yet, dear reader, God's Word gives us examples from the past:

During the rule of Nebuchadnezzar, God showed the prophet Daniel that this king was given power and strength and honor from above. A short time later, however, during the time of his son Belshazzar, the Medes and Persians reigned and, after them, the Greeks. The next to rule were the Romans, and we read: "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

During the reign of Caesar Augustus in Rome, Jesus, the Son of God, was born. He is the precious Cornerstone who came down from heaven, and to Him was given all authority, power, and honor. Just as kingdoms then had dominion for a little while and then were blown away by the wind like chaff on the summer threshing floor (Daniel 2:35), so it is in our time.

The rulers of today do not have power and authority in heaven and on earth. This belongs to Jesus Christ alone. "God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Philippians 2:9-11).

H. D. Nimz



The Immeasurable Value of the Bible

It is regrettable that so few people actually read the Bible. It is the most well-known and most widely-distributed book, while being the least understood and comprehensively-mastered manuscript. Have you ever thoughtfully and studiously read through it?

As a very young man, I bought a Bible to read so that I could learn about it. At the time, I was still an unbeliever, but I wanted to see what the Bible actually taught. Taking time to research it purposefully, I began reading, and to this day, after 24 years, have not stopped! It is a wonderful book! I found God and my Savior in it and became a truly fulfilled person through it. I have read the Bible many times, and I still read it today with great benefit and pleasure. Oh, if only every

person would read the Bible carefully and studiously before judging it! Many would come to a very different conclusion about it.

Jean Jacques Rousseau, the most influential French writer of the 18th century (1712-1778), said of the Bible: "I will confess to you, that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible, are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and so sublime, should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? . . .



Shall we suppose the evangelical history a mere fiction? . . . [I]t is more inconceivable that a number of persons should agree to write such a history, than that one should furnish the subject of it. . . . The marks of its truth are so striking and inimitable, that the inventor would be a more astonishing character than the hero.”

Wolfgang v. Goethe (1749-1832) said: “May the human mind expand as it will—it will not get beyond the majesty and moral culture of Christianity, as it gleams and shines in the Gospels. . . . I consider all four of the Gospels to be absolutely genuine, because the reflection of a majesty in them is evident, emanating from the person of Christ and in such a divine way as only the

Divine has ever appeared on earth. If anyone asks me whether it is my inclination to offer Him adoring reverence, I say: By all means! I bow before Him as the revelation of the highest principle of morality!”

Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), the great philosopher from Königsberg, Prussia, once confessed: “All the books I have read have not given me the comfort which the biblical word from Psalm 23:4 gave me: ‘Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me.’” To the author Jung-Stilling, he wrote: “You do well to seek your reassurance in the Gospel, for it is an inexhaustible source of all truths which, when reason has measured out its whole field, is nowhere else to be found.”

Napoleon I (1769-1821) said: “The Gospel is not a book; it is a living being, with an action, a power which invades every thing that opposes its extension.—The soul, captivated by the beauty of the gospel, is no longer its own. God occupies it altogether; he directs its thoughts and all its faculties. It is his.”

Heinrich Heine (1797-1856), a scoffer from whom one should expect little reverence for the Bible, wrote: “I have already spoken about the transformation which took place in my mind regarding divine things. I owe my enlightenment simply to the reading of a book.—A book? Yes, and it is an old, very old book—and this book is called, in short, The Book, The Bible. With justification it is also called the Holy Scripture. Whoever has lost his God can find Him again in this Book. And who never knew Him, the breath of the divine Word blows here. . . . I owe the reawakening of my religious yearnings to that Holy Book. It became a source of salvation for me as an object of the most devout admiration. Strange! After having spent my whole life on the dance floors of philosophy, indulging in all orgies of the spirit, courting all kinds of systems without being satisfied—now I suddenly find myself on the simple standpoint of the Bible. What humiliation! With all my science I am no further ahead than Uncle Tom, the poor ignorant slave, who scarcely learned to spell.”

Adolph Menzel (1815-1905), famous for his history paintings, said: “The Holy Scriptures equate the Book of Books, the source of eternal life, of comfort and strength, for all the unfortunate and the challenged. It is a shield and armor of virtue, an awakener of the spiritually asleep, a guide out of the labyrinth of sin, as well as a righteous final judge to those who persist in sin. It is a book like no other on earth, whose contents, like the gaze of God Himself, penetrate so deeply into the soul, which is so thoroughly true, wiser than all law books, richer than all textbooks, more beautiful than all the poetry of the world, more heart-penetrating than a mother’s speech, with such depth of spirit that even the cleverest cannot exhaust it. Yet, it can still uplift and purify the simple-minded, the most educated, and the most elevated. It is the Word of the hereafter, before which Belshazzar quaked and trembled, and before which Paul himself became mute and was blinded. This Word binds, loosens, and slays, but also brings to life.” ■

God's Word— God's Power

With the clock nearing midnight, Kate was still waiting up for her husband. Her heart was heavy, and her eyes brimmed with tears as she sat, head bowed over her Bible. It had long been a light on her path, and through much suffering, she had learned to take comfort in Him who promised, “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you” (Isaiah 66:13). But today, she was surrounded by darkness and drowning in sorrow.

She thought back to how she had followed her husband to another country nearly two decades ago, leaving her parents and her childhood home behind to start a family with him alone. At the time, she had not fully understood the scripture chosen by the pastor at their wedding, taken from the chapter of love, 1 Corinthians 13:13, “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.” What was so hard about love? Loved as she was by her husband, nothing could be simpler. After all, they were both going into marriage with God at the center, and their parents had given their blessing to the union as well.

In the intervening decades, she had been blessed with five children, and despite some heavy clouds of worry over career and family, she possessed a deep, true joy. That is, she had possessed it—until the other woman entered her husband's life. Bitterly, Kate remembered the moment she first knew for certain. She recalled how

it almost shattered her, having to somehow grasp the impossible: that her husband's heart and trust were no longer hers.

Day and night, she pleaded with God to lead her spouse back to her. She humbled herself before God, asking Him to forgive her own weaknesses and mistakes. Countless times in the long, lonely nights, her thoughts strayed to the man, the father of her children, who was now in another woman's arms. The pain threatened to swamp her. Her husband drifted farther and farther away from her and their family until a complete separation seemed only a matter of weeks.

Just like every other Sunday in recent months, today was especially hard. Out for a stroll with her children, Kate wistfully watched all the other women enjoying the day of rest with their husbands. This city, where she had spent such happy years, now struck her as alien and cold. In her loneliness, she yearned for her faraway home. With nobody here to confide in and nobody to share her broken heart, gloomy thoughts threatened to overcome and bind her.

On the way home, they passed the next-door neighbor's sprawling house, and she was reminded of the young woman recently widowed behind its doors. The thought came to her, unbidden: What if her beloved husband had died back then, when he was deathly ill and she had begged God to heal him? Would it not have been easier to stand at his grave then than to

stand here now, with their marriage broken by another woman?

At home, Kate was reminded of something from the sermon that morning. What was that verse again? She picked up her Bible to look for the chapter they had studied in Isaiah. She called to the God of all comfort, asking for strength and new courage, and the words from Isaiah 54 fell on her wounded, torn-up heart like balm, speaking to her personally as she started reading from verse 5, “For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is His name . . . For the Lord has called you like a woman forsaken and grieved in spirit.”

It was as though a soothing touch healed her heart as she continued reading, “For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you.” Barely believing her eyes, Kate discovered new depths to this Book she thought she knew so well and was able to claim one verse after the other in this precious chapter, especially when she came to the promise in verse 13, “All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children.” Tears flooded her eyes, and a deep peace filled her soul.

God Himself, through His word, had comforted the abandoned, despondent woman and called her to Him! Secure in this knowledge, Kate arose from her knees to go to bed. Sincerely praying to God for her husband and placing her life in His hands, she fell into a deep, untroubled sleep. ■

The Power of the Gospel

There were two heads of African tribes, one of whom was named Kama, a chief among the Caffres; and the other Morocco, who was a Bechuana chief. A missionary went to Kama, and settled among his people; another Christian teacher went to the tribe of which Morocco was the chief. Some years passed away, when it so happened that these two Africans came to the same place to sleep, at a distance from their homes. When Morocco heard that his enemy was in the house where he was to rest for the night, he did not like at first to enter the doors; but as evening came on, he went in with his attendants, and set himself on the opposite side of the room to that where the other chief had placed himself: For some time they looked at each other in silence. At last the Caffre chief thought, “Why

should I be silent when I have found the mercy of God, and I have nothing but love in my heart to all mankind?” He then said to Morocco, “Do you know the reason why you and I have met together in peace in this room?—you have left your spear at home, and I have left mine; and we are now sitting together as friends in the same room?” Morocco said, “No, I cannot tell the reason; but it is true you are sitting there, and I am sitting here, and we are sitting as friends.” Kama then said, “The reason is this: the missionaries have come into our country with the Word of God. And that Word teaches us, that although we may differ from each other in color and language, and may live in different countries, yet we are of one blood, and are fallen into sin. But there is one Savior who died for us all, and one way of salvation,

and one Spirit to teach us that way, when the Word is preached. This Word has been preached to us Caffres; and much as we loved fighting before, we see now it is a bad thing, and we have left it off. The Word of God has conquered our hearts, and we are now at peace. If it had not been for this Word, our meeting today would have been very ugly indeed: either your spear would have come into my heart, or mine might have gone into your heart; one of us must have fallen.” They then took off the rings from their arms, and exchanged them in token of peace and friendship. After this, they shook hands, and joined in prayer together; and were greatly delighted in talking about the great change which the gospel had made, in stopping war and bloodshed, and in producing peace and joy. ■

In a Swedish village, a miller’s apprentice, John, bought a Bible from a travelling salesman. Shortly before, he had fallen into the river that powered the mill and had nearly been swept up by the mill wheel. Having narrowly escaped with his life, he resolved to buy a Bible at the next opportunity. When opportunity knocked in the form of this salesman, John followed through on his decision. He bought the Bible, read it carefully, and found the way to eternal life, becoming an earnest Christian.

The people around him soon noticed that a great change had taken place in his life. They did not approve, and he was mocked and laughed at by the miller and his wife, by his friends, and by the customers. All of them wanted to stop him from reading the Bible. But John stayed true to his Savior and his chosen path, although the unkind words sometimes hurt.

Andrew, the 20-year-old son of the miller, had been good friends with John and was especially angry about his newfound piety. He tried

all sorts of ways to lure him back to his former frivolous life. When nothing worked, he began thinking about how he could wound his former friend as deeply as possible.

One day, when John was away, Andrew crept into his room, grabbed the despised Bible, and took it to the river to throw it in. On the way, he absentmindedly opened the Book, and his eyes fell on the words, “Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know ▶

what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:41–42).

These words pierced his heart to the core. An indescribable feeling of fear overcame him, and he could not bring himself to throw the Bible into the water.

Andrew took the Book back into his friend’s room, fell on his knees right then and there, and asked God for forgiveness for his sins. The Lord forgave him, and

he was filled with joy and contentment. John and Andrew soon became the best of friends because both loved the Savior and served Him by leading godly lives.

It did not take long for the other people in the village to notice what a great transformation had come over these two young men, and many followed their example, giving their hearts fully to God. ■

Your Word Gives Me Understanding!

| *“Through your precepts I get understanding” (Psalm 119:104)*

Nobody wishes to be called foolish or be told they have no understanding. People may admit that they have done wrong, but they are offended when they are called foolish and without understanding. Our very nature seems to abhor this. Now one would think that since the Word of the Lord gives understanding, people would gladly embrace it and its precepts. Psalm 119:104 reads: “Therefore I hate every false way.”

Those who have understanding do not wish to proceed on a way that is false. A false way will not lead you

to where you want to go. If you are travelling somewhere new and you come to a junction, it may not be clear which of several routes is the right one to take. Someone who knows which road to take has understanding. In spiritual matters, the more you understand of the Word of God, the easier it is to find the right way. Through understanding, there is harmony between what we want to do and what we should do. Therefore, it is imperative to study the Word of God and to use it as a daily guide in order to have the understanding needed to walk on the narrow way, the way of eternal life. ■



The Bible

The Bible is current

The Bible is always the most current, up-to-date book in the world because it is timeless in its meaning. It was relevant in the days of the Roman emperors, just as it is today. There is no epoch in the history of the world in which it is not highly relevant! Why? Because God, the unchanging One who is the same yesterday, today and forever, stands behind the Bible. What is current today will be outdated tomorrow; what is considered contemporary in the morning will be replaced by the evening. Not so with the Bible! “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away,” Jesus said (Matthew 24:35).

The Bible is a light

The Bible is the Christian’s light, which he needs to see clearly. Night has fallen over the Western world. In matters of law, a pure life, faithfulness, honesty, etc., people often grope in darkness. A multitude of deceptive lights are thrown at us, flashing up here and there and then disappearing again without a trace. “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:10). We will gladly exchange all deceptive lights for this bright light.

The Bible is a compass

The Bible is our compass. Life is a long journey leading into the unknown. This long and beautiful journey is also one that is continually threatened. We hear often in the news of people who have lost their direction and whose path leads to ruin. But many miss their path without ever being mentioned in the news. Every path away from God is a journey to ruin. “How can a young man cleanse his way?” is asked in Psalm 119:9. And the answer is: “By taking heed according to Your [God’s] word.”

The Bible is nourishment

No one can survive without food. So should the soul alone remain hungry? When the stomach experiences hunger, it growls. The starving soul silently cries to itself and starves. A terrible vitamin deficiency has

attacked the soul: lack of vitamin B - Bible - which makes people joyless, desolate, and powerless. Jeremiah states: “Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart” (Jeremiah 15:16).

The Bible is a mirror

Who doesn’t look in the mirror on a daily basis? When we read Holy Scripture, we are always amazed at how accurately it reflects our image, how subtly it criticizes us, and what loving, constructive correction it gives. Life can be lived in such a constructive way! Looking into this mirror is worthwhile. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

The Bible gives power

The Bible is a source of power. There are people whose mental and physical powers are strained to the utmost. Life has dealt them blows which could cause them to collapse; it has imposed burdens on them that far exceed their natural abilities;—and yet they are not crushed! Why? Where do they get their endurance? These people receive daily consolation from the Holy Scripture. “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18).

The Bible is Truth

The Bible brings the truth. Grievous ideas of deceit and distrust shake and agitate mankind. Where is truth? Where is a word that we can say is “true and does not deceive and certainly delivers what it promises, in death as well as in life?” Where are the actions behind the words? Where are words guaranteed in the absolute sense by One capable and able to fulfill them? Where other than in the Bible, which is of God Himself! “Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven. Your faithfulness endures to all generations; You established the earth, and it abides” (Psalm 119:89-90). ■

Comfort Found in the Holy Scriptures

Writing to the brethren in Rome, Paul says, “For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

In these days when the world seems so cold, when sin is rampant, and Satan tries with all his cunning to bring down the children of God wherever possible, we all need comfort. And God has not left us without it.

He has designed it in His plan that we should be comforted by the constant and abiding presence of the Holy Spirit and by the Holy Scriptures. Many things have also been recorded especially for our comfort. Since God has given us this source of comfort, we should make use of it, instead of struggling with our difficulties until we are completely discouraged.

Dear reader, are you perhaps discouraged? There is comfort for you! Do you feel that you cannot find a safe place in the great storm of life’s struggle and that you will be overwhelmed? Are you in an intense spiritual battle and need refreshment? Notice the words in Isaiah 25:4: “For You have been a strength to the poor, a strength to

the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shade from the heat.” Then you, too, can agree with the prophet, “O Lord, You are my God” (verse 1)! The same “God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work” (2 Corinthians 9:8).

Does it seem to you that no one cares about you and that you are abandoned and unnoticed? Cast “all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). God says that a mother may forget her child, but He will never forget us. “See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands” (Isaiah 49:16).

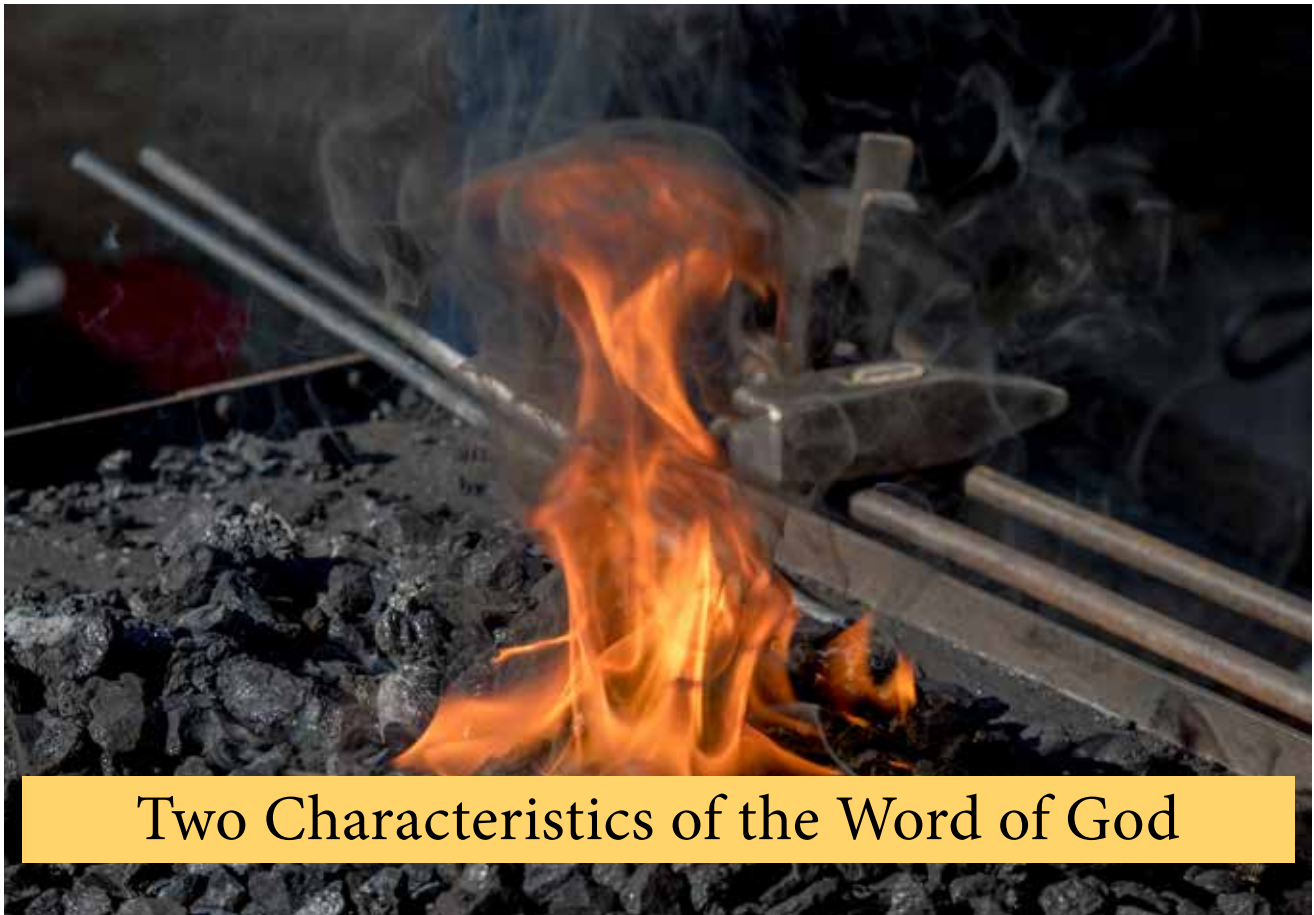
Do you suffer persecution? Have your persecutors become so bold and strong that you are afraid? Look away from all your troubles to God. He is stronger than they. “I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of a man who will be made like grass? And you forget the Lord your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth” (Isaiah 51:12-13). In Isaiah 41:10, the Lord says, “Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you,

yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Here are some more precious, comforting promises from God’s Word: “‘They will fight against you, but they shall not prevail against you. For I am with you,’ says the Lord, ‘to deliver you.’” (Jeremiah 1:19). “For the Lord God will help me; therefore, I will not be disgraced” (Isaiah 50:7).

You may go through many trials, and they may seem like great waves that want to overwhelm you and plunge you into the depths, but God promises you, “When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you” (Isaiah 43:2).

Ponder these precious passages of Scripture for a moment and take courage in trusting God. He loves you, and He is mighty to help you. Yes, the Scriptures are full of comfort and encouragement. Look up to the Lord from Whom your help comes. Pick up your Bible, and ask for the Holy Spirit’s help to give your heart understanding. Read it with a prayerful and trusting heart. Your soul will be lifted above all things, and you will go your way joyfully. ■



Two Characteristics of the Word of God

“Is not My word like a fire?’ says the LORD, ‘and like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’” (Jeremiah 23:29)

Fire melts the rock, while the hammer smashes it to pieces. Both the fire and the hammer illustrate the Word of God’s purpose and effectiveness.

The rock illustrates the stony heart of the natural man or the sinful heart. When the Word of God is preached to hearts in the power of the Holy Spirit, and if they are willing to hear, the Word will have a melting and crushing effect.

Some stones are harder to melt or break than others, but as the heat rises, or with repetitive use of the hammer, the stone breaks down, and likewise, through God’s Word, one learns to submit. Stones are usu-

ally smashed before they are melted. No doubt this also applies to God’s impact on the stony hearts of men.

Therefore, let us cry out and not relent, but use the mirror of God’s word to reveal sin! Let us be filled with the power of God’s Spirit, and the fire of His love will melt willing hearts and perhaps some of the stubborn ones. If our own hearts are cold and distant, our preaching won’t melt other hearts. If we withhold judgment against sin or dull the sharpness of the sword of truth, preventing it from cutting, no one will feel and sense it.

What would we think of a person who was trying to break apart

rocks, if he wrapped his hammer with rubber, and still expected the stone to break into pieces when he struck it? It is possible to use truth in such a way that its effect is neutralized or deactivated. We can hold to doctrine with apparent accuracy, but the rock will not be broken.

“The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; and he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?’ says the Lord. ‘Is not My word like a fire?’ says the Lord, ‘And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?’” (Jeremiah 23:28-29). ■

The Keys to the Kingdom of Heaven

According to Matthew 16:19, what are the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and when did Peter receive them?

The key is used here as a symbol and represents power or authority. Jesus used many illustrations to help His listeners understand truths. Without a key, one cannot enter a locked building. But he who has the key has authority over the house; he can let people enter and shut them out. “Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 16:19).

Since heaven is a spiritual place, this must relate to spiritual power. We know the church of God of the new covenant has no earthly power at all, only spiritual power. And on what is this power based? We can answer with great certainty and firm conviction: it exists in the preaching of the living Word of God entrusted to it. Therein lies the power of the keys, which the apostle Peter also received on the day of Pentecost.

But not only Peter, as some think, received the keys to the kingdom of heaven. From Matthew 18:18, we see clearly that all the disciples received this power: “Assuredly, I say to you: whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” Jesus spoke even more clearly to the eleven disciples after His resurrection, “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (John 20:23). This is the same power that He figuratively called the keys to the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 16:19.

Now let us take a closer look at the nature of this power, this key, and first ask ourselves: Does the preaching of the living Word of God really possess a binding and freeing power, a sin-forgiving and sin-retaining power?

Even Noah, the aged man of God, preached the living word of the Almighty authoritatively (see 2 Peter 2:5). Obeying the message guaranteed salvation. Despising it, however, resulted in destruction. At first glance, it seems to us that Noah was powerless, but he stood before the people with a word of divine authority. It didn’t matter if his contemporaries acknowledged it at that moment or not. He faithfully exercised the power entrusted to him by God and was able to call the people to take a stand. He did not force them to

convert. He did not force them to harden their hearts. He did not compel them to enter the ark, nor did he force them to remain outside. But he compelled them, by virtue of the message of the Living Word, to make a personal decision. No one whose heart and conscience has heard the spiritually-empowered message of the Word of God can avoid making this inevitable decision. A person can only do one thing when faced with this: either he closes himself off, or he opens his heart.

When the prophet Nathan told David, “You are the man!” (2 Samuel 12:7) it was a word of unsurpassed authority that confronted the king of Israel who had fallen into sin. He had only two options, to either harden his heart, or repent. The power of the divine word forced him to decide, and he thankfully chose the latter.

The Apostle Paul describes the consequences of the power of the Word which forces people to make a decision: “To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not, as so many, peddling the word of God; but as of sincerity, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:16-17).

Spirit-empowered preaching of the Gospel is truly the key to the kingdom of heaven. This unlocks the kingdom by clearly showing that the way has been opened, the ruler of this world has been judged, and that life and immortality have been revealed. But it is also the message that locks the door by clearly and definitively stating “that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:21), namely what is listed in verses 19-21.

The key to the kingdom of heaven, the living Word of God, first unlocks the door of man’s heart. Now, divine light streams in. This is an entirely personal experience. This shows God whether someone loves darkness more than light, or if he flees from the light. This is the first turning of the key. The second will be either an opening or a locking of the door. It is wonderful when the Word of God welcomes the penitent into the church of the Lord. This soul has assurance and “there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10).

The Word of God itself is the master key that keeps out all those named in Revelation 22:15, for “the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Corinthians 6:9).

The actual key holder is Christ Himself (Revelation 3:7). But He has placed His work entirely in the hands of the apostles and in the hands of those working in the same Spirit and mind who do not abuse its power.

The words of Jesus show His keyholding power. He unlocked, and He locked. His disciples gained entry into the kingdom of God by His word: “You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you” (John 15:3). To the paralytic, He said, “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you” (Matthew 9:2). He stated this in full accordance with the principles of the word of His Father in heaven. “The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority” (John 14:10). He closed the kingdom of heaven to hypocrites. In a powerful and decisive manner, He declared they would “receive greater condemnation” (Matthew 23:14).

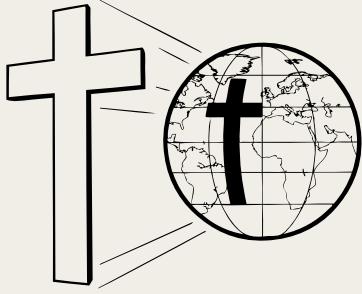
The present-day servants of Christ, who deliver the message according to Christ’s commission, also exercise the power of the Word because God’s Word is the power. This is neither a personal power, nor a power vested by a church, but it is Christ in the Word. He Himself is the Living Word. Paul says, “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us” (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Only the true church of the Lord is in possession of the key, according to Matthew 16:19. Yes, the power that radiates from true servants of Christ demands a personal decision from

the individual. This has a genuine, spiritual foundation and leads to either freedom or fetters, to forgiveness or retention of sins. Those who hear the pure Word of God and choose to follow Christ, will live in power, righteousness, and holiness before God. But for everyone who closes his heart to God’s message, the very power of that Word retains his sins and binds him based on his wicked decision or his avoidance and indecision. This is how the keys to the kingdom of heaven work. ■

W. W.





Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Healing Revelations through God's Word

We meet God in his word. His word gives light and shows us the way to salvation and eternal life. What do we do with what God shows us?

When Jesus prayed to His heavenly Father in John 17:6, "I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world," it was through the clear declaration of the divine Word. Further, He says, "For I have given to them the words which You have given Me" (verse 8). Jesus gave thanks that they had accepted and truly recognized that He had come forth from the Father so that all might find salvation.

God's Word is a very powerful source of revelation that heals us, and it will always remain so. Unfortunately, today, so many have become alienated from this glorious wellspring, and therefore "what may be known of God" (Romans 1:19) has also become very unfamiliar. The prophet Hosea lamented the hardships of his time in Hosea 4:1-2: "There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. By swearing and lying, killing and stealing and committing adultery, they break all restraint, with bloodshed upon bloodshed. Therefore the land will mourn; and everyone who dwells there will waste away."

It is as if the prophet is speaking of our own time! But God's Word also shows us help and a way out of these conditions.

God's Word exposes one's forsakenness.

"Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34). That is how King Solomon presented it to his people during his reign. Who could disagree? Blessed are those who recognize this and take it to heart! We all know how tragically one can ruin his own life. How much guilt, suffering, and hardship we can bring upon ourselves! Cain cried out before the Lord, "My punishment is greater than I can bear!" (Genesis 4:13) Saul, in great despair of his unrighteousness, felt he had no other choice but to find help from a fortune teller (1 Samuel 28). Who can describe such inner despair, and where might one find a way out? Saul threw himself on his sword, but that was not the answer!

God's Word reveals to us the only Savior and the way to Him!

God Himself placed this only Savior in this world. At Christmastime, people still sing, "Christ the Savior is born!" We all need Him, but who is looking for Him? Who wants Him, and who heeds His call to repentance? He came to us in human form because He wanted to be like us. The angel of the Lord announced



Him: “you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

He came into the world for this special purpose. The way out of all ruin is Jesus Christ, the Son of God! In His first message (Mark 1:15), He already proclaimed, “Repent and believe in the gospel.” That was a clear reference to God’s Word! And again, He called out to the lost multitude, “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28-29). Can there be a better offer?

Let us consider a serious warning from Jesus in John 15:22: “If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin.” In John 14:6, He shows us the only way out of misery and ruin: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.”

God’s Word is the message of Christ and the cross. Paul emphasized, “For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18). It is truly the most beneficial revelation for life.

An elderly couple had decided to read the Bible every evening. One evening, the husband said, “Wife, if the Bible is right, then we are in error.” Another evening, he said, “If the Bible is true, then we are lost!” And as he continued to read, he said, “Wife, we must be converted!” And they were saved! This is the healing power of revelation through God’s Word!

God’s Word reveals the will of God

Through Peter’s sermon, a great revival occurred in Jerusalem (Acts 2). The word had “cut to the heart” of the people, and they asked, “What shall we do?” The answer was, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:38).

God’s Word wants to show us the way and bring us safely to our destination, for Jesus prayed in John 17:24, “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.”

Have you already allowed these revelations from God’s Word to heal and influence you? They are for you personally, dear soul, and they are there to bring about your salvation! ■

Study Notes (13)

My Clinical Internship Year

I started my clinical internship year in anesthesia and really enjoyed it. In the third week, I was allowed to place my first central venous catheter (a somewhat more complex procedure in which a catheter is inserted into a large blood vessel in the neck). Because it takes a novice some time to do this, the report on it had to be written down in a big hurry. My superior dictated, and I wrote. But even as I wrote, I began to have doubts about his account. Had we really done everything like he said we did? It seemed to me that this was not the case. So that the operation could take place without delay, I kept silent at first until the patient was safely under anesthesia. Then I tried to wait for the superior to share my concerns with him when we were alone. It was clear he would not be impressed, but I knew there was no point in putting off this concern. The longer I stayed silent, the harder it would be to make my case. So I stepped into his office, a little apprehensive, and asked what the point of this report would be if we hadn't done it that way after all. He explained his reasons to me, but of course it was about the legal protection of the hospital. So I explained, "Don't get me wrong, I can keep quiet for you, but I can't lie for you. I'm not a heathen." He bristled. "You didn't lie; after all, I signed it," he assured me. "Still, I'd rather not write it then." "I have taken note of that," he replied. I thanked him and fled.

I was aware, of course, that he would pay special attention to my every word from then on. The next morning, I expressed my regret that we were still not working because we had been waiting for the patient for three quarters of an hour. "Why are you lying so boldly to my face?" he asked provocatively. Apparently, he didn't believe I was sorry, and he was waiting for me to justify myself. I smiled at him and said as amiably as I could that I thought that was rude. He lowered his eyes and left. I wondered if I would now have a hard time with him and prayed, as it says in the song, "Keep me near Thee, blessed Jesus, keep me near Thee

lest I stray." Thankfully, however, the matter did not seem to have aroused his anger, for from then on he treated me with great courtesy. ■

Corinna Kowalski
Hamm, Germany

VERSE OF THE MONTH

*"[Be] fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."
(Romans 12:11)*

A single coal cannot possibly create a large fire on its own. Only through a larger quantity of burning coals and through a trigger do the individual pieces ignite each other into a bright fire.

In times of physical distance, there is a danger that we can cool down like individual pieces of coal and lose strength. That is why moving closer together "in Spirit" is important.

What does it mean to be "*fervent in spirit*"?

In Luke 12:49, Jesus said that He came to light a fire on the earth. By this, He did not mean an actual fire but a spiritual fire in our hearts. He does this through His Holy Spirit. He alone is the "kindling" of our spiritual life and our source of strength and fire, to which we always want to hold ourselves very close.

Let us pray that together we may remain burning to radiate light, warmth, and hope in this world.



“What Touches You Becomes Part of You!”

Recently, my wife came home with a new shower gel. “Here,” she said with a smile, “you can try something new.” She meant well. It was a new product that contained “no frills” at all. The whole presentation of the packaging showed that the marketing department of the manufacturer had obviously done a good job. And so, one morning, I noticed a phrase written on the back of the tube: “What touches you becomes part of you!” Somehow, this phrase stuck in my mind. Again and again, I’ve had to think about it and realized that there is a lot more to it than the creative department probably had in mind.

Obviously I’m not concerned about the touch of a shower gel, but with things that attract our attention and begin to occupy us—they touch us and thus become a part of us. For example, there are people whose lives or fates touch us. They leave a lasting impression and often directly influence our actions. There are pictures, music, or books that touch us. Perhaps you have already experienced how a single Bible verse has changed your thinking and suddenly shown you a new perspective. Things that seemed insurmountable and difficult suddenly seem doable. Worry gives way to hope.

But then there is something else that concerns me. It is the question of whom or what we give our attention to throughout the day. I am convinced that the devil tries with all his might to tirelessly draw our attention to “him.” There is no means too great for him. His goal, in the sense of this tagline, is to become a part of us. Do you know the feeling of envy? Where does it come from? Isn’t it a situation or a piece of information that touches us and thus becomes part of us? Now, if we aren’t alert to this feeling and give in to it, it will most likely have an effect on our behavior. Yes, it thus becomes part of us. So many examples could be given here: What about pride, anger, strife, fear, etc.? Don’t

these things occur according to similar patterns? We see something, hear something, notice something, etc. And if we are not careful, then things happen that are not good for us, and they can become sin.

But that’s not all. What about the flood of media that surrounds us everywhere? Do we realize that it has incredible potential to change our behavior? Ten minutes of YouTube turns into 100, 5 minutes of Instagram into 50. Do we need to ask ourselves: Who has control over our media consumption? And what all comes out of it? Is everything we watch and listen to an enrichment for us, or does the thought of it becoming “part of us” even scare us?

In this context, I had to think of what Paul mentions in similar ways three times in the letters to the Corinthians: “Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19, & 2 Corinthians 6:16). As born-again people, we become a temple of God. Take some time and think about this statement. And then think about what has touched you in the last week in the sense of the preceding thoughts. What is most important for you? What has become part of you? Does it all suit the temple of God? Is it what you would expect to find there? A much more decisive question is whether it is what God would expect. We know about Jesus, how He went through the temple of Jerusalem at that time and had to “cleanse” it.

What encourages me is the fact that I am not at the mercy of anything that happens. I can consciously give myself over to the things that promote God’s peace in me (Philippians 4:8-9). On the other hand, when I identify weaknesses in my life, I may ask God to help me (Psalm 12:6). ■

Niko Ernst
Herford, Germany

Simple Worship Services and Divine Results

Hebich related how the services were conducted in the following excerpt:

“I seldom succeed in delivering a fluent sermon among them, as I frequently have to nudge them to deeper understanding by asking questions. Our little chapel is simple and quaint. On the left, the women with their children, who sometimes let their wailing voices be heard during the service (may they reach the heavenly Father!) sit on mats. On the right, the men sit on benches, and further back, the Indo-British have their place. I stand in front of a table covered with a white cloth, which is just below the small pulpit. To my right is Aaron, who translates my Kannada words into Tamil. To my left is the schoolmaster, who is also my chorister and teacher.”

On the white-covered table, beside the Bibles in Malayalam, Tamil, and English, lay a small rod and a longer reed. But why were these things needed in a worship service? Well, if the dear little children were not quiet during the prayer (Hebich prayed for almost an hour) or during other parts of the service, then he would rise from his knees and restore order with a properly measured application of these tools, and then continue with praying or preaching. When, however, he was admonished about this strange practice by a brother from the mission organization, these peculiar items were removed and the practice discontinued.

It must have been on an occasional trip to the Nilgiri Mountains (Blue Mountains) when the dusty wanderer Hebich was turned away from the door by a colonel's servant. This colonel wanted absolutely nothing to do with him.

Hebich had stopped in to see his friend (also a colonel) who lived in the same community and asked to borrow his hunting vehicle. He hurriedly changed his clothes and then set off again in his host's vehicle to call on the officer who had just refused to receive him moments earlier.

When the colonel noticed the familiar vehicle, he naturally thought it was his friend coming to visit

him. To his astonishment, however, a moment later he found himself face to face with the missionary. When he could no longer avoid him, he asked him to come inside. They had hardly taken their seats when Hebich said, “Indeed, Colonel, now I come to you as a rich man and you receive me; but if I come as a poor man, you reject me. So, of course, you do not want to receive the poor, despised Jesus, but only the rich Jesus. You will end up in hell with your arrogance! Only the spiritually poor will see God. Come now and let us pray that the Lord Jesus will forgive you.”

It is reported that the colonel bowed down, ashamed of his pride, and became a humble follower of Jesus.

Thus, this faithful servant of God became “all things to all men” in order to save some “by all means.”

We should not assume that every day was equal to the other. However, whatever the day brought, Hebich was always in contact with his God and therefore always ready to be a blessing. At the same time, he was tirelessly active, taking advantage of each quarter hour and seizing every opportunity to make his life as rich as possible in the service of God.

In order to understand this man and his work, we must speak of the love he had for the people. It was a great, strong love, kindled at the altar of God's love on Calvary. Yes, how dear those souls were to him, and what patience he exercised! He was never in a hurry. He waited for God, and he also waited for people. He gave them time to reflect, but when he was sure that God had given him a soul, he did not rest until the soul had surrendered to God.

Yes, Samuel Hebich lived with God and walked with God; that was the secret of his blessed life. His whole being breathed faith, love, and joy. He was not without fault, but he had courage and humility, and when he had transgressed, he bowed in repentance before God. We can learn that like him, it is possible to leave a luminous footprint. Let us be devoted to God and to doing the will of God and glorifying Christ. Then the all-consuming passion for souls will compel us, as it did in God's servant, Hebich. ■



God's Light

Marc, did you feed the dogs when I told you to?" Mother asked. "Oh," Marc said as he clapped his hands over his mouth. "I forgot."

"You must go feed them now."

"But, Mom, it's dark outside. I can't see where their dish is," Marc complained.

"You should have fed them when I first told you to. It was light then," Mother said. She opened a drawer and took out a flashlight.

"Here, you may use your daddy's flashlight to light your way."

Marc took the light and went outside to feed the dogs. In a few minutes he returned.

"Mom, when I was outside the flashlight made a bright path for me to walk in. I turned the light off once, and I couldn't see anything. I was scared of the dark. But Daddy's flashlight is bright

and I was not afraid with it shining."

"Did you know that God has a light that is brighter than the flashlight?" Mother asked.

"He does?" Marc asked surprised.

"Oh, you mean the sun, don't you?"

"The sun is a light God made, but I mean a different kind of light," Mother explained.

"Just as the flashlight made a path through the darkness for you to walk in, God's light shows us how to walk through this wicked world. Sin is dark. There is a lot of sin in the world. It starts in people's hearts. Lying, cheating, stealing, saying bad words, and treating people unkindly are some of the sins of darkness. Many people stumble around in the darkness of sin all their lives. God's light is called truth. He shines

it into people's hearts, so they will know how to keep away from the darkness of sin."

"If God shines His light of truth, why doesn't everyone walk in it?" Marc asked.

"Just as you turned off your flashlight, some people turn off the light of truth," she said. "They will not read God's Word or listen to the minister preach to try to find His light. They think they can make it all right in the dark."

"I nearly fell in a hole when I was in the dark," Marc said.

"Those people might fall, too." "Yes, many people fall into holes that the devil has made, and they never get out. We must be careful to pray, read the Bible, and listen to those who teach us God's word so we can follow the light of truth." ■

*Sandra Whitson
The Beautiful Way*

Those Three Little Words

When my children were little, there were three embroidered words mounted on the wall, the adjectives of obedience: fully, cheerfully, and immediately. This is how children's obedience should be formed. They must learn

to obey fully, to obey cheerfully, and to obey immediately.

Fully—not only as far as it suits and pleases them, but completely, as the parents have asked. How often I caught the children and later the grandchildren



only half obeying. When they felt like it, they fulfilled the given order. But when they didn't feel like it, they didn't do it.

And “cheerfully” was often also a problem. How often, when I gave an order, I saw that the lower lip pushed forward. That was a sign that the order was not pleasant for the child, that he didn't like to do it. Maybe he just wanted to play or whatever else he had in mind. “Someone else can do it. I always have to do it!” If their father insisted on his will, then it was indeed carried out, but it was clear how unwillingly it happened. How many a mother then gives in to the child's displeasure and says, “If you dislike doing it so much, then let it be, and I'll do it myself!” In this way, the child is encouraged to disobey.

Lastly comes “immediately.” How often did my children wish to be allowed to do this and that first, and only then they would do what I asked them to. But if I had given in, it would never have been completed. I insisted on “immediately.”

If children have learned and practiced these three adjectives, then they have learned something important for life, because our God also demands that we obey fully, cheerfully, and immediately. He is only satisfied and pleased by obedience that carries out His wishes and instructions fully, cheerfully, and immediately.

Have we learned to obey fully yet? King Saul had not learned, and because of that, he lost his crown. The prophet Balaam had not learned to obey fully either. Despite grandiose speeches that he would not go along even if Balak gave him a house full of gold and silver, he did it anyway and ran into disaster.

Maybe God gave you a commission through a person, “Oh, when you get there, why don't you visit my brother who is not yet saved?” You came to the place and made the visit—but the brother was not at home. Now you were content to have made the effort. But the wish of the person who commissioned you was that you would talk to the man about his soul. But you

didn't do that; you were satisfied with having done the job halfway.

That was a disappointment for the person who asked—and certainly a disappointment for God.

And what about “cheerfully” in our case? Did we always obey cheerfully? Oh, how often have we weighed the will of God on the scales to see whether it was light or heavy. And if it did not seem easy to us, then we either did not do it at all or did it only very unwillingly.

In every house, there is a call for “someone else,” just like it is with the children. When God told us to do something, we thought: someone else can do it. And—it did not happen.

And that word “immediately”—doesn't it also have something to say to us? I know of an elderly Christian who made a particularly calm and peaceful impression. He was asked about his secret. He answered: “My secret? I have no secret at all. *I've just gotten used to never letting God tell me anything twice.*”

But with that, he had told us his secret. He obeyed right away. What about us? Haven't we sometimes let God tell us something ten or twenty times before we did it? I must confess it of myself. How many times did God put His hand on my pipe and say, “Stop that!” But I was not ready to obey just yet. I continued to smoke until finally the day came when I realized: It's now or never! God expects obedience now—or your life will go on in disobedience and without blessing. And never have I regretted finally becoming obedient! I only wish I had obeyed God right away! His peace would have completely filled and ruled my heart even sooner. For I had long smoked in conscious disobedience to God, who told me, “Whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple.”

My brother, my sister, if you want your life to be a blessed life, be obedient to God, fully, cheerfully, and immediately! ■

Ernst Modersohn

Dedication service in Okposi

Group photo with Brother Christian Ress from Germany



Worship service in Benin

Pastor/Assistant meeting in Porto-Novo, Benin



Report on the Work of the Church of God in Nigeria und Benin

Since 2014, the church of God in Germany has been in contact with brothers and sisters in two African countries. Several brothers and sisters have also visited the congregations there. In September 2018, Brother Okereke Ogbonnaya was in Germany for several weeks and preached the Word of God in many congregations.

Development of the Church

The beginnings of this ministry go back to 1978. God led Brother Okereke Ogbonnaya to obtain a copy of "The Way of Truth." It was in this publication that biblical baptism by immersion was discussed. He then contacted Brother Craig, the preacher of the church of God in Hagerstown, MD, USA. Brother Craig an-

swered and sent him literature that assisted him in studying the Word of God, as well as doctrinal information showing the New Testament Church as described in the Word of God.

The brother realized in the light of divine truth that the full gospel was not being preached and lived out in the congregation he attended. He therefore left that congregation in June 1982 and adhered to the Word of God alone. On June 20, 1982, the first service of the Church of God was held in Okposi. In the years following, Brother Ogbonnaya sought those who belonged to the church of God. Although there are more than 20 groups with this name, he was always disappointed when he met with them personally. It was not until four years later that he found brothers Benjamin

Adesoro from Auchi and Silver Nnaeto from Benin City. These brothers then met in February 1986 with brothers Ollen and Alvin Craig from Hagerstown (USA) in Okposi. The Craig brothers also visited Nigeria three times until 1995. They helped the brethren dig deeper into biblical teachings and instructed the leaders in many matters of practical church life in the church of God. They also brought them literature of the church of God and sent them regular publications (*The Way of Truth*).

Brother Hessou H. Jean from Benin reports how he became acquainted with the teachings of the church of God as early as 1983. In 1984, the brothers and sisters began church of God services in Hègo-Tanmè, Benin. In 1989, when Brothers Alvin and Ollen Craig visited Nigeria, a group of brothers and sisters from Benin traveled to Nigeria and became acquainted with the brothers from the USA and, likewise, the brothers and sisters in Nigeria. Thus began the close collaboration of the ministries in Nigeria and Benin, which have grown to this day.

Since the beginning, the work of the church of God has grown rapidly in both countries. In Nigeria, there are currently over 30 local congregations, and in Benin, the brothers and sisters gather in 19 locations. In total, about 2500 people attend the regular services in both countries, of which over 40% are children and youth. Only some of the local congregations have a building for the services; however, the term “building” can easily mislead us. In some cases, the services are held in extremely poor conditions or in rented rooms.

The pastors responsible meet regularly for pastors’ meetings.

In both Nigeria and Benin, camp meetings are regularly held to strengthen the church in the way of biblical truth.

In 2014, 2016, and 2018, visits from Germany took place in Nigeria and Benin. Remarkable was the fact that both the brothers from Germany and Africa gratefully noted how important “church of God” is to them both in Africa and in Germany. Again and ►

Meetings in Benin City



Open air mission in Benin



Meetings in Hego-Tanme, Benin

Pastors’ meeting



again, they shared together the preciousness of the church doctrine and practical living.

For the past three years, a radio program of the church of God has been broadcast in some states in Nigeria, which has been well-received beyond expectations. In Benin, the radio mission was started earlier.

The church of God in Nigeria is so similar to the church in Europe—and at the same time so structurally different. There, where the essential spiritual elements of salvation, love, grace, and zeal are at stake, unity is clearly experienced. Unity is assured by the mind of Christ, who guides His children in every country. It is love and humility that unite the hearts of diverse people in a spiritual way and enable understanding across language barriers.

And then there are the different cultures in which the church lives and works. It is shaped by the environment, the regional culture, and the temperament of the inhabitants. There are major differences here: it starts with punctuality and does not end with lively worship services. But these

Nigeria has a population of 201 million people (Germany: 83 million, Canada: 38 million, U.S.A.: 331 million). Three African languages, as well as English, are the official languages. In total, more than 500 different languages and dialects are spoken.

About 50% of the population is Muslim, who occupy the northern part of the country.

Although Nigeria has the largest national economy of Africa, it has one of the lowest life expectancies in the world at age 55. More than half the people live in abject poverty, well below the poverty line. On average, they have to get by with less than two dollars per day.

Benin borders Nigeria to the west and has about 11.8 million inhabitants. Benin is strongly influenced by its past as a French colony. The official language is French. Benin is one of the poorest countries in the world.

(Source: Wikipedia)

differences ensure that the people of the surrounding area feel comfortable in the various congregations. The respective congregational culture is authentic and harmonizes with the spirit of the Gospel in its environment.

The mutual visits have shown how much we also need each other. In the last few weeks (March 2021), Brother Rufus sent a message to Germany, “I am on my way to evangelistic meetings to preach. Pray for me.” Prayers were said for him in various congregations—and God blessed the work. The services were held in an extremely poor room, and the visitors sat on plain plastic chairs. But the Holy Spirit was present and worked in His power.

May God continue to bless the work of the church of God in Nigeria and Benin and let it be a bright light in a dark place. ■

Herbert Kowalski
Hamm, Germany

Olanike Adewusi-Anders
Gifhorn, Germany

Hermann Vogt
Gifhorn, Germany



Sister Sunday from the church in Okposi with her Sunday School class

A Congregation's Report

On January 10, 2021, a sister first entered the church at the end of the worship service. In her arms, she carried an approximately 7-month old baby who was crying. The child was dying. Brother Okereke Ogbonnaya took the child from her and brought it to the altar in front of the congregation. He earnestly prayed the prayer of faith together with the entire congregation. God heard them, and the child came to life again. Shortly afterward, the father, who attended a different congregation, came. Because of the circumstances, the little family stayed in the chapel for three days before they then went to stay with the woman's family. Since this day, the father of this child has not missed one service yet.

After some time, Brother Okereke asked him why he now comes to the services of the church of God. He answered that there were many reasons for it. The

beginning for him was the divine healing of his terminally ill child.

But then his wife's holy living impressed him deeply. When he came home drunk, she quietly endured it without scolding or criticizing him. He also noticed how she greeted with special kindness their hostile neighbor who had threatened to kill her.

His decision was then further solidified when, one Sunday, he witnessed Brother Okereke presenting the congregation's financial report with income and expenses. In conversation with his friend, he compared the pastor's behavior with the greedy actions of many pastors from other congregations he had met. His acquaintance also made the decision to attend the meetings of the church of God going forward.

Brother Okereke reported this story with the plea to pray for these men so that they would recognize the powerful truth of the gospel. ■

Two Ways to Read Your Bible

There are two ways in which to read the Bible. One of them is not very helpful. The other way is useful and will enrich our lives. I used to read the Bible in the first way because I was not familiar with the other. Then I received a letter outlining the other method of Bible reading, and I was greatly enriched. I first want to talk about the way to read the Bible that was not very useful to me.

This way to read the Bible is just to read a chapter according to a Bible reading plan. You just open your Bible, read a chapter—with which you are already familiar—and then you think you have done your duty. If you had asked me after reading a chapter: “What good did reading that chapter do you?” I would not have been able to give you an answer. I had read the chapter to do my duty. Even if I didn’t say so, I probably thought so. Many think that reading the Bible is a good deed that needs to be done in order to perform one’s Christian duty. Reading the Bible in this manner did not provide lasting benefits for me. The advice given in the letter I received was to read the Bible asking questions and to be engaged in self-examination. After a verse or passage, it is good to ask oneself: Do I possess this? Do I know this? Do I do this? Do I measure up to this? I started reading the Bible in this way. I noticed that the way in which I now read brought more blessing and was more effective and fruitful. I no longer took the Bible and read something for the Lord; rather, I took the Bible and read for me.

When I examined myself and asked: “Do I know this, do this, measure up to this?” then it was as if the Word said, “You have already been a Christian for so long and are still lacking here, don’t understand yet?” It was not as if it were written there, but the Lord Himself through the Word spoke to me. And even without thinking, I started praying: “O, Lord, forgive me that I am not yet where I should be spiritually, that I have not yet received what You are offering me.” And then I pleaded, “O Lord, give me that which I am still lacking.”

In this manner, a dialogue ensued. God spoke to me through His Word, and I spoke to Him in prayer. I

was able to grow spiritually because I recognized what I lacked and asked Him for help and renewal.

Let me give you an example of how I read the Bible using questions for self-examination. In my Bible reading plan, I came to 1 Peter 2:7, “Therefore to you who believe, He is precious.” I paused there and asked, “Is He precious to me?” And I was able to answer, “Yes, He is precious to me.” But it did not end there. The thought came to me, “Why is He precious to you?” I thought about it and could say that He is precious to me since He was willing to be born in a manger, leave heaven’s glory, and come to our poor earth. He is precious to me because through His cross, He granted me salvation. He is precious to me because His grave is empty, and He has brought life and immortality to light. I thought, “Is that all?” After thinking further, I answered, “No, that is not all. He is precious to me because He is my guide through life; He answers my prayers; He is my comfort in sorrow.” And again, “Is that all?” “No,” I said, “that is not all, for He is precious because of His Word that speaks to us and also speaks to me. He is precious to me because He has called me into the ministry, even though I resisted at first. He is precious because He gave me energy, grace, and strength for this ministry, not only spiritually but physically. He healed me from an ailment that the doctors said was incurable. So now I have renewed energy to fulfill my duties. He is precious to me because He has allowed me to see the fruit of my labors, people responding to the gospel through my ministry.”

I read Colossians 3:12, “Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering.” And now the questions begin: Am I in possession of these? Do I show tender mercies with those around me who are suffering? Do I show kindness in my interactions with those I meet? Do I have the humility to esteem others higher than myself? Do I have meekness, should others treat me badly? When things are not done as promptly or as well as I would like them to be, do I get agitated, or do I portray patience? As I begin my self-examina-

tion, I turn to the Lord and pray, “O, Lord, forgive me.” And “O, Lord, give me.”

Don’t you see that this kind of Bible reading is useful for spiritual growth? Such reading of God’s Word brings many blessings. Meditating on the words and thinking about them a bit longer lets us make some precious discoveries.

That was the case, not too long ago, when I read Ephesians 2:19, “Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.” “What am I according to these words?” I asked myself. I am a fellow citizen because of His Spirit, whom He has also given to me. He is precious to me because of His blood, through which He cleansed us—even me—from all sin. Again, is that all? No, He is with the saints.

I have citizenship in the city of God. I am a member of God’s household. And what does that mean? God is the Father, and I am a member of His family. But if I am a member of His household, do I then need to worry about food, clothes, rent, and things like that? No, parents take care of those in their family. How much more will God the Father take care of those in His household! I was blessed and overjoyed by these thoughts. If we start reading the Bible with questions like these and apply the Word to ourselves, we will be greatly blessed. We will be glad and rejoice “as one who finds great treasure” (Psalm 119:162). When you read your Bible, read it with questions for self-examination. ■

Ernst Modersohn



The Word of the Lord

Your Word, o Lord, is like the dew,
Refreshing souls in summer.
Let ev'ry heart planted by You
Receive Your word of comfort.
Let Your plants grow and let them show
Much fruit for You, the Master,
In days that follow after.

Your Word, o Lord, a flaming sword,
A boulder-chiseling hammer;
Searing the heart with one accord,
Causing the proud to stammer.
O let Your Word, when it is heard,
Destroy both sin and sadness,
Refining hearts with gladness.

I needed help and found it not
Until your Word came to me.
It was the comfort that I sought,
A lamp that shone so clearly.
Through it I know the way to go,
It makes my footsteps even
And leads me home to heaven.

I'll cling to You, for then I know
In safety I'll go forward.
There's nowhere else that I could go,
For You have words of life, Lord.
The Spirit's sword, it's Your dear Word
That gives me strength and feeds me,
Comforts my heart and leads me.

O send a hunger everywhere
And thirst for Your commandments, Lord.
O may Your Spirit guide our prayer
So we may honor e're Your Word;
And let us search all o'er the earth
For those with thirst within them
And bring them to your kingdom.

Carl Bernhard Garve