



Foundation of Faith

Faith *in the* **Modern** Age?

Societal Change and Faith

Serving God in 2021

Faith and Signs

I Believe in Jesus—
Am I a Christian?

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

Some time ago, I went to my family doctor, a nice, friendly young man, to get a necessary prescription. In the process, the doctor wanted to prescribe an additional medication for me that could have dangerous side effects. I told him that I believed in divine healing, as well as healing through natural herbs and the like. He answered: "This is not scientifically proven!"

Yes, today, according to many people, everything must be proven scientifically. But how often have we seen that people, scientists, and other scholars are sometimes wrong. What was touted as good yesterday is known today as error and often even considered dangerous and deadly.

Dear reader, we live in a world in which God has given us light and life. We read: "And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (John 1:5). Further, "men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19). God's Word shows us many examples where few accepted the truth and the majority believed what was wrong.

Even in our "modern" times, God's Word, His wonderful promises, and Christ as Savior are dismissed and rejected. Faith in the divine seems old-fashioned to many. Because of this rejection, God sends sorrow and judgment instead of His blessing.

The world, the prince of this world, Satan, and his helpers are trying to turn everything upside down in order to seduce and deceive the masses and thus plunge them into damnation and eternal torment.

However, steadfast faith in God's Word and Jesus' promises also remain for our modern time, yes, even for all eternity, for Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6).

H. D. Nimz

The Divine Answer

During a time of revival in West Germany, the daughter of a very wealthy man had become greatly troubled in her heart. On Sundays, she sat attentively in worship services, listening with her soul. Introspective and quieter than usual, she walked around the house throughout the week without finding the courage to speak to anyone about what was so strongly and agonizingly occupying her inwardly. She deeply felt the contradiction between the requirements of God's Word and the views of most people.

Gertrude did not by any means come from an ungodly home. Her parents attended worship services, not regularly but from time to time. She never heard hostile and mocking words from them. But something was missing in the home, which otherwise had no lack of earthly things. Gertrude felt it very clearly: Something was missing in the lives of most of those who called themselves Christians. In her own life, too. What was it?

She began to read her Bible regularly. But this made her even more restless. One thing soon became clear to her: the God who was now proclaimed in the assembly, of whom the words of Scripture speak, this God not only promised forgiveness of sins, life, and blessedness to those who come to Him, He also wanted to be the center of their whole lives. Helping, comforting, but also challenging and disciplining, He wanted to influence all their actions. He wanted to be worshiped not only on Sundays, on church feast days, at meals, and at special family events—no, in everything people thought, spoke, and did, they were to stand before this God.

Had her stance toward God so far been like this? Was her parents' and friends' stance to Him like that? Anyone she knew? Yes—one! The old lady upstairs in a little room of the old house—perhaps! But she was generally regarded as an oddball.

Was the whole thing perhaps a mistake? Restlessness of an overexcited soul? Her teacher at school had once spoken completely differently of God. Who was right? How could she become certain of God? How could she get to know what He was really like?

Gertrude was intelligent. A clear head and sharp thinking skills had always distinguished her. She had always liked to get to the bottom of things. Even now she could not and did not want to be just a follower, neither to the right nor to the left. She sought clarity, searching for solid ground under her feet. Who could give her the clarity for which her soul longed? Who could put her feet on solid rock?

She knew one thing, however: Her heart agreed with the words of the preacher and the Scriptures. And once she had recognized the truth, she would devote herself to it wholeheartedly, without timidity or fear of man. Ah, but who would help her find true knowledge of God?

Weeks went by without Gertrude coming to peace and certainty. The girl, who used to be so happy and lively, became more and more silent. And her parents began to worry about the health of their child.

By now autumn had arrived. Here and there purple and golden shone in the foliage of the trees. But the air was still warm, the sky blue, and the sun shone every day. Gertrude wanted to spend a few of the last beautiful days of the year visiting a friend who lived in another town. Her suitcase was already packed, and she planned to leave early the next morning.

The night before, as she customarily did now, she folded her hands and prayed, "Lord God, show Yourself to me as You are! Give me clarity and certainty about what You expect from Your children!"

Early the next morning, she said goodbye to her parents and went to the train station, bought her ticket, and boarded the train. She was alone in a compartment. She sat quietly in her corner. Completely wrapped up in her thoughts, she paid little attention to what was going on around her.

The train had already stopped several times. There was a longer stop at a small rural station. Gertrude had taken a quick look through the window. The platform was almost deserted; there was not much to see here. So she was soon lost in her thoughts and hardly noticed that the train was slowly starting to move.

Suddenly, there was hasty running and excited shouting of the officials and the bright, pleading sound of a woman's voice! What was that? Startled, Gertrude straightened up. Then the door of her compartment opened; the conductor and the stationmaster together pushed in a breathless, perspiring woman.

Involuntarily, Gertrude jumped up. She grabbed, lifted, and pulled the obviously exhausted woman in—and then the door slammed shut.

It was just in the nick of time. The train was already moving at a faster pace; the station disappeared.

Gertrude had sunk back into her corner. She was so startled that her heart was beating loudly and violently. She looked at her new companion. She was a middle-aged woman. Quite beside herself from the hurried run, she struggled to breathe. She kept wiping the beading drops of sweat from her forehead. Gradually, however, she seemed to calm down. She looked around her. The eyes of the two met.

“Just in time!” said Gertrude with a smile. The woman's eyes began to shine.

“It was an answer to prayer!” she said, taking a deep breath.

“What?—An answer to prayer?” A sudden tremor seized the girl's body.

“An answer to prayer!” the woman repeated with the same wonderful glow in her eyes. “Didn't you see it? The officials who usually detain and penalize anyone who wants to get on a moving train, they themselves helped me and pushed me in!”

“Yes, but why?”

“I had to go!” the woman said. “The letter had come so late, I couldn't get ready any sooner. So I ran the entire way and just kept sighing, ‘Lord, you know I have to catch the train! So help me!’ And He helped.”

“May one come to God with such earthly things?” asked Gertrude, astonished and stirred to the core. “How can He pay attention?”

The woman looked over almost pityingly. “God pays attention to everything,” she said, “even the smallest things in our lives. Oh, He is faithful! The more we entrust to Him, the more gloriously He reveals Himself to us. I have experienced it! Oh, I know Him!”

At these words, it was as if a bright light radiated into Gertrude's soul. As if dazzled by this light's brilliance, she closed her eyes for a moment.

So that was it! This was the way to get to know God: you had to trust Him, entrust Him with everything that stirred your heart. “The more you entrust to Him,” the woman had said, “the more gloriously He reveals Himself.” Trust leads to the knowledge of God, to certainty.

With this clarity, this certainty, a stream of joy flowed into Gertrude's heart. As if freed from a heavy burden, she breathed a deep sigh of relief. Tears ran down her cheeks, tears of joy.

She was given only a short time to travel together with the woman. By the third or fourth stop, she had reached the destination of her journey. But Gertrude never forgot this short interlude, the few words they were able to speak together about what filled both their hearts.

She came home a different person and, yet again, as the old, joyful, determined, and energetic one. Only that joy and energy now rested on other, on eternal, ground. From that day forward, she entrusted herself to God in big and small, in heavenly and earthly things, and was able to experience His love and caring grace abundantly. Her joyful, certain faith has carried many along; her calm trust has strengthened many.

A few years later, she became the wife of a clergyman, a faithful shepherd of his congregation, who had become certain of his God like she had. They walk the narrow path hand in hand. The promise given to Abraham is also fulfilled in them: God has blessed them, and they are a blessing to the circle in which they have been placed. Sorrow and tribulation have not bypassed their threshold. But in the power of the Merciful One, they have taken up their cross. They will continue to be a blessing, for their souls trust in God, and His almighty hand holds them. ■

S. Everius

Unchanging Faith

Today, we are confronted with constant change. Indeed, our lives seem to be changing at an increasingly rapid pace. Societal norms and values that were cherished and upheld for centuries seem to be losing their meaning. Does that mean biblical faith needs to be redefined as well?

The foundational relationship between God and humanity has remain unchanged throughout the centuries.

In our present-day culture, the question of our relationship to God, to Jesus Christ, and His divine power is generally ignored and treated peripherally. Relationships between God and most people remain severed. They do not know what the will of God is. Yet it remains a fact that God in His great eternal love still manifests and reveals Himself as He has done in the past. He is looking for intimacy and faith among those He created. He is seeking their trust and offers them His love.

God does not let Himself be influenced by how a person stands in their relationship to Him. Humans are the crown of God's creation and, as such, each human is valuable in God's eyes. Although God would not need any human participation in actualizing the plan of salvation, He includes them. God loves all people and seeks intimacy with them.

The foundational intimate relationship that God has had with people who believe in Him has not changed. It remains constant for the followers of Jesus today. Their dependence on God solidifies the relationship. Consider the forty years that the people of Israel wandered in the wilderness. God disregarded all the problems and difficulties the people caused Him. Through Isaiah the prophet, He proclaims: "You have burdened me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities. I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for my own sake; and I will not remember your sins" (Isaiah 43:24-25). Even during that

trying time, God had an intimate relationship with those individuals who kept the faith. The Lord loved them with their weaknesses.

This was also the case when Jesus was on earth, and the mutual relationship between God and His faithful ones has remained fruitful throughout the Christian era. Jesus looked for genuine faith when He was on earth, and He was there for all people. He was no respecter of persons. Unfortunately, the attitude among many people today has changed. They think that they do not need a relationship with God. How tragic! If people would reflect more deeply and realize who they are and who created everything that is visible and invisible, they would seek after God in faith and find a relationship with Him.

The relationship between God and humanity depends on mutual love, trust, and experience. These characteristics have stayed constant throughout the centuries. They are solidified between God and those who have genuine salvation. Paul verifies that for God's true followers, "faith, hope, and love" remain, and "the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The foundational elements of biblical faith remain unchanged.

For various reasons, many today have a problem believing in God and in Jesus Christ. As a rule, many people consider themselves educated, think highly of themselves, are arrogant, and place their faith in science. If they have questions, they ask Google and believe the answers that their device gives them. Others may believe in God, yet the mere fact that they believe

that God exists does not help them, since James 2:19 says: “You believe that there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble!”

True biblical faith involves more. It involves trust, patience, and hope. Trust in God includes relying on God and believing the many promises found in the Holy Scriptures. Faith in God fosters an intimate relationship with God and with other believers. Moses trusted God and counted on His presence to accompany them (Exodus 34:8-9), otherwise Moses did not wish to continue the journey. We know that “the Lord went before them” (Exodus 13:21). David went out into battle against Goliath because he trusted God. Therefore, he did not fear the giant. He relied on God and was victorious.

Helps and hindrances in the battle of faith.

What do the people of today rely on? They look at the circumstances and the problems and then try to find solutions on their own. Dear reader, God has not changed. Rely on Him, and you will be victorious. You can count on God in every situation. He is worthy of your trust, even if things seem hopeless. It pays to put yourself into His hands and to submit to His will. “Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has a great reward” (Hebrews 10:35). It pays to trust in God and take hold of the inheritance that God has prepared for all those who endure until the end.

We have to contend for the faith. We must fight the good fight of faith. It is a battle that is still relevant today. The courageous warrior wins the battle. Living faith manifests its power through works. Jesus says, “Believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1). This admonition is valid until Jesus comes again. Then faith will become sight; we shall see Him face to face. Until then, we need to simply believe God and hold fast to Him. Dear reader, grasp this in faith. Trust in God so that you will not be put to shame on the Day of the Lord.

True faith is patient. True faith can wait. Rushing and impatience are not godly traits. By rushing and impatience, people make mistakes and do things that are not thoughtful, often creating problematic situations that can hardly be corrected. Hebrews 10:36 rightly says, “For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise.”

Biblical faith knows firsthand about the prayer of faith according to the will of God. Through prayer, the soul enters into the presence of God, and there it can bring its petitions to the Lord and share all its concerns with God in full confidence. That is how Moses stood in the gap between God and the people of Israel, pleading and asking for them with full confidence and trust. God heard his prayer. In times past, God heard these prayers of faith, and we still have the same privilege today. James 5:15 says, “The prayer of faith will save the sick.” God was and is the same today.

These thoughts verify that faith in God and His limitless power and might is something that remains constant and does not change. In our time, faith in God seems to be declining. Jesus Himself asked the question: “Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8).

Dear reader, do you wish to have answers to your prayers? Then remain steadfast in childlike faith and earnestly believe that God hears your prayers. Do not cease to pray, and remain connected with your Savior and God.

As I write this article, I have just received news that in our region, the restrictions due to the coronavirus have been lessened. On the second of May, we held a day of fasting and prayer. We know God hears the prayers of His children, yet we are to wait for His answer with faith and full confidence. And now we see His answer. We have been allowed to assemble and to sing together again, and we will be able to hold communion and the ordinance of foot-washing again.

Answer to prayers like this strengthen our faith and encourage us not to grow weary in prayer and bringing our petitions to the Lord. God reveals Himself to those who come to Him sincerely with prayer, as it was in the days of the apostles. We read in Acts that “Peter was therefore kept in prison, but constant prayer was offered to God for him by the church. . . . and when they opened the door and saw him, they were astonished” (Acts 12:5 & 16). The Lord answered the prayers of those praying for Peter in such a way that they could hardly believe it when the answer came. Those who trust in God and count on His help do well.

Praise and honor be to God alone for answering our prayers. ■

*Otto Anselm
Weil am Rhein, Germany*

Societal Change and Faith

“I can’t understand how someone can still be religious in 2021.” I heard this in a recent conversation and it stayed on my mind. This statement clearly describes how the majority of our society feels about the topic of faith and religion.

But how could it get this far in our “Christian country”? And how can we as Christians be ambassadors of our faith in these times?

Throughout the centuries of the Middle Ages, Christianity became more and more distorted. It became an instrument of power for the church, that through fear, intimidation, and invention, such as the sale of indulgences, would gain them more riches and absolute authority.

The Reformation through Luther, Zwingli, Melancthon, and others led to a glimpse of light in the 16th century before the Enlightenment in the 18th century finally ended the supremacy of the church and moved many to disbelief. The Enlightenment led to many good achievements such as enormous scientific advances, a general increase in education, and improvements of social equality. However, it also brought some challenges, such as new philosophies and scientific theories, like evolution, which caused people to turn away from their faith.

At this time, the theory of humanism also flared up again. It describes the pursuit of better humanity, with the human being as an individual at the center of thought. In the many currents and teachings of humanism, man is elevated as the highest being, and the endeavor is to make being human even better and more worth living, and to bring him to a higher physical and spiritual level.

This constant individualistic thinking of man continues to this day and has been reinforced by ever-increasing wealth. Nowadays in the Western World, anything is achievable with someone’s own strength and work ethic. Almost everything on earth and in the universe is explainable through formulas and a few basic scientific principles. Political and social currents are working towards more tolerance and diversity towards all conceivable minorities and world views.

And in the middle of this wealth, advancement, diversity, and tolerance one voice is heard less and less. This voice reminds: “Now consider this, you who for-

get God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver” (Psalm 50:22).

Serious offences within the Catholic Church keep playing a role in the rejection of Christianity. One of my neighbors told me that he grew up in a Catholic boarding school and that he was only spared from abuse because of personal disputes with one of the supervisors. Several of his classmates later raised serious concerns towards this particular supervisor. According to his statement, that is the reason why he is skeptical and almost resistant towards religious institutions.

How tragic when those who should bring the saving message of the gospel and eternal joy are the ones who cause the greatest damage.

We not only see resistance towards the institutions of the Christian faith but also faith and the Bible in general. The Bible is looked at as a historic book, and its content is only looked at as symbolic at best. However, most of the time it’s just being mocked. In a time where everything can be proven scientifically, no one needs religious explanations and interpretations of individual facts and events. In many parts of our society, the Bible as truth is not being acknowledged.

Therefore, it has become difficult to argue the truth of the Bible in discussions with coworkers, classmates, or passersby. These biblical truths are often viewed by the world as fairy tales, and arguments based on apparent falsehoods are not convincing.



To talk with someone who refuses the truth of the Bible about where they will spend their eternity is almost impossible if they're convinced that there is no eternity.

Can we still reach our fellow men at all with the Gospel message? And if yes, how? I am convinced that this is only possible if we live a genuine Christian life that reflects real salvation.

We need to look appealing to the world around us by the way we live out our faith. You will be noticed if you, with God's help, are the calmest in a group project during a stressful phase of project, maintain your inner peace in a stressful situation, are not led to yelling or swearing about unfavorable circumstances or last-minute changes and are still the most productive part of the group.

If you continue to be friendly towards your boss or coworkers even though several jokes, comments, or insults were directed towards you, you will be a light.

And sooner or later, the question will come up why you are so different, so calm and patient through it all. Then you will have the opportunity to witness for God and to share your salvation story. Your own life will be the basis for discussion through which salvation clearly shines forth and which so many fellow men have watched with their own eyes.

We cannot live such a life on our own. To do so we must cultivate an intimate relationship with our Savior, and need to ask Him day by day to give us the strength and wisdom to do the right thing and react properly in every situation of our lives.

May God give you and me the strength for this! ■

*Lukas Rode
Hamm, Germany*



Serving God in 2021

| Is it possible for people today to lead a pious life and serve God?

She is 33, an entrepreneur, and a mother—and is saved. She learned nothing about God at home, instead getting to know the dangers of the big city in her first 25 years of life. Today, she loves her Savior and leads a completely different life than before. There are a lot of young brothers and sisters living, studying, and working in local congregations. Along with many others, all of them are daily proof that anyone can serve God in 2021.

The Dangers of Our Time

Knowing about a threat often protects us from falling prey to it. Our world today is brimming with snares and hidden temptations. A big problem is that we are already exposed to the poison of humanism and trained in political correctness as young children through the school system. This strongly influences our thinking, value system, and judgments. Strong, responsible, sober, and upright personalities are not wanted today. People get direction from the spirit of the times and not the Bible. We are trained to blend into the crowd, not to make waves, and to march in step and in tune with the masses. Not many people are willing to take a stand against the subtle political pressure exerted with the support of advertisers and the media.

It seems that we are experiencing the paradoxical development

of a militant and discriminatory tolerance throughout the world. If people do not submit to the general tolerant and godless world view, they are intractably marginalized and are written off as wrong. This development is driven by a spirit from hell that wants to eradicate all fear of God in our societies and leave people adrift and disoriented. This spirit plays a big role in our everyday lives by trying to blur or entirely remove boundaries. Modern media are an important tool in this regard, as this spirit disguises the dangers of media consumption by highlighting the necessity of technological development in everyday life.

Our modern time also faces another dangerous virus: fear! People feel overwhelmed, helpless, clueless, uncertain, adrift. They capitulate to real or imagined constraints and demands and live in constant, growing fear. Never before has a generation in our western countries lived in such freedom, wealth, and peace. Despite this, fear is blinding people, leading to panicked and irrational actions.

The Blessing of Serving God

No, we do not need to be at the mercy of modern currents of thought, passively given over to fate. No, that is why Christ came! He still frees us from fear today and saves us from destructive forces, whether internal or external. “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall

be free indeed” (John 8:36). In the gospels, the life of Jesus shows us what freedom truly means, even for our time.

Paul reminds the congregation in Corinth of their previous lives and the powerful transformation that took place when they entered the service of Jesus, writing, “And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Corinthians 6:11). Through the same experience, people today can also live in Christ and enjoy the highest level of human fulfillment. The soul lives in harmony with its Creator. Every day, it feeds from God’s power, receiving guidance, instruction, and protection from the Spirit of God. God is the source of love—and our Father. That makes our life at any age exceedingly rich, fulfilled, and a blessing to others. Being fully dependent on God frees us from dependence on people. In dark, painful nights, faith sees the bright star of God’s will and of hope in our eternal home, shine through.

How can we serve God in 2021?

First, we should let go of a commonly held misconception: Nobody can serve both God and the world simultaneously. This has been true for as long as the Earth has been home to humans (see Luke 16:13, Romans 6:16–22, James 4:4, and 1 John 2:15–16).

“Google doesn’t answer many important questions—but the Word and the Spirit of God do. That is why it is so very important to read and study our Bibles!”



The condition of and reward for serving God today is a very clear and determined decision for God and against the world. This means not conforming to the world but rather deciding to lead a life according to God’s will. Jesus was very clear on this point, saying, “And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27). “Both” and “and” is not an option here. You can only pick one. If we see the boundaries of holiness as confining, our heart is drawn towards the world and not towards the fount of life. Remember that God does not bind you. If you love the world, He lets you go. A “successful” and blessed life in the service of God is only possible if our hearts belong wholly to Him.

Yes, this means serving. Modern people do not want to be slaves; they want to be served by others. But in the Kingdom of God, there is only one Lord: our God. He expects our love and complete surrender to His will. Therein lies the key to the rivers of grace and power; our consecration is the secret to a brightly shining, rich life as a child of the King—a life of freedom, carried by love and faith.

But what do we, as children of God, do with the noise of these

times, the stress of daily life, “social” media, and the links to many areas of society? Jesus prayed, “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). Our Father knows about our lives as part of this world, this society. God knows that the Internet has become part of our normal lives, but His strength is sufficient to protect us and our children online.

Did you know that we do not have to jump on every bandwagon and follow every trend? We do not need to comment on every post. If successful business people plan and organize their time carefully, how much more care should we give to our time in our spiritual lives? We need to see where our time is being stolen. Using the opportunities responsibly lets us be productive while serving as a blessing.

We can do our part for protection (1 John 5:18) by consciously and regularly seeking peace in the presence of God and maintaining our relationship with Him. Your soul needs this time of retreat and daily direction. A lot of technological equipment is recalibrated every time it is turned on. Similarly, we need precise in-

struction in the will of God every day. During these quiet moments, we can plan our days together with our Lord. He will remind us of the important things that need to be done. “Aspire to lead a quiet life” (1 Thessalonians 4:11). Sometimes we will need to be victorious over ourselves, but every victory brings strength for new victories.

And another helpful hint: Important questions cannot be answered by Google but only by the Word and the Spirit of God. That is why it is of such crucial importance to read and study the Bible. In reverent discussion with the Spirit of God, our Teacher and Mentor, He takes our hands and inducts us into the secrets of godly wisdom and insight, educating us in humility and enriching us in grace.

Serving God in 2021—is this your blessed reality too? Healthy and strong, sober, and filled with love towards our Savior—this is a life led in accordance with the will of God, even today. We do not need to settle for less because God is the source of the power and the blessing. ■

*Hermann Vogt
Ilona Grötzinger*

I Believe in Jesus— **Am I a Christian?**

It was late and had become dark outside. The evening was cold and uncomfortable, moreover, heavy rain started to fall. I was driving home from work when on the straight stretch ahead of me, I suddenly noticed a young man on the side of the road, hitchhiking for a ride. I stopped and asked about his destination. He needed to get to the next village, about 8 km away. “Well then, get in,” I said.

We barely had ten minutes of ride-sharing together, only time for small talk. “Where are you from, where are you going?” After a moment’s thought, I ventured to ask, “Do you believe in God? Do you believe in Jesus?” Surprised, he looked at me. I’m sure he didn’t expect this question. But he quickly collected himself. “Oh yes, I believe in God and Jesus. I’m Catholic and principally a believer.” I didn’t get the impression that he knew much about God, though. In the short time I had left, I tried to show him how much Jesus loves us and how much each one of us needs Him.

Is profession of faith enough?

Saying “I believe in Jesus”—am I then truly a Christian? Is traditional or social faith enough to have a living relationship with God?

We must answer these questions with a clear “no.” No, it is not enough to grow up in a Christian home. It is not enough to bear the name “Christian.” It is not enough to belong to a Christian church. Yes, even biblical baptism is not a guarantee that we are true Christians.

In the Acts of the Apostles, we read about Simon, the sorcerer, who apparently became a believer and was baptized with the others. But when Peter and John came to Samaria, Simon’s real inner condition was exposed. Peter said to him, “Repent . . . For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (see Acts 8:4-25). So we see that professing Christianity is not a guarantee that one is truly a Christian.

Becoming a Christian

Becoming a true Christian firstly requires forgiveness and secondly a change of heart. We need forgiveness because as human beings, we have all sinned before God. We need a change of heart so that we—reoriented—can serve God.

This process is so transforming that the Bible speaks of a new birth, a rebirth. Jesus says, “Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). For this reason, we must be born again by the Spirit of God.

However, before we can be born of God, we must realize that we are far from God and that we are guilty before Him because of our sins. When this becomes clear to us, deep inside of our heart, a desire for God and His love will grip us. We will desire deliverance from all sin and guilt. The Holy Spirit works this desire. He draws and calls us to God. This “drawing of the Spirit,” the desire for God and the knowledge that God loves us infinitely, no matter who we are, leads us to God.

In repentance and contrition, we can now come to God, confess our sin and guilt in prayer, and ask for a clean heart. As a result, God intervenes in our lives and grants us forgiveness and new life, which we must accept through faith. Only then, the statement “I believe in Jesus” gains its true value. There are no genuine Christians without a genuine rebirth.

The results of faith

This dynamic experience of receiving forgiveness of sins and a new life makes us a new creation. “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

This is the change of heart that is so imperative. We must have a new direction for our lives, and the following results will be evident in our life:

* We will have a living relationship with God. He is now truly our Father, and we will seek fellowship with Him through His Word and prayer.

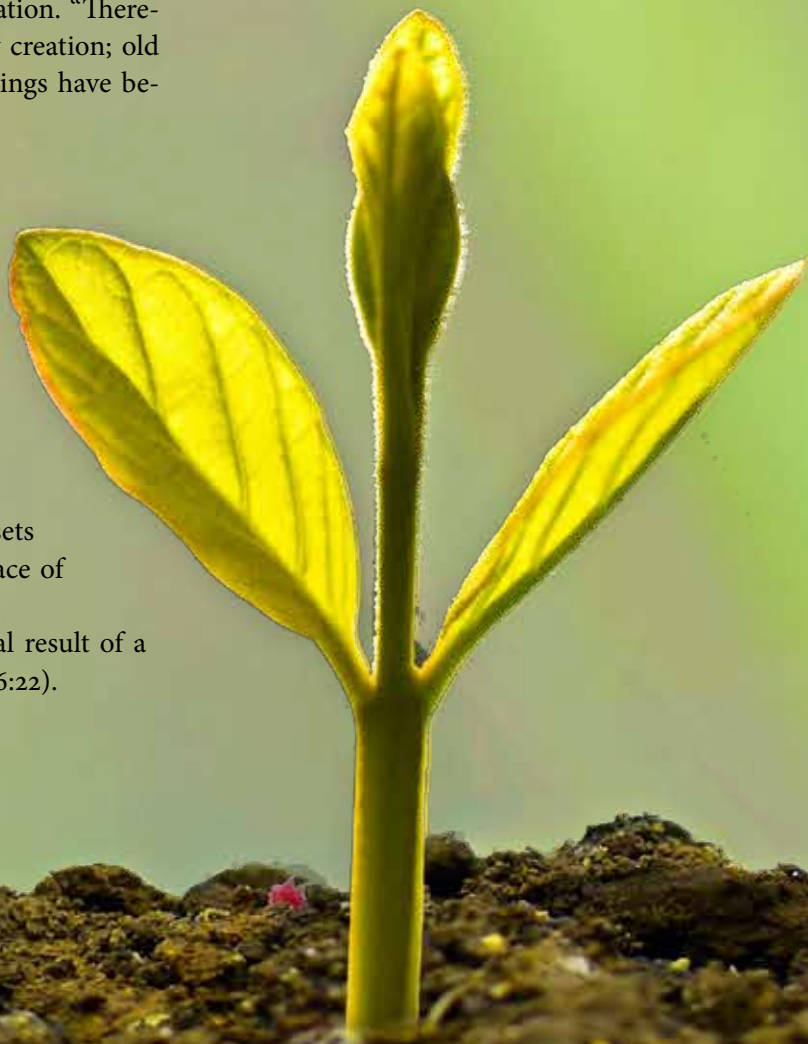
* Jesus not only forgives sin but also sets us free from sin (John 8:36). By the grace of God, we can have victory over sin.

* The fruit of the Spirit is the logical result of a living relationship with God (Galatians 6:22).

* The term “Christian” comes from “Christ.” So our goal will be to live a Christ-like life. Someone put it this way: “Live in such a way that no one will have any doubts whether you are a Christian or not.”

I believe in Jesus—God grant us not only a profession but a living faith which manifests itself in a life that pleases God.

*Eduard Albrecht
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Faith and Signs

The supernatural always fascinates people. Even the Jews urged the Lord during His time on earth: “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You” (Matthew 12:38). It was a request that Jesus did not regard with favor. He sharply rebuked them, saying that the sign of the prophet Jonah would be enough for them. On the other hand, we read of countless miracles that Jesus performed among the Jews. He often strengthened the faith of His disciples by signs, and yet He lovingly rebuked them not to depend on them when he explained to Thomas: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29).

So what about miracles and signs? Were they reserved for Jesus and the apostles, or can we still experience them today? We will meet people in our lives who vehemently claim one or the other. Some even go so far as to teach that miracles are irreplaceable proof of being a child of God. This view is biblically untenable. Early on, in the books of Moses, we read of

Egyptian magicians who also had some form of power, but this was certainly not a sign of godliness. It becomes critical when people proclaim that God must help—after all, they had asked Him for it in faith. I once heard someone praying in this way and felt a strange trepidation. Did this person think he could dictate things to the Almighty? The woman he had prayed for to be healed did not get well but died. Isn’t children’s faith in Christ greatly damaged by such actions? How are they to grow in faith if they are promised a miracle with great conviction and then it does not happen? How are they supposed to learn to discern the will of God in a matter and then pray accordingly when people promise them miracles indiscriminately because, in their opinion, God must help?

Knowing God’s will and purposes is an important prerequisite for experiencing God’s miraculous intervention. This is not always easy, because God’s ways and thoughts are so much higher than

ours. Undoubtedly, everyone who has served God for a long time will be able to tell of experiences that cannot be explained in an earthly way: last-second rescues, changes in the mindset of someone who was initially against them, or healing from illness—the list could go on and on. Not for nothing is it said: He who puts everything in the hand of God will also see the hand of God in everything. However, God cannot grant us every wish, even if our faith is very great. We read very briefly about the prophet Elisha, who himself performed many miracles: “Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die” (2 Kings 13:14). Can we accuse him of lacking faith? Certainly not. But God has arranged it in such a way that our lifetime is limited, and often an illness precedes death. In addition, human understanding is also very limited. It is often difficult for us to see things in the light of eternity. We read about the son of Jeroboam that he died even though he was the only one of his family in whom



something good was found. Therefore, he was given an honorable burial, and all Israel mourned him (1 Kings 14). This prospect probably seems uninviting to us, but let us look at the matter from another point of view: If he had stayed longer on this earth, would not the good in him have been quickly overgrown by sin? How long would he have been able to stand among his godless relatives? A few years less on this earth thus determined an entire eternity.

But should all this discourage us? Certainly not. In this matter, Jesus' words to Martha have always been a blessing to me: "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40). She truly saw great things! God is willing to work many things in our lives, but let us be careful not to prescribe God's effectiveness. When we are in an oppressive situation, our imagination quickly develops plans of how God could help in this matter. This is human nature. Naaman, too, had clear ideas about how he should be

helped and was disgruntled when his expectations did not materialize. Only when he yielded to his wise counselors was God able to heal him. Are you also waiting for a sign from God and it isn't coming? This can be due to various reasons, so examine yourself diligently and, above all, with sincerity. Do you believe God's Word? Faith is something that grows, but sometimes it is as if the decision to believe must be renewed. Often after great victories, we go through terrifying lows, as if our faith has been "used up," and we feel the misery of Elijah, who prayed in the wilderness after God's miraculous judgment on Mount Carmel, "It is enough! Now, Lord, take my life, for I am no better than my fathers!" (1 Kings 19:4). Elijah was now fleeing from Jezebel and was at the end of his strength of faith. Nevertheless, God gave him a time of rest, strengthened him, and sent him off again into His service. He did not allow him to give up or to allow his faith to become weak—something God wants to work in

your life as well. Are you keeping His Word? Consider that it would be presumptuous to remind God to keep His promises if you will not keep His commandments.

And finally, do you have patience? Abraham, whose children we have become in faith, waited a long time. Very long. Probably so long that most of his descendants would have given up hope long ago. In my youth, I once had to ask for one thing for seven years—and that already seemed very tiring. Today, I know that an answer to prayer can take considerably more time. But which miracle would we be deprived of if we gave up before that? Praise be to God who wants to give us the strength to persevere in faith. God wants to help—through circumstances, through the guidance of His Spirit, through our brothers and sisters in faith, but also through His direct intervention: through signs from heaven—if you only believe. ■

*Corinna Kowalski
Hamm, Germany*

The Final Goal of Faith

*“Receiving the end of your faith—
the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:9)*



Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:17, 19). If our faith does not have a glorious goal in the end, it is completely useless, even devastating. A faith that leads to destruction is a terrible deception, and yet countless people cling to such a faith. Even worse, many such deceived people relate to a “Christian” faith! For example, if I believe that all Christians are and remain sinners here on earth, my faith will result in a sinful life. If I believe that God’s Word requires me to live a holy life in order to be saved, that faith will lead me down the narrow path of holiness. The fact is that our faith will determine our attitude, our walk, and our whole life.

Faith determines our daily walk

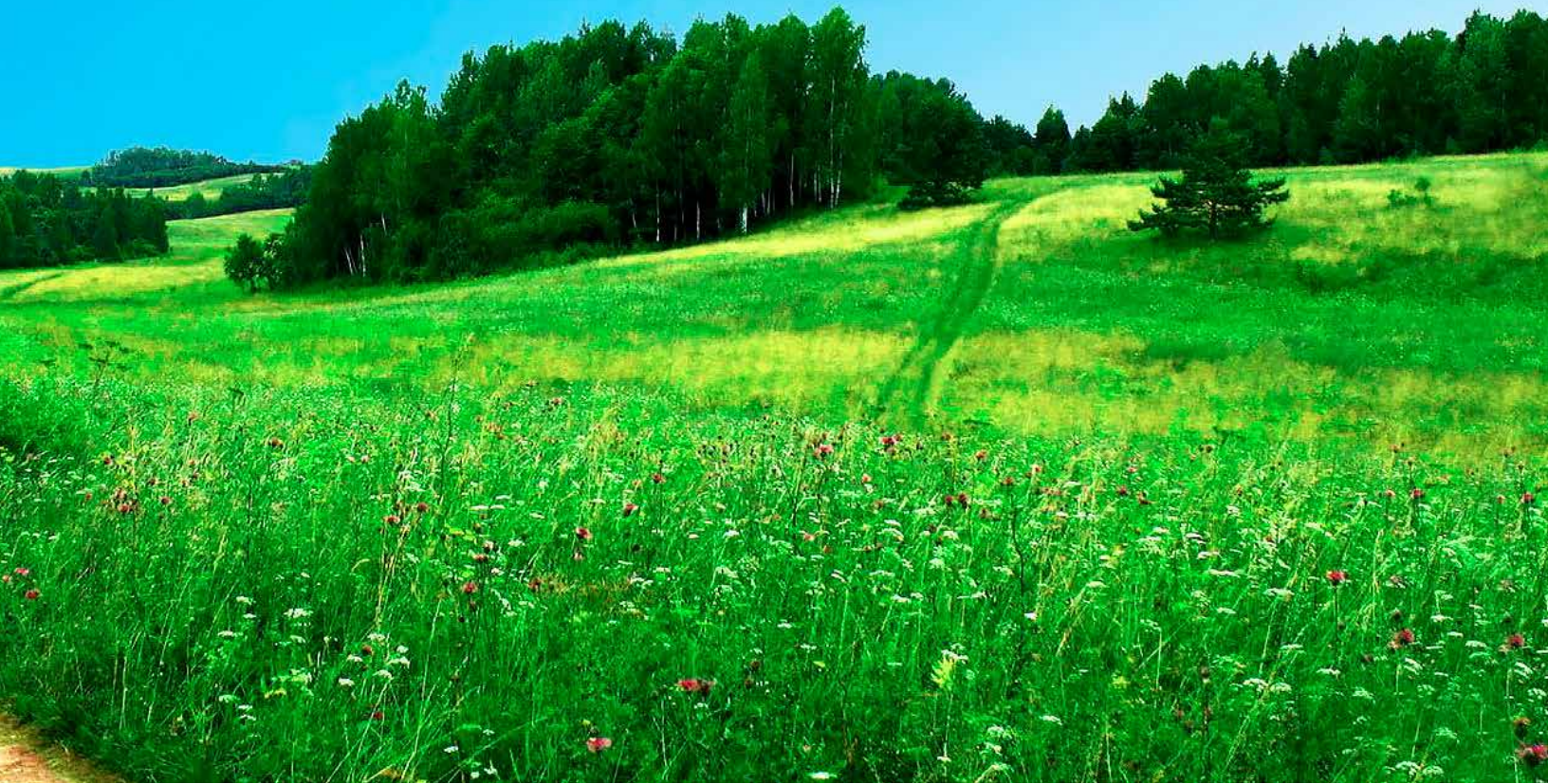
Satan is always very eager to cover up or downplay the consequences of sin. Man should simply not look at the consequences of his decisions. Especially in times of temptation, the devil has a lot of success with this. However, most people’s decisions in general life are based on the principles of their view of life or their faith. They act according to what they feel is right.

If I believe that I can determine my own destiny, I will dare to do some things. If I believe that my actions will have few negative consequences, I will give free rein to my lusts. However, if I am convinced that I must give an account for all my words, thoughts, and deeds before a thrice holy God, I will decide to live according to the Word of God. In every decision, in everything I do, what I believe will govern my actions.

A sincere faith is of utmost importance

Every path leads somewhere and ends at a certain destination. Solomon already said in Proverbs 16:25: “There is a way that seems right to a man. But its end is the way of death.” In general, people look for a faith that impresses them. It should be easy, comfortable, undisputed. However, when their life principles are constantly shaped and determined by the latest politically-correct trends, they remain without substance and soon become erratic. Every belief is evaluated and eventually determined by the majority.

Unfortunately, this trend often extends into Christianity. Congregations and individuals strive to keep up with and adopt the latest trends. Under the guise of changing times, Christian faith transforms and loses



form, purpose, and power. Often, the faith is adapted to the current morality. What kind of end will such an unsteady faith bring forth?

Jude writes in his letter: “Beloved, while I was very diligent to write to you concerning our common salvation, I found it necessary to write to you exhorting you to contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). The true biblical faith, the only faith that will ultimately stand before God, is unchangeable! It cannot change because it comes from an unchanging God and is directed to Him.

The goal of faith shapes our faith

Why do I believe? What benefits does my faith offer me? Where do I want my faith to take me? These questions about the goal of my faith will have a strong influence on my life principles.

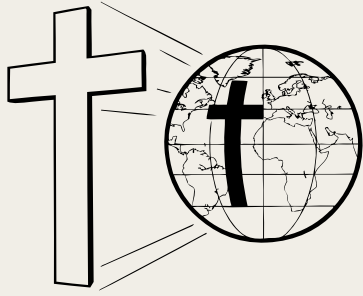
If the goal of my faith is to please people, may it be parents, family, friends, or a pastor, then my faith will only take me so far until I have satisfied the perceived demands of others. If my faith has the sole purpose of finding a Christian spouse, my zeal in faith will dwindle soon after the wedding. If the goal of my faith is to appease my conscience or to calm my fears of being

eternally lost, then I will do only as much as necessary to assuage those fears.

But if the goal of my faith is to love the Lord my God with all my heart and to serve Him out of love and gratitude, then my faith will lead me to consecrate and place my life and existence completely in His will. If I believe that there is a holy Creator, Sustainer, and just Judge, my code of conduct will be to live according to His commandments. If my ultimate goal is to stand before God and be saved at any cost, as Peter portrays in our title passage (“receiving the end of your faith—the salvation of your souls”), then this faith must have a living and life-giving influence on my whole existence.

And indeed, such faith is worthwhile! A living faith in the Almighty God, in Jesus Christ as the only Savior, a faith that proves itself in a holy life and is based on the unchanging foundation of the Word of God, will surely result in the longed-for goal: our soul’s salvation! Dear Reader, what difference does your faith make in your daily life? True faith will subordinate everything else to the ultimate goal: to be with Jesus in glory one day! ■

Ron Taron



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

A Blessed Conviction of Faith

*“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.
For by it the elders obtained a good testimony” (Hebrews 11:1-2)*

The real mystery of faith cannot be grasped through human explanation. We learn to recognize faith by letting ourselves be led into this mystery through the personal obedience of faith. All Bible readers are familiar with, for example, the great Old Testament man of faith, Abraham. He was told by the Lord, “I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless” (Genesis 17:1). This is exactly how we are led into the mystery of faith and come to a clear, inner conviction.

At the age of 17, a young man had entered a merchant apprenticeship in the Black Forest in Germany. He was a Jew by birth and had been brought up in the Jewish faith by his parents. During his apprenticeship, he lived in a guest home in Freudenstadt. It so happened that he had met a pastor of the church of God who was also temporarily staying in this guest home. This pastor had invited the young man to his room. They had many discussions about faith, which deeply impressed the young man.

“Something quite miraculous happened to me,” the young man reported. “My inner eyes were opened, and I clearly realized that Christ is the Son of God! With this deep conviction, I left that room

again. Courage, light, and faith came into my soul.”— He had experienced salvation and wrote: “In time and eternity, I will thank the Lord for this hour.” To this, he quoted Jesus’ words. “Flesh and blood [i.e., a man] has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:17). This young man later became a messenger of the Lord, convicting others of the truth of the gospel all over the world for over sixty years.

In 1995 in Kazakhstan, German countrymen had arranged special worship services. After one sermon in the very crowded room, a strong-looking man stood up and said: “I am an atheist. Up to now, I have lived my life in complete unbelief. In this service, however, I realized my error for the first time.” Tears rolled down his cheeks, and he asked the believers to pray for him. This request showed that God’s Spirit had spoken to him, and he felt the first light of faith come into his heart. He was convicted of his error, wrong attitude, and corrupt, sinful life. He experienced God’s mercy! This conviction did not come from a man but by God Himself through His Spirit.

This example clearly shows us how important and valuable this inner conviction really is. Inner conviction



tion leads to faith, and without faith, it is impossible to enter into a living relationship with God and to experience His saving grace. Without faith, there can be no inner revival; and without a clear, profound revival, there can be no future Christianity.

If the young generation of our time is not truly awakened and led to God, healthy continuity of the church is hard to conceive. God undoubtedly desires to continue working miracles of grace in the lives of people, however, He can only perform them on those who have faith. Living faith is rooted in three tenses: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever” (Hebrews 13:8). It is based on Jesus’ self-sacrifice on the cross and on His victorious resurrection.

This living faith can be experienced today and is a truly amazing possession. Through it, one attains inner peace, the full blessing of salvation, and the comforting hope of eternal life. Because of his faith, Paul testified: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1 Corinthians 2:9). It is faith that lifts out of all error, darkness, and despondency. It is faith that leads out of the death of

sin into life of peace with God! And it is faith that gives light and support to our life and fills us with the certainty of all things we do not yet see.

Hebrews 11 is about people of faith who lived long before Christ and yet were completely convinced of those great things that would happen through Christ. Jesus directed His disciples to these people of faith, saying, “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; for assuredly I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it” (Matthew 13:16-17).

Our opening text stated, “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Some future events we cannot see, nor do we see our promised home, but we know:

*There is a land of pleasure pure,
By faith it is our home secure;
We'll be there at the end of time,
O hurry to this land divine!*

And Jesus said: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). ■

Thoughts of a Teacher at the Beginning of the School Year

Dear Students,

It is almost that time where we head back to school, me, as a teacher, you, as a student. Before we think about that though, let's pause and reflect on how the last year and a half has been unlike any in human history in terms of the global scale of lockdowns. For many of you, this meant switching to online learning, missing your friends, teachers, the structure, routine and stability that in-person learning brings, mental and even spiritual challenges. I know some of you will have thrived online and for some of you it was the ultimate challenge to stay healthy, engaged and caught up.

For us teachers, it has also been a difficult time. The restrictions have led to missing colleagues, friends and family, working late to try and make lessons exciting for online learning, and trying to keep up relationships with students who vanish behind computer screens with cameras off. In the year and a half that I have been teaching from home, I realized that I could instead use some of my extra time with Jesus. Instead of having to rush out of the house and commute to school, I could cuddle up on the couch and spend seemingly longer mornings in prayer, study, and meditation of scripture.

My point is, when hard things come on us, we have a choice to make: will I keep looking at the waves of my uncertainties (like Peter did), or will I look to Jesus and let Him make the best of a rather sour situation? You might be wondering why I mentioned this; it is because as we enter a new school year, what moments of great joy and sheer disappointment lie ahead? I think we all learned how little we know about the future when our 2020 plans quickly unraveled. In order to walk as a blessing through good and bad times, we need to cling to Jesus in both.

Here are some practical tips to start this school year off strong and keep it going that way, even if unexpected troubles come.

1. Memorize Scripture passages that challenge, encourage and comfort you. When moments of upset or uncertainty threaten to rock your boat, just keep repeating God's Word. He is with you and will carry you through. Some of my favorites include: Psalm 94:18-19; Isaiah 42:16-17; Jeremiah 31:3; Jeremiah 33:3 and Psalm 130.
2. Another tip I have is to start each day with some Bible reading and prayer. Getting into the routine of getting up 15-30 minutes earlier so you have time for those things will serve you well for years to come!
3. Don't let schoolwork get in the way of going to and serving in church. Serving and worshiping will build you up, rather than tear you down and drain your time and energy.
4. Manage time spent on hobbies and commitments wisely to avoid feeling exhausted and drained.
5. When struggles come up, make sure to talk them through with someone you can trust to give you wise, godly advice, and who can keep personal matters in confidence while challenging you when you may be wrong. I suggest your parents, Sunday School teacher, pastor, teacher, grandparent, aunt, uncle, or mentor.
6. And lastly, always focus on Jesus and the blessings you receive from Him. A grateful focus on these blessings can help you stay afloat in the unforeseen challenges coming your way.



Having been a student for over 16 years of my life, the advice above comes from lessons I learned the hard way. My prayer is that you may be well-equipped to tackle whatever battle may come your

way this school year and that you could grow in your faith.

*Anicia Schulz
Edmonton, AB*

Experiences at Work (1)

The Decision

In the summer of 2018, I was faced with a bigger decision, namely whether I should supplement my professional career with further training to become an accountant. I met the admission requirements and, therefore, it seemed that the way here was open.

Yet I still was intensively thinking about if this was the right way for me. I realized that this route would mean I would have to quit my current job and start a fulltime training program—a bold move that had to be thought through. I prayed for clarity and God’s guidance. God directed me to a statement that we often read in the Old Testament: “I am the Lord.” But what did that mean for my decision? Soon, I realized what God wanted to tell me: I should not forget that He was to remain Lord of my life—with or without further training. God doesn’t tell us the exact career we should follow, but we should still consider: Will the career choice I make bring me closer to God, or will it hinder me? It is important that our career does not separate us from God but that we worship God with all our heart and follow Him.

Upon further reflection, the following questions still preoccupied me:

- Will my priorities be shifted? A promotion often brings with it more responsibility at work, costing us more time and energy and causing us to give God the “leftovers.” I don’t mean proper and

diligent preparation for exams. It only becomes a problem if work is constantly number one and God is pushed into the background of our daily life.

- Will I be led by my own wishes and expectations (branch, company, financial ideas), and will I take important decisions into my own hands that could later potentially become a stumbling block in my service to God?
- Is there a danger that I will later become proud of my accomplishments?

I understood that God gave me the freedom to make a decision. However, I was supposed to be careful in every step, watching out for His leading without rushing. He sees further and deeper what is good for my life.

In reverence, I laid everything in prayer into His hands and trusted for open and closed doors, especially when I submitted the entrance application at the German Chamber of Industry and Commerce. I also asked Him to help me stay humble if He was to grant completion.

I received an acceptance letter, so the decision was clear to further my education. Planning could begin. (To be continued.) ■

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Eppingen, Germany*

Faith in Turbulent Times

Before the greatest event the followers of Jesus would ever experience, the Savior urged them, “You believe in God, believe also in Me” (John 14:1). Surely the disciples did not fully grasp the magnitude of these words in that moment. But in a few hours, their faith in Jesus would be shaken to the core. He, in whom they had placed so much hope and expectation, would suffer a ghastly death, and their dreams would collapse into rubble. If it was ever important for the disciples to hold onto faith, it was right then.

Many times in human history, faith has been severely tested. Martha and Mary had let the Savior know that their brother Lazarus was sick. They sincerely hoped that Jesus would come immediately and make him well. But He didn’t come. Their brother died and was carried to the grave without the Lord appearing. When He arrived four days later, He said to Martha, “Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?” (John 11:40).

A family prayed earnestly for their mother’s healing, but she did not get well. Instead, the Lord took her home. In such cases, faith is subjected to a serious test because it is not understood.

God’s people go through hard tests of faith from time to time, so too during the Coronavirus pandemic. What the Psalmist speaks of in Psalm 91 has unexpectedly come to pass again: “You shall not be afraid of . . . the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor of the destruction that lays waste at noonday.” COVID-19 has brought devastating consequences for mankind. Certainly some ask the question: “Why did God permit this?” Yes, if one could only always know the answer, then faith would not be necessary. The test, however, may not lie so much in the disease itself but in the various attitudes people take

toward it. There are countless theories and views about the whole situation that are vehemently held and asserted. People look critically at those who do not agree with their view. It is obvious that Satan is using the present situation to tear God’s people apart and drive them into conflict. Then what role does true faith actually play in all this? The question that everyone should ask themselves is, “Can I believe that God is still in control of everything? Do I put my trust in God, or do I let certain loud voices draw me into a wild protest?”

The disciples of Jesus watched and witnessed the cruel events on Calvary. Should they simply watch this great injustice passively, or should they do something about it? But the Master had put it onto their hearts: “Believe in God and believe also in Me.” Worried, they went through the next days but stayed together. When two of them went to Emmaus, the Lord brought them back to the others. In difficult times, it is even more important to stand together and entrust to God what we cannot change nor fix.

It was faith that made the sisters of Lazarus experience miracles. It was faith that sustained God’s children through bleak hours. In the midst of anxiety about the future, Jesus’ admonition is so true: “You believe in God, believe also in Me.” Repeatedly, we find the Lord Jesus saying to people, “Your faith has made you well.”

In today’s uncertain times, children of God can be a blessing to the world through a firm faith in God’s guidance. It is God’s will that we believe, as the Scripture says, and not despair in doubt. “This also comes from the Lord of hosts, Who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in guidance” (Isaiah 28:29). ■

*Peter Ens
Toronto, ON*

How It Happened

“Mother,” said Sophia, “will it be all right if I invite Mia to come home with me for supper tomorrow? We have a special assignment to work out together for class.”

“Of course, Sophia,” Mrs. Sloan answered.

“But there’s something I wanted to ask you,” Sophia said slowly. “You see, Mia’s father isn’t a Christian. Can’t we leave off the blessing Father always asks on the food? Just this once? God will know that we are thankful, whether we tell Him or not. Mia Jean might not understand.”

Mrs. Sloan turned to her daughter. “Sophia,” she said, “suppose you gave wonderful gifts to a friend each day. While you and she were alone she was very grateful for your gifts, but if someone else came in just then, she accepted what you offered without even a



‘thank you.’ Wouldn’t you think she was ashamed to acknowledge before others that the gifts were from you?”

Sophia thought a moment and then she replied slowly, “Yes, I guess you are right, Mother.”

While the family was gathered around the table after supper, Mr. Sloan offered the Bible to Sophia. “Will you read this time?” he asked.

Sophia knew that Mia Jean was looking at her with surprise. She felt that she just couldn’t do it. But she took the Bible from her father’s hand and turned to the twenty-fourth chapter of Luke and began to read. At first the words swam before her eyes, but as she read on she seemed to gain strength. She felt that she was almost living the story she was reading, the wonderful story of Jesus’ death on the cross for sinners. She seemed to hear the ringing of the hammers as they drove the nails into His hands and feet. Never again would she be ashamed to confess Him!

Sophia closed the Bible, and there was a deep silence. It had been so real for her listeners that it took a moment for them to bring their minds back to the present again. Mia Jean’s eyes were filled with wonder. Then Mr. Sloan said, “Let us pray.”

The following day Sophia came home from school with shining eyes. “Oh, Mother,” she cried, “Mia Jean accepted Jesus as her Savior today!”

“Well,” Sophia began, “at lunch period today she asked to talk with me. She told me that her mother had been a Christian and told her Bible stories. Then her mother died, and her father didn’t seem to understand when she asked him questions about God. Mia Jean wanted to know more about what I read last night. She said that Father’s prayer was the first she had heard since her mother died. I was so thankful that we had not left it out, as I asked you to do. And I was so sorry that I had never told her about the Lord Jesus. We had a lovely little prayer meeting and she was saved! Next Sunday she is going with me to church.”

—Ruth Speece



Set Your House in Order (Part 2)

| *“Set your house in order, for you shall die” (Isaiah 38:1)*

In the past, I’ve been able to visit various countries. It was interesting to see the different ways people live. They look different, speak different languages, eat different foods. They behave differently. The steering wheel is on the right side of the car, and they drive on the left side. “Different countries, different customs.” But I have noticed something that is found in every country: cemeteries. Although burial and mourning customs are different, it shows us that people all over the world have “no continuing city.”

Worldwide, an average of 54.75 million people die each year or 150 000 per day or 104 each minute. Very clearly, I can hear the words of the writer of Hebrews, who states that it is appointed (destined) for man to die once (Hebrews 9:27). Nothing can alter this fact. Neither are we able to avoid this fact. Therefore, the verse is of great importance: “Set your house in order, for you shall die.” This means we should intentionally face the fact of death and make necessary preparations.

Seniors' Page

In the last issue of the *Foundation of Faith*, a few points were mentioned as food for thought to consider when you “set your house in order.” The first two were already covered last month: the soul and our interpersonal relationships. Today, we will deal with other thoughts: our intellectual capacity, the body, our assets, and the funeral.

III. Our intellectual capacity

Many people are granted the ability to think clearly until the end of their lives. This is not always the case, however, because dementia and other causes can destroy acumen. When this occurs, we are completely dependent on other people to take care of us, including making decisions on our behalf. Nobody desires this, but we need to prepare for this reality. Of course, this must be done in a timely fashion.

We should determine who will make decisions on our behalf. Who should manage our business and financial affairs? In order to establish a power of attorney, each country requires certain documents that need to be completed. “Ordering your affairs” includes this task. Many have thought, “It won’t happen to me; my mind will remain clear to the end,” and they did not grant anyone the power of attorney. But how much hardship happened later as a result! This could have been avoided.

IV. The body

The increasing years of life are not without impact on our body. Paul noted our outward man is perishing (2 Corinthians 4:16), i.e., our strength diminishes and the body slowly breaks down. This fact cannot be denied. This process can necessitate decisions about our health, even when we are incapable of making them.

One midnight hour found me at a bedside. The patient was in a coma, and the doctor asked the question, “What were this person’s wishes?” No one could answer. These are difficult situations for family members to deal with and often for the pastor as well. Wouldn’t it be far better if I discussed my wishes for such eventualities with my spouse, children, or representative in a timely fashion and gave them the necessary authority to make decisions for me?

It is of paramount importance to think about this early on. To whom do I entrust my health care? Who will make decisions in my best interest and consider my wishes? And what are my wishes? Do I want to be

“kept alive” on life support when my end is inevitable, or should I be allowed to die in peace? All of these are extremely complicated questions.

“Set your house in order” are valid words. Arrange everything at the opportune time! Give someone the living will, talk to the appointed person, express your wishes and even write them down. There are documents that should be filled out for this purpose. They may need to be verified by witnesses to be legally binding.

V. Our property (the estate)

I don’t think any area has caused so many family problems as the matter of inheritance. How much misery and broken families and relationships are the result of this. How will the inheritance be divided? That is the real question. It doesn’t even matter whether it’s a little or a lot.

Although you may not want to admit it, you cannot take along your hard-earned savings, your house, or any of your possessions. Everything—without exception—will remain behind. They are your assets for which you are still responsible. Wouldn’t it be better to decide now how your assets should be divided after your death? It might also be advisable to appoint an executor to make sure your will is carried out correctly. That would certainly be the right thing to do, wouldn’t it?

A lot of godly wisdom and common sense is required when making a will. You have to be careful, especially if there are several children in the family. Is it justified to make distinctions? “Yes, since our son is not serving God,” a father said to me. He felt that this would be reason enough to exclude him from any inheritance. I replied, “Surely you want him to be saved, don’t you? Will it help his soul if you exclude him from the will, or could it even turn him further away from faith?”

Don’t make verbal promises without including them in the will. Promising “You’ll get my car when I die” is certainly well-intended, but who can verify later that you really said that? Even if your descendants don’t fight over the inheritance, clear instructions are a loving gesture to spare them potential problems. Have you made your will yet?

VI. The funeral

When the inevitable occurs and our life on earth ends, we as believers will be united with the Lord. And this

will be forever. All suffering and hardship will be over. Just thinking of this fills us with exceedingly great joy.

However, it is quite different for our relatives. They will have suffered a great loss. The family circle will have broken. In addition, amidst their grief, they now have only a few days to plan your funeral. You may have experienced how difficult it can be to remember everything important and find all the necessary information. As a pastor, I usually become involved in this planning and walk alongside the grieving family.

I have encountered many families who are completely clueless and helpless in this situation. They don't know where the documents of the deceased are. The subject of dying had never been discussed, and, consequently, no one knows anything. A search operation begins. Had there been foresight to arrange a burial plot? Had a funeral home been entrusted with arrangements? If so, where are the documents?

Then there is the planning of the funeral service. It is a good opportunity to share the Gospel with those attending. However, the message from God's Word should also provide comfort to the bereaved. As a pastor, I also like to add a personal touch to the service by sharing something about the deceased person's life. So I ask questions. Once, in such a situation, I asked the children, "When did your father become a Christian? Was he baptized? Did he receive special answers to prayer, have a favorite Bible verse or a favorite song?" I usually get vague answers to these and similar questions.

It is not uncommon that records of life events are lacking. Often, relatives are missing accurate dates and information. In addition, there is no suitable photo for

the memorial service and obituary. Thus, the next of kin may be burdened with unnecessary worries in the planning process during these difficult and sad days.

A recommendation

The words "Set your house in order" are serious words to consider. First and foremost, they refer to the spiritual life. He who is at peace with God and man can also go Home in peace.

However, we must not think only of ourselves but also of the people who lovingly care about us. We have the opportunity to lighten their load by timely discussion and cooperative planning of the required tasks during a sad and difficult time.

The rules for enduring or lasting power of attorney or personal directives vary in different countries. Therefore, it may be wise to access professional advice on the respective documents. When the time comes, wouldn't it be good for your children or the authorized person (executor) to find the will and all signed and required documents and records in a folder or briefcase?

Write down your life history with a list of residences and dates of moves. It helps if you also write down spiritual milestones, special experiences, your favorite Bible verses and songs. Add a picture of yourself so that everything will be ready at the required time.

Those who are proactive help themselves and their families. They will thank him or her for it. No one knows their last hour. That is why it is not advisable to put these preparations on "the back burner." ■

Harry Semenjuk

Announcements

New Church Dedication Service in Edmonton

September 19th, 2021

Services: 10:00 am and 2:00 pm

Edmonton Church of God
7230 Keswick Link SW
Edmonton, AB
T6W 4R7

www.edmontonchurchofgod.com
Email:
office@edmontonchurchofgod.com
Telephone 780-433-8706

TESTIMONY

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ says the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.’” (Isaiah 55:8-9)

I would like to testify how great the goodness of the Almighty God has been upon us this past year.

First of all, I am deeply grateful to God for salvation. At the age of 15 years, I answered God’s call and received forgiveness of my sins. Already in my youth, God’s way was often quite different than I would have chosen. I must say that throughout my entire life, I often could not understand God’s way. I went through many a dark valley; however, when I had prayed my way through it, I could say with the Psalmist: “Unto the upright there arises light in the darkness” (Psalm 112:4).

Even during my later years, things turned out quite differently than I had hoped and wished for. I was employed at the school in Neustädt for 26 years. Since I turned 69 last year, I decided the time had come to retire. During my first years of employment, I was not enrolled in the “Seguro” (insurance), so I was still three years short of qualifying for retirement. So, there we were, with no house and no income. Our sons told us they would take care of us, but for me it was very awkward. I thought a lot about my life, how the Lord healed me many times. When the boys were younger, the Lord interceded and saved me twice from death. I said, “Lord, it is enough; now let me go home and I will be taken care of forever.” The whole situation became so difficult for me that I could no longer deal with it inwardly. I kept myself busy on the farm, where I could talk to God a lot.

During this time, Brother Schmitt from Rosal brought the message from Luke 12:22, “Do not worry about your life.” He said, “Look at the ravens, how they fly so carelessly.” I said to myself, “That is impossible for me. I cannot look at the ravens, because here in our country I have hardly seen a raven.” How surprised I was when soon one did appear. I looked at the raven making its rounds so seemingly free of care. This repeated itself for two weeks. Every day, the raven came, made its rounds, and disappeared. The song “I’m a Child of the King” came to my mind. Very slowly, I

began to sing, and suddenly I said to myself, “What? You don’t sing it like that!” I quickly checked to make sure there were no neighbors outside, and then I started singing as loud as I could.

*My father is rich in houses and lands.
He holdeth the wealth of the world in His hands!
Of rubies and diamonds, of silver and gold,
His coffers are full—He had riches untold!
I’m a child of the King! A child of the King!
With Jesus, my Savior, I’m a child of the King!*

I said to myself, “Royal children are provided for!” There, under the open sky, I could say “yes” to the help of our son. From that day on, the raven no longer returned.

The congregation decided that we could live rent-free in a congregational residence. We are very grateful for this.

My heavenly Father opened the windows of heaven very wide above us. Especially at Christmas, several gifts came. It was so special; no one brought the same gift. It was as if everything was planned in heaven. Also, here and there, brothers and sisters put some money in my hand. Once, there was some money in our mailbox in the church foyer. Then in my Bible, which I had left in church, there was an envelope with money. Meat was also given to us. Another time, there was a small bag of oranges outside the door. What else was so special is that we needed a new freezer. I kept quiet about it and didn’t tell our sons either. To my great surprise, money was sent to us, and it was exactly enough for a freezer! I said, “How great has the goodness of the Almighty God been upon us!” The way of the Lord is always the best! ■

With deep gratitude,
Helen Friesen
Neustädt, Mexico

The Word of Faith

We're proclaiming the Word of Faith,
The majestic, awesome Word;
It sounds forth to ev'ry nation,
Searching out hearts for the Lord.

All who believe find salvation,
Are clothed with love and righteousness
And find peace through the Savior;
These are freed from sin and death.

Not by works are they now righteous
But through grace, by faith alone;
It is only through the Savior
Who by blood their sins atoned.

Through their faith they are forgiven;
Faith produces holiness.
Walking blameless as God's children,
Living now in righteousness.

And in sickness and in sorrow,
Jesus is the same today;
He can help in ev'ry trial,
Trust His promise, come what may.

Put your hand, completely trusting,
Into the Father's mighty hand;
Close your eyes and let Him lead you
Safely to the Promised Land.

Word of faith, so freely given,
Firm assurance from the Lord;
Tell all people and all nations
Of this hope and blessed Word.

Gertrud Tarutis