

Foundation of Faith

Death Waits Around the Corner

God's Clock is Always Right

The Coming of the Lord

Scenes of the Judgment Day

"The Rest of the Time"

**Our Time—
*Embedded in Eternity***

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OUR TIME—

EMBEDDED IN ETERNITY

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The FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a journal of vital Christianity, published in the interest of the Church of God, that takes a clear and decisive stand for full salvation in Christ, the unity of all true believers, and the truths of the Bible.

The editors reserve the right to abridge and edit all materials and information submitted for publication. Research sources are listed for information only and should not necessarily be construed as an endorsement or recommendation.

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH (USPS 9008) is published monthly by Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Flint, MI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA
Volume 19 Issue 11

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is a trademark owned by Christian Unity Press in the United States and foreign countries.
Printed in USA.

FOUNDATION OF FAITH is published free of charge. All expenses are covered by freewill donations.

Editorial

Dear Reader,

We have to get ready for so many things. Preparations are made for trips we want to go on, for carrying out celebrations, and for important work and special tasks.

However, I am afraid that millions of people are not prepared for the most important event that lies ahead of us all—Jesus’ return. Although none of us knows the year, the day, or the hour, we know the Son of God will come again.

“Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen” (Revelation 1:7). “Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other” (Matthew 24:30–31).

The world has already seen many great events, but Jesus’ return, the hour of the Last Day, the hour of the Great Judgment—that will be the greatest and most glorious event for all believers, for all children of God, because they have prepared themselves, washed their clothes in the blood of the Lamb, and served God faithfully!

But what will the fate be of those who have despised Jesus, trampled His precious blood underfoot, and mocked and ridiculed Him? They have rejected the love and grace of the Savior, and now eternal torment and darkness will be theirs. God’s Word testifies, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Hebrews 10:31).

Therefore, dear Child of God, remain faithful. And if you, dear Reader, are not yet a child of God, then urgently use the opportunity to repent, for tomorrow may be too late.

*Come, ere the last day passes,
The evening is no longer far;
A shining light glimmers in the darkness,
The glorious cross on Golgotha!*

H. D. Nimz

Death Waits Around the Corner

On a sunny autumn afternoon, a young farmer stood outside his front door checking the weather. He still wanted to head out to mow the last borders of the fields. Just then, his mother-in-law came in from the neighbor's garden and asked, "Where are you going, Andrew?"

To the field, Mother."

"May God keep you! Come home safely!"

The farmer laughed loudly, "Listening to you talk, you'd think I was taking a trip around the world and might drown at sea or be eaten by wild animals. I'd like to know what could happen to me on the field, barely ten minutes from here. Should I send for the pastor right away to prepare me to die?"

"You shouldn't mock, Andrew," the old woman admonished sternly. "Often enough, death is waiting where you least expect it. And we must be ready to die at any moment."

"Those are just old wives' tales," the young man replied, and with a laugh, marched toward the field.

As he let the scythe glide across the field, he couldn't help thinking more than he liked about the words of his mother-in-law. "Ready to die?" The old woman saw death waiting around every corner. Well,

that was understandable, considering her age. But why did she have to keep bothering him with this question? Was he terminally ill? Was he dying? Were his limbs already shaky from old age? Oh no. He had seldom felt so well, so healthy, so strong and full of life as he did right now. "Oh, those old women!" Andrew laughed out loud while he stood up to sharpen his scythe.

Suddenly, several shots rang out. In the nearby forest, the lord of the castle had organized a small hunting party to honor a guest. One of the bullets had missed the target and struck the young farmer in the chest. He screamed and dropped to the ground, his hands clasp his chest. Some workers nearby ran over and quickly rushed the unconscious man to a doctor. After examining the injured man, the doctor was able to reassure the dismayed relatives that the bullet had not caused any serious injury, and the wound would likely heal quickly.

When Andrew awoke from his unconscious state several hours later, he looked around, very distraught. Then his eyes spotted his aging mother-in-law. They looked at each other for a long time. "Mother," Andrew whispered, "death was waiting around the corner, and I wasn't ready!" ■



The Volatility of Life

In Job 7:21, we read, “You will seek me diligently, but I will no longer be.” Job speaks of how fleeting life is. You may say that someone who has gotten weak enough to talk this way has little to expect besides a swift death. Maybe this reminds you of someone specific in your life right now, perhaps somebody old and sick. But does this only apply to the aged and infirm? What does the Bible say?

“As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more” (Psalm 103:15–16). In James 4:13–15, we are reminded, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit’; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.’”

And what do the cemeteries tell us? In many a grave lies a man torn away at the height of his prime. Others harbor women touched by the cold breath of death in their youth. And here and there, children are buried, their lives cut short. Yes, there is hardly a family that has not experienced death. How insignificant and fleeting is human life!

“Where will I be then?” This question should occur to everyone who considers the possibility of not waking up tomorrow morning. It should penetrate deep into our souls. “When it’s over, it’s over,” one or the other might flippantly say. But this is only something

people say to avoid thinking about eternity because they are not ready to meet God.

In all of history, not one unbeliever could face death fully conscious without discarding his unbelief in utter despair. At the edge of eternity, unbelief cannot stand. But in most cases, it is already too late to repent and receive forgiveness. How many did not believe in life but then had to learn, to their despair, that hell is real and that they were condemned to damnation for not wanting to believe the Word of God or turn to the Lord while they still had time and opportunity.

Everyone is headed to one of two destinations: heaven or hell. We will all spend eternity in one or the other. We each have to decide for ourselves if our eternity will be in heaven, with all its blessings, or in hell, with its torture and suffering.

Trying to describe an especially happy home or life, people here on earth say, “It’s like heaven on earth!” because we cannot imagine a place of greater joy. Similarly, if we want to describe an especially unhappy circumstance, we cannot find a stronger expression than “It’s hell on earth!”

Jesus came from heaven to earth to make it possible for us to get into heaven to be with Him, and all the redeemed, for all eternity. He spilled His blood at the cross of Golgotha to save us from our sins. Whoever comes to Him in sincere repentance will receive salvation through faith. If we follow Him obediently until the end, heaven will be our eternal home. ■

E. Tschritter



We Are Guests on Earth

On the wall of an old house in Europe, there was a poem transcribed with beautiful letters. It had a lovely rhyme. The English words do not rhyme, but here's the translation: "This is my home, though it's not mine; someone else will move in after me, and it's not his either." So, to whom does the house actually belong? In the past, some people would reside in the same house as long as they lived, and home ownership would only change when someone died. This poem on the wall was to keep the homeowners humble and remind them that we are only guests here on earth.

Today, people buy and sell homes much more readily. Who would ever think of putting a verse like that over the door of their house today to remind them that they are only temporary guests in it? If the idea that we are only guests in our homes for a time is outdated, then paradoxically it may be because we do not live in one house long enough to ponder the idea. It used to be that houses owned for many generations would have the elderly die in the same houses in which they were born. Whereas those who passed away were carried out, new life entered when babies were born. It was not that people changed houses but that houses had a change of people.

Today it often seems the other way around. Immersed in the rapid change around us, we imagine we'll remain who we've always

been. Yet that is an illusion, and sooner or later, we also come to realize that we are only guests here on earth.

Going on vacation also makes us aware that we are guests. When we go on vacation, not only is it a change from our daily routine, but it is often the highlight of the year. Being guests somewhere is highly enjoyable.

So why should it make us sad to think we are only guests on earth? It should be quite the opposite!

As Guests, We Know Our Time Is Precious

We will not always remain here. As guests on vacation, we generally don't waste time, but we don't rush either. On vacation, we use our time wisely because we know it is limited. We don't let unimportant, trivial things take the place of the activities we want to do. We live more intentionally and plan our days better. We are suddenly interested in things we don't usually take time for.

We are (hopefully!) more pleasant in dealing with people, away from the stresses of our usual routine. As vacation guests, we're also much more mindful of things that are only available to us for a time. They aren't ours; they're just there for our use. We know that soon we must leave again. However, that does not make us nervous or uneasy, but rather, it gives special meaning to the time we have. Similarly, we tend to value real flowers more than artificial ones because

we need to enjoy them before they fade away.

How can our "vacation mindset" apply to our life here on earth?

We Are God's Guests on Earth

We have no time to lose. Life is worth living now. We're not lost in a dream of some future better time. We shouldn't be nervous or anxious, but should live rationally, going about our activities more deliberately, responsibly, and thankfully. We should keep in mind that we're here only for a time. We don't know the date of departure, but it's relatively soon.

The psalms show us that as God's guests on earth, the time we are given here is to be a joyous time. Psalm 36:7–9 says, "How precious is Your lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of Your wings. They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light."

Our life, however, is not just one long, lovely vacation.

Being Guests in a Country Means We Are Not at Home

Migrant workers are not in their home country. They have come to work. We did not invite them, except perhaps to benefit from their labor. They have left their home country in order to provide a better life for their families

back home. Migrant workers live among us, but their hearts are back home in their own country. They know what it means to be homesick, and they look forward to going back home again. Each day they're here, they know they're in a foreign land. Even if they're well taken care of, they don't feel at home.

Today, many people are away from home. Many are without a homeland. They may have left their small towns to move into the big city. Some move to other countries and continents. Being in strange surroundings makes people aware of the homelessness inside them. Even those who stay at home can feel homeless because they know that despite making life as comfortable as possible, they are not here to stay.

Followers of Jesus need not hide the fact that they are guests here on earth. The world treats them as outsiders anyway. When treated as strangers, Christians can share their plight with the Lord. For their homelessness, they have gained a heavenly home.

Although the earth is the Lord's, He suffered and was cast out. Jesus, "that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Therefore let us go forth to Him, outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (Hebrews 13:12–13). Those who follow Jesus are not promised an earthly home here since "foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head" (Matthew 8:20). Yet, He declares, "In My Father's house are many mansions . . . I go to prepare a place for you. . . I will come again and receive you to Myself;

that where I am, there you may be also" (John 14:2–3). And Paul declares in Philippians 3:20, "Our citizenship is in heaven."

An Embassy for Guests

Guests in foreign lands are not without protection. There is usually a consulate or an embassy stationed in the country they are visiting. In the midst of the foreign country, there is home, protection, and privileged status. In a similar way, the church belonging to the Lord Jesus is like an embassy in a foreign land. It is kingdom-of-God territory here on earth, where we find Christians, fellow-citizens of our homeland. The laws and customs of our kingdom are acknowledged here. Like an embassy protecting its citizens in a foreign regime, so the church protects its members in this world from harm. The church is a place of refuge where the Spirit of God is at work.

Christians without a church may falter sooner or later. Paul writes of the church to the Ephesians, "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone" (Ephesians 2:19–20).

When we meet our brothers and sisters, we should be as happy as fellow citizens who meet in a foreign land. We'll always be in the minority in this world, but we have found an everlasting home that will not pass away.

Ferdinand Schalk



“One of These Hours Will Be My Last”

These admonishing words are written above a clock in the state of Saarland, Germany. I am reminded of them again and again and cannot forget them. You, too, must realize that this phrase is true.

“All my possessions for a moment of time.” It is said that these were the last words of Queen Elizabeth I of England on March 24, 1603, as she writhed in agony on her deathbed. Poor woman! She had a crown on her head, a kingdom at her feet, and millions in her treasuries, and yet she begged for a minute. She was surrounded with all the world could offer in grandeur, splendor, and glory. But neither her power, nor the skill of physicians, nor the devotion of her subjects could give her the moment she asked for.

One of these hours will also be the last for you. Look this fact clearly in the eye and draw the right conclusions from it. Is your life with God in order? That is what matters. What use are all earthly goods, beauty, happiness, and honor among people when your dying hour comes? All this will then appear to you as void and meaningless.

“If I have Christ, I have everything, even if I have nothing. If I don’t have Christ, I have nothing, even if I have everything,” were the words of a dying man. This says it all, for a life in communion with Jesus Christ is true joy, real happiness, and genuine peace. A life without Jesus is lost.

While traveling in Italy, the famous professor Tholuk was driven a long time by an old coachman. When Tholuk had to leave him, he asked him what the greatest wish of his heart was. The coachman did not reflect long before answering with a quivering voice and eyes wet with tears: “To die in peace with God.”

This, then, was the highest desire of this simple man, that dominated and determined his life. The old professor commented, “Nothing of all the beautiful, great and glorious things I have seen and heard in Italy has made such a deep impression on me as the simple words of this coachman from Abruzzo.”

Jesus Christ accomplished everything with His sacrificial death on the cross of Golgotha so that you too can die in peace with God one day. Deep peace will enter your heart if you accept in faith the gift of His

atonement and say yes to the Savior. Will you not trust Him?

Don’t be like that old guard on the road. In the evening, after dark, he lowered the barrier and went to rest. One night, a traveler came along the way, knocked, and asked to be let in. The guard answered, “I’m coming!” When he did not come, the traveler repeated his calling and knocking and received the same answer. But the guard did not come.

At last, the traveler ran out of patience. He pushed open the door of the hut and called inside, “How is it that for a quarter of an hour now you have been calling out, ‘I’m coming!’ yet you don’t come?”

The old man snapped out of his sleep, asked to be excused, and said, “I’m so used to the calling and knocking that I answer in my sleep, ‘I’m coming.’”

This is what many people do when they hear the Word of God. They say, “I’m coming!” but they never come. Take the step toward the Lord now and accept His offer. Then you will be able to confidently overcome sin and face the hour that will be your last. The Bible clearly testifies, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36). ■

S. K.



Time–Death–Eternity

Dear Reader, your time on earth is very short. The end of every year, every setting sun, every strike of the clock shortens your days on earth and carries you quickly and quietly, but surely towards eternity. The year, the day, the hour, the moment will come when your life on earth will come to an end and either you will be singing in heaven or wailing in hell. Nothing will bring you back to earth. You will be in one of two places forever, for all eternity.

Today your feet stand on the sinking sands of time. Soon your footsteps might still be visible, but you will have been called away. Where to? Into eternity.

Today your hands are very busy, your eyes are checking things out, your mind is thinking, and you make plans for the future. Tomorrow everything could be quiet, hands folded, eyes closed, because you have been called to eternity.

Others were once busy and healthy like you, and perhaps without a care like you. They are no more. They have been called to eternity. The cheerful voices, the gifted artists, and the actors who entertained people are gone from a life of imagination and fiction to a place of reality—eternity.

Your time, dear Reader, will also come when you enter eternity. Ask yourself honestly and sincerely,

“Am I ready for eternity?” Give your conscience time to answer. It is speaking to you today. Do not muffle or stifle its voice.

Let heaven and hell stand before your eyes in all their reality. One of these places will be your eternal home. Today is the time to make your choice. Tomorrow could be too late—eternally too late. What is the purpose of your life? What are you living for? What is your destination?

To go from the dens of vice, sin, and indulgence to the presence of God and the Lamb—impossible! To go from being damned and chasing after gold and gain to the heavenly songs of the redeemed and the crown of glory—no, it will never happen.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3). Dear Reader, have you been born again? If so, it is well for you. But if not, the horrors of eternal hell await you, and today you are closer to its unquenchable fire than you have ever been.

Stop! Why do you want to meet God with an unsaved soul? This is not His will. Today He calls to you with love to seek salvation. Why do you want to perish? ■

J. R.



The Zeitgeist

Our “zeitgeist”—the spirit of our times—can be summed up in two words: hurry and worry. The motto is: hurry, hurry, hurry. Everything we need to do must be done quickly, and we need to work harder and harder to keep up with our neighbors. We already break the speed of sound in flight, but it’s still not fast enough. If we look closely, we are stuck in a never-ending rat race that does not even have a specific goal. Time has become immensely valuable.

Things were so very different in times past, when men still worked for twelve to fourteen hours a day. Mothers scrubbed the whole family’s laundry on the washboard, baked bread, worked the garden, milked the cows, chopped wood, and did hundreds of other chores—and still had time for the most important parts of life. Yes, they still had time to raise their children in the ways of the Lord. Bathed in sweat, fathers toiled alone in the fields—and still had plenty of time to socialize with their neighbors and take their families to worship services.

But now, who still has time for the important things in life? Parents are too busy to spend time with their children. Life seems to be an endless race, and there is no time left for God nor our souls.

How few are those who still take time to think of God. Who still has time to think about eternity or quietly read God’s Word and commune with the Father in heaven? Who still has time to invest in the soul? We rush around from morning to evening, day

in and day out, from one week to another, wiling away our time on earth. Hurry encapsulates the zeitgeist so well.

But worry is no less fitting. Many people today have nervous disorders. No wonder, because speed and hurry attack the nerves. Why do so many families quarrel and bicker? Because of “nerves.” Why do so many people become pathological fault-finders, often even in the church? It is due to their strained nerves. Why are heart attacks so common today? Are they not often the result of hurry and worry? Why do fear and worry keep spreading? Because humanity seems to forget that the future lies in our heavenly Father’s hand. Should we not trust Him?

It is crucial to take time for contemplation. We cannot lead a holy life without putting in the time. It is easy to let ourselves be swept away by the masses, but swimming against the current demands strength and power.

It is not possible for us to escape the sight of God. Even if people around us try to leave God out of their lives, we children of God are still bound by Jesus’ command to “seek first the kingdom of God” (Matthew 6:33). That is what we need to prioritize in our lives.

In these times, let us remain alert to Satan’s methods. He is not above using the zeitgeist to achieve his goals. If he succeeds in keeping us so occupied with earthly concerns that we forget the most important thing—our spiritual wellbeing—then he has won. Let us therefore watch and pray, dedicating our time first and foremost to God and His kingdom. ■

God's Clock is Always Right

With all the strength he had left, a traveler reached the ticket counter and asked, "When does the 5:30 train leave?"

The answer was "At 5:30."

"Can I still make it?" the traveler asked.

"No." was the answer of the official. "The train already left."

"It's gone already!" the traveler called in surprise.

"On the church clock it is 5:27, on the post office clock it is 5:25, and your clock said 5:32. Which clock can I trust?"

"You have to know that yourself," the official said, "but the 5:30 train according to our clock already left!"

Likewise with God's clock, the only one that is not deceptive. God's timing is the right one. We need to live according to His clock.

Many travelers to eternity will one day have to hear, Too late! You arrived too late because you focused on everyone else's clock. That means you trusted others' advice, opinions, regulations, and so on. God's clock of grace points to "Today!"

"Behold, now [today] is the accepted time; behold, now [today] is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). ■

*Life is fleeting, on the run,
Time is always rushing on;
Rapidly it flies away,
We are not meant here to stay.*

*Like a dream that fades away,
Water vapor, ocean spray,
Smoke dispersing in the air,
So is life and beauty fair.*

*We rejoice while we have time;
We're like fragrant flowers fine,
Blooming in the morning sun,
Fading when the day is done.*

*Like the waves upon the sea,
Always restless, so are we;
What is now will soon be gone,
Since the river's flowing on.*

*Now is still the time of grace;
So, no matter what you face,
Serve the Lord in all you do,
Keep eternity in view.*

*A true Christian life is blessed,
Serving God is what is best;
So let's serve Him while we're here,
For eternity is near.*



Time Cannot Be Stopped

How beautiful spring was with its fragrance, blossoms and sunny days, stretching far into the night, not wanting to end! Nevertheless, the days hurried along; they just couldn't be stopped.

Full of hope and expectation, the summer approached, and soon it was harvest time. Filled with joyful work, the days flew by rapidly. Too quickly they hurried along, too hastily for all the work, too swiftly for all the joy. And then autumn approached. The shadows grew longer. The birds departed to another land; there was no stopping them. The leaves fluttered down, silently and determinedly. Nature prepared to wither after a short life. Oh, we would have liked to hold on to those last warm rays of the sun, the last fading roses, the last bit of green! And yet, our longing was in vain. The change of seasons approached quickly; time hastened on.

Does it not seem, in the face of these facts, that a cold hand reaches to our heart and places this admonition before our soul: "Our life on earth is like a shadow, and there is no stopping it." How the golden days of youth have passed, full of delight and joy, filled with so much expectation! How we wish we could have held on to those days a little longer. The midday of our life has also passed quickly, with all the work and creativity which invigorated our days. They went by too fast, and we almost failed to notice the shadows lengthening around our lives.

Oh, how we would like to prolong those days which are becoming fewer, the precious time that is still given to us. And yet, hour after hour rushes inexorably into the sea of eternity, never to return.

Amid the hurry and haste of our days, God places this impermanence as a serious reminder in our path. We too can confess with David, "We are strangers and sojourners before you, like all our fathers. Our life on earth is like a shadow and there is no stopping us" (1 Chronicles 29:15). We truly are guests and strangers. But where is the place of eternal abode to which we are naturally hastening?

Let us be still for a moment and contemplate the importance of our life. Time continues without return. Every spoken word and every deed is done forever and

can never be taken back. Just as the sower walks over his field and scatters handfuls of seed over the open furrows, likewise we also sow the seed of our life and cannot take back a grain. It will take root and bear fruit. "What a man sows, that he will reap" (Galatians 6:7). This eternally valid law cannot be changed. It is fulfilled in the natural and spiritual realm.

Never again can missed opportunities be summoned back. The souls we meet today may reach eternity tomorrow. Spurgeon aptly said, "If a man were a warrior and had lost a battle, he might well long for a new day to dawn and a new fight to save the campaign. But if you lose the battle of life, you will not be able to fight it a second time."

If you miss the opportunity to serve Jesus here, you cannot return for another chance. If you left a bad example for others, you can never again erase that image in their soul. If you did not find it necessary to anchor the image of Jesus into the hearts of your children, it will not be possible for you to rectify it once they go their own ways. If you do not invest in a heavenly treasury for yourself by deeds of love and kindness, you will not succeed after death. Time will inevitably pass and erase the traces of your life.

Let us take this seriously and make use of our life, as it flashes by, faster than lightning, and never returns. Only a short span of time is allotted to us.

On the other hand, it is comforting to know that, just like a good seed, every good deed done for Jesus' sake will one day bring a plentiful harvest. Every act of self-denial, every sacrifice, every unseen service weaves a piece of the garment we will wear in eternity.

It is comforting to know that even the sufferings of this time are brief and limited. What may seem so difficult to us today will already have passed tomorrow. Even over the deepest suffering, even over the most painful grave, time passes and heals even the deepest wounds.

The volatility of nature certainly relays to us the seriousness of life, but it also gives us a glorious view of eternity. ■

G. T.



Time is Vanishing, Unstoppable

Time is precious and short. It is approaching its final goal, the end not only for the individual but for the entire world.

Our time is limited. Do we believe that, or do we wish to deceive ourselves? Are we utilizing our time for God? Or is it possible that we have no time for Him because we are so busy with the idol of “self?”

The things transpiring in this world clearly tell us, “Time is running out.” Your own time is also coming to an end; remember that. The Bible warns, “[T]he world is passing away, and the lust of it” (1 John 2:17). God Himself will determine the events of time. He will make true the promise He made to Jesus’ disciples: “This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Do we expect Jesus Christ to return as King? Do we expect Him soon? We don’t have to sink into a doomsday mood. But being fully awake and full of joy, we are to expect our King. We cannot set a date. God has His own calendar we’re not allowed to see. But the signs of the times, the world events, the events in the church of the Lord, announce the nearness of the great day of Jesus Christ.

People deceive and are deceived. Many Christians are asleep. Love has grown cold in many, and ungodliness is taking over in the world. All these signs and manifestations have been predicted in the Bible as

signs of the near return of Jesus. But all the darkness that fills the world must give way on that great day to the Light of the Great King when He comes. Are you ready for that great day?

Looking ahead to the coming of Jesus Christ is important for us. Our lives must be focused on that day, not fearfully, but in joyful anticipation.

When Jesus returns, the multitude of people who have kept faith in Jesus, those who have waited watchfully and prayerfully for His coming, even though they were mocked and ridiculed, will experience rejoicing. Our Lord Jesus Christ will not disappoint. His people will receive their glorious reward. All mockers and all enemies of Jesus Christ, all who have been lukewarm and apathetic, will need to confess with shame, “We have despised Him Who alone could have given us eternal life. Now we are forever lost; we are doomed to judgment without hope.” It is the most terrible thing a person can experience.

Which category do you belong to? Do you belong to those who are redeemed from their sins by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Do you follow Him as you wait for His return? Jesus’ call to you will then be, “Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28). ■

The Coming of the Lord

The Second Coming of the Lord Jesus Christ is an event of utmost importance for all people. For most, it will be something exceedingly terrible because they lived in sin and yet they had felt secure. Yes, many had a contemptuous smile for those who had spoken to them of death, judgment, and eternity. The Lord Jesus also refers to a group of people: “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:22–23). But those who “have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb” (Revelation 7:14), who have served Him faithfully, will rejoice when the Lord comes.

There will be a great gathering of people of all ranks when the Lord comes with flames of fire to take vengeance on those who have disobeyed the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then the Lord will repay each one according to his works.

Jesus has already visited this earth once. But He will come again, as He promised. His second coming, however, will not only be vastly different from His first coming, but will also serve a completely different purpose. The first time, He came in lowliness as the Savior and Redeemer of man. “He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). He was rejected by men and crucified.

But everything will be completely different at His return. Jesus said, “For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works” (Matthew 16:27). Then great men, esteemed as valiant, but who hardened their corrupt hearts and ignored the warnings in Scripture, will seek to hide “themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and [say] to the mountains and rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us’” (see Revelation 6:15–17). Then there will be no escape, and no one will avoid divine judgment and punishment. Yes, that will be a terrible day, a day of wrath for all who have rejected God and His grace.

At His first coming into this world, Jesus was treated shamefully. Our so-called Christian world is also full of those who have the same godless spirit as

the Jews of that time, although they often profess to be followers of Jesus. Many also believe that when Jesus returns, He will not sit in judgment nor end all things but rather will establish a millennial reign, bringing peace throughout the world. The devil, who caused the Jews to reject the Lord Jesus, is still deceiving people today. He causes many to accept false and deceptive hopes. But when the Lord returns, there will be no more time of grace.

Godlessness is becoming more and more prevalent in the world. It is easy to see we are living in the end times. The conditions today are similar to the time of Sodom and Gomorrah. Is it not a fact that the world today is so hardened and has lost all reverence for the Word of God that it intentionally turns a deaf ear to the teachings of Christ? Many know what God’s Word demands, but love sin more than God and live without care for divine warnings.

Many professing Christians of our time become completely absorbed in the things of this world. The gathering of treasures or enjoyment of life is the highest goal people pursue. They indulge themselves, live in carnality and worldly pleasures of all kinds, and do not think of the salvation of the soul for which Christ shed His blood.

Jesus also says of the signs of the last days, “Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (Matthew 24:11–12). Isn’t today’s world full of false and deceptive teachings? Does not injustice abound, and has not love grown cold in many? Whoever has open eyes cannot fail to see and recognize this. We do well to heed the admonition of the apostle Paul to his spiritual son Timothy: “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). If we follow this admonition, this promise will also be true for us: “Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth” (Revelation 3:10). The Lord calls to all of us, “Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown” (verse 11). ■

G. T.

Scenes of the Judgment Day

“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world’” (Matthew 25:34).

What shouting and rejoicing there will be when children of God will hear this call from their Savior! That will be the day when the redeemed soul passes from faith to sight. As long as we live on earth, we cannot see Jesus with our physical eyes. We can see Him in the Spirit, and we can have fellowship with Him, but in eternity we will see Him face to face.

“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). Oh, heaven is an indescribably glorious place. But when we shall behold our Lord, even the heavenly glories will pale. Jesus Himself is glorious and exalted above all. For the person who has grasped, in faith, the certainty that he will see Jesus as He is, this transient world loses all its charm. Nothing binds him here on earth anymore. Such a person agrees with Paul: “Forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13–14).

What will happen to those who will be standing at the Lord’s left hand? Jesus Himself tells us this clearly and plainly: “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels’” (Matthew 25:41).

As long as we live on earth, we cannot understand the blessedness of the saved, nor the anguish of those who are lost. There are people who say they cannot believe that God, Who is love, created hell for man. He did not prepare hell for man, but for the devil and his

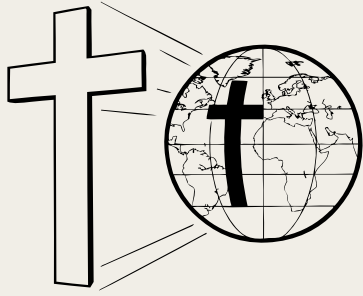
angels (see again Matthew 25:41). However, when man rebels against God and His holy Word and commandment and sins, he is already living in communion with the devil here on earth.

Still others claim that there is neither a devil nor a hell. Such people are deceived by the devil, because they are in his bondage and do his works. The works of these people are listed in Galatians: “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21). Jesus says in Matthew 25:46, “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

We do not know how great the punishment and torment of the lost souls will be, but one thing is certain: the greatest torment will be that they will be eternally separated from God, cast out into eternal night and darkness.

The apostle John tells us what souls will face there. In Revelation 22:15, we read, “But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie.” Wherever the Scriptures speak of dogs, it always means something mean and hideous. You would not like to stay there in such company, but if you die as a sinner, you will have to spend all eternity in such company. ■

H. M. R.



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Eternity

*“For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:14).
This Bible passage speaks of two essential facts: the transience of time and the reality of eternity.*

The first fact is absolutely indisputable, because we all know how fleeting time is and that the many things we have accumulated will be left behind. Our life is also impermanent. It has been appointed for man to die, and therefore we have no permanent home here. This gives us sufficient reason to think of eternity because it is a reality.

Just as there is life, there is also death, and just as there is time, there is also eternity. Unfortunately, very few people are concerned about eternity. Many even rebel against this thought. They consider eternity to be an invented fable. Many believe there is nothing after death, so why even think about eternity? With this explanation, many people rest easy, but they do not find the hoped-for rest. Human opinion can never give anyone real certainty, especially if it is contrary to the teaching of God’s Word. God’s Word speaks clearly about eternity, and this word “eternity” makes people uncomfortable and gives them pause for thought.

Among the travelers on a passenger ship was a courageous man of faith. He took the opportunity to distribute gospel tracts among the travelers. While doing this, he had set his sights on a particularly conspicuous scoffer. When he offered him a tract, the man hastily took it from his hand, tore it up, and threw it over-

board. But the wind blew back the little scraps of paper, and one got caught on his coat. The man took it and read the words, “God and Eternity.” He could not rid himself of these words. After having to think about these words constantly for some time, he came to the conclusion that God and eternity are serious realities.

We all approach eternity willingly or unwillingly. Despite fear and anxiety about eternity, it is a fact. One does not fight and argue against something that is not there. Eternity can be just as little explained away as God Himself, and therefore we should seriously deal with both.

Our time has a distinct end. Looking to this end, John states in Revelation 10:5–6, “The angel whom I saw standing on the sea and on the land raised up his hand to heaven and swore by Him who lives forever and ever, who created heaven and the things that are in it, the earth and the things that are in it, and the sea and the things that are in it, that there should be delay no longer.”

Where time ends, eternity begins for me and for you! Despite its millennia, time is only a small fraction of eternity. It is like a small island of sand in the sea, whose shores are washed away more and more until it is completely submerged. In this way, time also enters



eternity and carries us daily towards it. How do we respond to coming eternity?

Eternity has two realms. Just as time has day and night, so eternity has a place of light and a place of darkness. It speaks of a place of rest and delight for the godly and a place of terror and torment for the wicked.

This fact is clearly depicted in Luke 16:19–31 in the parable of the rich man and the poor man, Lazarus. Faced with this reality, the question forces itself upon us: “Where will I be in eternity?” Dear Reader, seriously consider this question in your heart, for you, too, are a pilgrim traveling to eternity and have no lasting home here.

Jesus said to His disciples, “In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told

you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also” (John 14:2–3). Does this also comfort your heart in view of eternity?

We must be prepared for eternity. Hebrews 13:20–21 says, “Now may the God of peace . . . make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.” Therefore, surrender your life to God, become a disciple of Jesus, and allow yourself to be formed and prepared according to the will of God. In this way, eternity will not fill you with fear and anxiety but with hope and joy! ■

2021 Online Bible Course Report



“Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105).

*“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).*



I am very thankful we were able to join the virtual Bible Course this year. When I was 18, I was fortunate to be able to attend a Bible course in person. It was a new experience for me, and I felt vulnerable in such a large group all by myself, but when I left there, I was a different person. God’s Word spoke to me in so many ways. I was touched by how deeply and passionately people could serve the Lord and it motivated me. I never thought I would be able to attend another Bible Course, so I was truly thankful for this opportunity. It was a wonderful experience to be able to dig deeply into God’s Word with my family, with friends from the church and with others from around the world.

The Bible Course took place from Monday to Saturday. Our schedule was the same every day. We began each morning with Brother Taron’s class called “Understanding New-Testament Prophecy.” Each day we went into depth on a key element of prophecy. This class was very interesting for me. We studied New-Testament Prophecy, the false prophecies of the rapture, the Antichrist, Israel as the centerpiece of God’s plan, and the millennial reign of Christ on earth.

Our second class every day was Brother Kehler’s class called “True Discipleship, the Gospel, and the Kingdom of God.” We learned so much about how to be a true disciple of Christ and what it takes to live a holy life and become more like Christ every day. We gained a better understanding about God’s kingdom and how Jesus’ church and the Kingdom of God

cannot be separated, just like faith and works cannot be separated.

Brother Klinger’s class was our third class and here we learned how the Bible gives proof to support arguments for the truthfulness of the Christian faith. This is such a deep desire of mine, to have knowledge of the evidence in God’s Word to strengthen my own personal faith and witness. This class was called “Humble Christian Apologetics.” We learned that one of the greatest apologists is our life in Christ. If we live in sin or are hypocrites, our testimony is ruined. We studied topics like “Does God exist?” “What is truth?” “What about evolution and creation?” as well as others. It was helpful to learn what the Bible says about these topics, and what we can learn from Christ Himself. We also became better equipped to share our faith with others.

Our last lesson each day was with Brother Mielke. He energized us with his passion for music! This class was called “The Thomas Series,” where we were able to look deeper into who Thomas the Disciple was, what he said and did, and how we could learn from him. We also studied what the biblical church of God is and how it is built.

I am grateful for a blessed week and for technology that allowed us to see one another and pray together, even if we could not meet physically. My prayer is that I could apply the many things I learned.

*Christina Neufeld
Seminole, Texas*

2021 Youth Bible Camp Reports

in Blaubeuren (Germany)

During the Youth Bible Days and the camp gatherings, it became clear to me how important God's Word is for our lives. His Word is not just an "extra" in our faith, but it changes us and our surroundings. I thank my Savior for His Word, through which I stay on God's enlightened path and let Christ shine brightly through me.

In Blaubeuren, Germany, I was able to experience how God touches the hearts of people and how His power strengthens us. How important it is for us to jointly bring this light into the world and to testify how Jesus works in our lives.

Arianne Schmitt

Youth Bible Days were days in the summer where we as youth could forget about our everyday lives and spend time redirecting our inner compass and focus entirely on Jesus. After we had to go without this special time last year, we had the opportunity to be able to see each other again. Although many things were different than before, it was definitely not worse. While the headlines announced issues such as COVID-19, floods, and forest fires, we were able to spend some secluded days in Blaubeuren and take many lessons with us regarding the theme "Living by God's Word." Brothers from all over Germany showed us different aspects of this topic and made it clear that God's Word is the compass that should direct our lives. As young people, we were especially happy to be able to see each other again after such a long time. We enjoyed it very much.

Even though we were somewhat sad that this wonderful time ended so quickly, we thank God with all our hearts and pray that these important and valuable times of fellowship and reorientation will remain with us.

Jonas Freiter

As members of the youth in Eppingen, Germany, we often think back to the Youth Bible Days of 2021. Through the many different topics brought, we were able to gain a new perspective of the theme, "Living by God's Word." Our modern times of prosperity especially allow us the opportunities to develop in many areas, but only "Living by God's Word" is profitable for our soul.

The following aspects for such a life became important to us through these individual sessions:

- Not to view the study of God's Word as a chore but to listen to it with our whole heart, to receive it, and to live it
- Reading the Bible to benefit from it and to receive blessings
- How to overcome fear by faith, and to be made complete in love by drawing close to God
- To live a life in reverence and fear of the Lord, as well as other topics

The Youth Bible Days this year were a great blessing and gave us practical instructions for our spiritual life.

Eppingen Youth



I was very happy to finally be able to see the other young people at the Youth Bible Days. I, and probably many others, were only able to meet in small groups, while the big youth gatherings were missing. During the pandemic, I truly missed the time of prayer and singing with others as it was very limited. To be able to do this again really encouraged me. The atmosphere among the youth was incredible. You could feel that everyone was truly excited for the fellowship, and the opportunity to learn, no matter what your spiritual level.

I am grateful to God for this blessed time. I want to thank everyone who was involved in this. I am also thankful for the topics that were carefully chosen and worked through by the brothers. I hope this can take place again next year.

Tim Schmidt

I want to thank God for the opportunity to attend this year's Youth Bible Days. Leading up to these days, everything was so unclear and uncertain, especially since the COVID-19 case numbers in Germany were very high.

However, God answered our prayers and saw our yearning for His Word and for time spent with other youth. All thanks be to Him.

I personally sensed how important it is to continually be reoriented in your spiritual life because it is easy to be distracted every day. So often, our closeness to God is disturbed by other things in life.

A sermon about reading the Bible daily spoke to me especially. In the days before the Youth Bible Days, it was hard for me to make reading God's Word a priority first thing in the morning.

Also, the importance of a new, changed heart and life through practical sanctification spoke to me. Especially during times of media distractions and temptations to sin through music, the Internet, or even conversations with colleagues, it is important to have a steady, devoted heart and to live a life of victory through God's power. Praise be to God for everything!

Ben Damm

I am grateful to God that He granted us the Youth Bible Days as well as the camp services. I have to admit that I was skeptical about the possibility of this event happening, especially with so many people attending. However, I believe that sometimes—humanly speaking—the more impossible our prayers are, the more grateful we are when we notice that God answered them. Especially in the last year in which we were unable to have big gatherings, we were able to appreciate in a new way the things we valued as “normal.”

Lea Freiter

The Youth Bible Days in Blaubeuren took place from August 2–4, 2021. There was time for everything, from sermons to singing. I was especially touched by the sermon “Benefitting from Bible Reading.” This showed me not only how important it is to read my Bible but also how to read it properly. After a similar topic was delivered the following day, I realized even more how important it truly is. We should read our Bible with all our hearts. A few weeks later, we had a youth session on the topic of why we so easily forget what we read in the Bible. The answer is because we don't read it properly. The Bible tells us to meditate day and night on what we read. If we don't do this, God can't show us what He wants to tell us through His Word. We also have to think about it, and need to engage with the Word. This can bring along some challenges, but the Word itself, as I learned through a sermon, says that we should be as steadfast in reading the Bible consistently as we are in our faith. Consistently means regularly and with perseverance.

The time of testimonies was a true blessing for everyone. The experiences that were shared with us gave us encouragement and hope. Maybe you can be a part of it next year too. You are warmly invited!

Jona Pokrant

You May Choose



A Sunday School teacher told the children in her class about Abraham, who did not want to quarrel. He and his nephew Lot lived together, and each had a large number of cattle. Now, the pasture land was not big enough, so their herdsmen kept quarreling. One day, Abraham said to Lot, "I don't want our herdsmen to keep quarreling. There is so much pasture land. Lot, choose a place. If you want to go to the right, I'll go to the left. But if you want to go to the left, I'll go to the right." Lot chose the better pasture, but Abraham was satisfied with that.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher said to the children, "You children can learn a lot from this story. When you are playing with your brothers or sisters, and you want to share your toys, think immediately of Abraham's words, 'You may choose!' And then you will have no quarrel."

Lizzie and Henry were happily walking home from school. Today was Sunday, after all, so they could play together all afternoon. They got out their construction set. Each built a barn, and then they distributed their little animals: "You get the dog, I get the little sheep. And now the kitten for me and the

rooster for you." Then there was a beautiful brown horse and a little gray donkey.

"I want the horse, and you take the donkey," said Lizzie. "No, no!" cried Henry, "I want the horse!" Having already raised his hand to snatch the horse, he suddenly remembered the teacher's words. He lowered his hand and said very kindly, "No, Lizzie, you may choose."

From then on, there was almost never a fight between the two children because each liked to say, "You get to choose!"

Don't you want to do the same in the future, dear children? ■

The Rest of the Time

“[T]hat he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God” (1 Peter 4:2).

Peter divides man’s life into two periods. He speaks of the “past lifetime” (verse 3) and “the rest of his time.” He compares the old life, the “past lifetime,” to the life of sin, its vices and lusts. Christ’s suffering and death make it possible to draw a line through the old life and to begin a new life. The Word invites man to live the remaining “time” differently than before; he should live according to the will of God.

“The rest of his time” speaks of the rest of his life, the still remaining time, i.e. as long as God gives us life and allows us to live on this earth. “The rest” of the time lasts until the day of our death. What comes after that is what we call eternity.

Obviously, nothing can be changed about our past. If it is forgiven, we can say with Paul, “Forgetting those things which are behind” (Philippians 3:13). “The rest” of the time, however, is given to us by God and is at our disposal. It is not to be frittered away or even lived indifferently, but is to be redeemed (Ephesians 5:16). It is good to consider this thought. What do we do as seniors with the time we have left? We don’t have much time, so we want to be all the more careful with “the rest” of the time.

There is a danger that our gaze is focused more on the past than on “the rest” of the time. This can even go one step further, when we “live” in the past. Why is this? A devotional page recently came into my hands, and it casts a little light on this thought. “It is probably related to increasing loneliness and also that old people like to talk a lot. Mostly they talk about themselves and about the past. They no longer understand the present, and the future only seems dark and bleak to them. The basic tone of their talk is the lament: Everything was better in the past. That is over now. And today everything is getting worse and worse. This attitude is understandable when one realizes that life is declining and the decrease in strength is progressing.” Remember that the past is important to us. After all, we have spent most of our lives in it. In our best years, we were in the forefront, in positions of responsibility

and decision-making. Taking that into account, we also understand why everything was better back then, and we call them the “good old days.” Of course, we may remember the past without living in it. It is always important to find our way back to the present, because it is relevant when we talk about “the rest” of the time.

I suppose you know this, but let me remind you again anyway. The same God who was with us in the past has promised to be with us also during “the rest” of the time. Yes, the same God who helped in the earlier years will help us in 2022. He presents Himself to us in His Word as the “unchanging God” (Malachi 3:6). In this respect, we are secure. Cling to that; don’t forget it. God is not only a God of the past but also a God of today and tomorrow. Even “the rest” of the



time we may confidently place in His hands. He does not abandon us.

When you are a senior citizen, the first rays of the setting sun can already be seen on the horizon. Too much time is no longer available to us. Once again, why not use one's strength with a joyful heart so God can still receive the glory, even through our aging? Paul may have thought of this when he wrote, "according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Philippians 1:20).

Let me give you some recommendations on how best to deal with "the rest" of the time. By doing so, you will help yourself, honor your God, and also become a blessing to your descendants.



1. Live purposefully. Detach yourself slowly from earthly possessions. No one takes anything with them. Speak more of God than of possessions.

2. Trust the Word of God. Cling to God's promises. Let them be your constant companion.

3. Gratitude, not complaining and lamenting, is what makes Christianity attractive. Do you know the song "Let's Give Thanks and Not Complain"? Gratitude appeals. Complaining repels. If complaining is necessary, try what the songwriter suggests: "Be true to God, He'll help you through, but never forget to pray" (Worship Hymnal of the Church of God, song no. 273).

4. In conversations with others, make it a point to consciously encourage the other person. Radiate joy. Give encouragement. Talk about God's faithfulness, answers to prayer, and heaven. You could put a little note next to your phone that says "Encourage others." It gives every call some purpose.

5. Pray for the various mission branches. You have probably never had as much free time as you have right now. Take advantage of the time and pray. Pray for others. Pray for your pastor. Include the children and youth.

6. Live with God. Talk to Him even during the day. When you have been in the presence of God, others will notice. You will be like Moses, whose face shone after he talked with God (Exodus 34:29).

"The rest" of the time—is it two years, or five, maybe even ten years? No one knows how long the span of his life is. What we do know, however, is that it is decreasing. Soon we will see Jesus. My brother and sister, with God's help and His grace, let us once again consciously live with the Lord for others. I want to. What about you? ■

Harry Semenjuk

That One Word

Among the dancing and chattering people moving back and forth in the ballroom was Marion, the young, beautiful daughter of one of the richest residents of the city. Care-free and indifferent, hurrying along on the paths of pleasure, the thought of higher things had never risen in her mind until now. She was young, beautiful, rich, witty and of refined taste.

That evening, she was the most cheerful of the cheerful, the most admired and most desired dancer. She was the shining center of attention among the guests, and her heart beat with proud joy. However, every pleasure comes to an end, and so did that evening of dancing. Marion went home and was greeted by her father with a smile of joyful paternal pride. She wished him goodnight and then skipped cheerfully up the stairs.

Arriving at her bedroom, she pushed open the door and saw her maid, Anna, bent over a book, sitting at the table. She seemed so absorbed in reading the book that she completely missed the opening of the door. Marion regarded her for a moment with quiet amusement but at the same time, with a touch of mock pity. Knowing the sincere devoutness of her maid, she guessed at once the character of the book which had so completely absorbed her. Quietly, she stepped behind the chair and

glanced over the girl's head to read the title of the book. But she had hardly glanced at it when a troubled look flashed across her face, and she turned away in silence.

At that moment, the musing girl also raised her head, jumped up quickly when she saw the young lady, and apologized for her absent-mindedness. Then she hurried to help her young mistress remove her ball attire. What a difference between these two girls! The one of dazzling beauty, wrapped in a costly gown studded with flowers and embroidery; the other inconspicuous and unassuming in a dress befitting her lowly position. But an observant eye would have noticed that the face of the one bore the expression of deep, true happiness, while from the countenance of the other had disappeared even the fleeting excitement of pleasure.

Anna was grateful when at last she was allowed to lie down and close her tired eyes. But she had not been asleep long when she was awakened by a soft, suppressed sob. At first, surprised at such an unusual sound, she remained silent. Finally, she could stand it no longer. She rose, and with a tone through which her loving concern rang, she asked, "Dear Miss, what has happened? Are you ill?"

The only reply was a faint "no." And then the silence was broken only by those deep sighs by which a heavy-laden heart seeks to re-

lieve its grief. Anna's sympathy was aroused to the utmost. She dared to ask once more, "Won't you tell me what is troubling you? I cannot bear to see you so distressed."

Marion would have much rather locked her sorrow deep in her proud heart. But who could resist the voice of love? Bursting into a torrent of tears, she cried in a passionate tone, "Oh, it is that one word I read in your book! I saw the word 'eternity,' and I cannot bear the thought of eternity. It fills me with fear and terror. Oh, how happy everyone must be who is ready to meet eternity!"

The moment had come that Anna had so long hoped and prayed for. Her mistress had awakened to an awareness of her perilous condition before God. Anna was now confronted with the serious, but precious task of showing her mistress the only way of escape, and pointing her to the One who is "the way, the truth and the life." In all simplicity, she began to speak of the wonderful salvation which God has prepared in Christ, and of the perfect joy which is enjoyed by all those who have placed their faith in the redeeming power of His death on the cross.

"I feel that I have always believed in Him," Marion replied, "and yet I feel so exceedingly unhappy at the thought of eternity."

"That's because you've only believed in Him with your head un-

til today,” Anna countered. “It has not been a heart issue for you. You have not been a truly lost sinner in your eyes until today, and therefore Christ was of no true value to you. Ah, my dear Miss, we cannot understand these things by ourselves. But when the Holy Spirit instructs us, everything is quite clear and simple. We are poor, lost sinners who have nothing to look to and trust in. But we also have a great, wonderful Savior who came into this poor world to save sinners. He died that we might live. And now He calls to each one of us, ‘Come to Me . . . and I will give you rest,’ and further: ‘My sheep hear My voice And I give them eternal life, and . . . neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.’ And we know that none of His words will remain unfulfilled, although “heaven and earth will pass away.”

“How terrible!” exclaimed the young lady. “Heaven and earth will pass away! What a thought! Oh Anna, if only I were as good and godly as you! Then the word ‘eternity’ would not fill my soul with such terror!”

“My dear Miss,” Anna replied, deeply moved, “do not think that I am good. Truly, it would be awful if I were to fall back and build on my own merits. Oh no, everything is the work of Christ, from beginning to end. Hurry to Him, Miss! Tell Him everything that’s trou-

bling you, even how little you’ve thought of Him until now, that you cared little or not at all for Him. Pour out your heart before Him. You will learn that your best friend dwells in that very unknown land of which you tremble, and that He will receive and welcome you with tender love when your life here is completed. As soon as you come to know Him in truth by faith, your fear will disappear, and peace and joy will enter your heart. Yes, in Him you are well-sheltered for time and eternity!”

“You must tell me more about Jesus, Anna,” the young lady replied. “Your words comfort me, though I cannot yet call Jesus my Savior. I feel that all the riches of this world are nothing compared to the riches you possess. What I would give to be able to close my eyes now with the blessed knowledge that I am saved forever and ever. But God will help me no longer spend my days in vanity and sinful pleasures, and use them to prepare myself for eternity.”

Anna would have liked to say a few more things in response to her mistress’ last words, but she thought it better to commend them to the Lord and His gracious work. Who could instruct and direct a troubled heart better than He?

Marion’s behavior demonstrated that the impressions she received that night were not tem-

porary. The Bible became her daily reading book from that hour on, and what she read was proved by its divine power on her soul. From day to day, the consciousness of her sinfulness became more vivid in her. But at the same time, God also directed her gaze to Jesus and His finished work. She found the peace she longed for in the simple faith in the blood of the Lamb of God shed on Calvary. Now she had no fear of eternity. Rather, she joyfully thought of the moment when she would pass from this world into the dwellings of the Father’s house above.

Her further walk was that of a faithful disciple of Jesus. Even the ridicule of her former friends and the displeasure of her father could not keep her from the narrow path there for all those who want to follow Christ in sincerity.

Eternity! Eternity! O may this earnest word penetrate with a thundering sound into every ear and awaken every indifferent heart from its slumber of sin. Living only for today, chasing after the vain, fleeting pleasures of this world, and striving after the riches and honors of this world are all foolishness. “For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul” (Mark 8:36), and his eternal happiness?

Listen to the friendly voice of God and escape from the coming wrath. ■

A Living Church at Prayer

As we stand at the threshold of a new year with its many unknowns, we can rest assured the Lord Jesus will take care of His church family as He has faithfully done throughout the centuries. Even though the church has been severely persecuted and many seek its demise to this day, Jesus promised us that “the gates of hell shall not prevail against her” (Matthew 16:18). Every local church needs to build its spiritual house on the rock of Jesus Christ and live out God’s commandments through the power of the Holy Spirit (Ch. 7:24–27). The members of Christ’s body will only accomplish this with a living faith and vibrant prayer life. Jesus stated that His house will be called a house of prayer (Ch. 21:13) and when we pray in faith, “whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive” (v. 22). May each Christian in every local church of God prosper in His grace through prayer in the coming year.

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1. The Local Church at Peace

“Then the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, they were multiplied” (Acts 9:31).

In the book of Acts we read of the trials and blessings of the early church. It remains a blueprint of God’s church to this day for us to learn from. In Acts 2 the disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and their mission to evangelize the world began with spiritual power. Although the church rapidly grew in numbers, persecution soon broke out. One of the key attackers was Saul, who raged

against the church to destroy it (Acts 9:1–2). After the Lord intervened and Saul was saved by grace (v. 3–9), the churches in the entire region had a time of peace (v. 31). What a blessing for the local church to live in peace!

Let us pray with God’s people:

- For peace and unity to prevail among God’s people in every situation (Romans 5:1–5).
- For harmony and peace to live in each Christian home and local church (Ephesians 4:1–6).
- For there to be peace in the land (1 Timothy 2:1–4).

2. The Church Grows in Strength

“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers” (Acts 9:31, NIV).

God’s plan for every local church and its body of believers is for all members to mature in their faith. The Lord will allow His people to be tested by the trials of life in order for them to grow in wisdom and spiritual maturity (James 1:2–7). All things the Lord allows us to face in this

life will work together for our good and to His glory (Romans 8:28–30). This will allow us to mature personally and bless those in our homes and in the church family.

Let us pray for our fellow members of our local church to:

- Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love (Romans 12:9–16).
- Edify one another and grow in the peace and joy of the Holy Spirit (Ch. 14:16–19).

3. Walking in the Fear of the Lord

“The church then had peace throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and it became stronger as the believers lived in the fear of the Lord. And with the encouragement of the Holy Spirit, it also grew in numbers” (Acts 9:31, NLT).

What does it mean for Christians to walk in the fear of the Lord? Jesus often said to His disciples, “Fear not” because He loved them and had forgiven them. Yet in the presence of the Holy One, we walk in awe and reverence and do not take His commandments lightly, but work out our salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians

2:12–16). This awakens a full devotion in our hearts for God’s Word. Sadly, this was not the case for Ananias and his wife, who both lied to the Lord. Their lack of respect caused their deaths (Acts 5:1–10). The church was moved to fear the Lord, and God blessed them with many miracles and answered prayers (v. 11).

Let us walk in the fear of the Lord and:

- Pray that Jesus blesses us with His hand of grace so He can freely work in our midst (Acts 5:12–13).
- Reach out to the lost in our communities and bless them with the Good News (v. 14–16).

4. The Comfort of the Holy Spirit

“So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied” (Acts 9:31, ESV).

In this fallen world of sin and death, every believer needs the comfort and power of the Holy Spirit to continue the good battle of faith. There are many things in this life we do not understand, but we accept them in faith and trust God Who works all things for our good. He comforts us in our daily cares and strengthens us to overcome the devil and all our trials

(1 Peter 5:6–11). Jesus promised to send us the Helper. The presence of the Holy Spirit in each believer brings us strength, joy, comfort and the peace of God (John 14:26–27).

Let us ask the Holy Spirit to:

- Comfort us in times of trouble, loss and grief (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).
- Know how to help our brothers and sisters in their time of need (1 Thessalonians 5:11–15).
- Give us the inner strength to pray without ceasing and to always give thanks (v. 16–18).

5. A Praying Church Grows

“Then the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria enjoyed a time of peace and was strengthened. Living in the fear of the Lord and encouraged by the Holy Spirit, it increased in numbers” (Acts 9:31, NIV).

Christ’s vision for the new year is that each local church would grow in faith and in numbers (Acts 16:4–5). Jesus made the amazing claim that countless angels of heaven will rejoice each time one sinner is saved (Luke 15:7). May the good Lord inspire us to reach out to

others who don’t know of His saving grace. Let’s reach out in prayer, sharing our testimony and passing out God’s precious Word. We know it is God’s will that all be saved and none be lost.

Let us pray in Jesus’ name:

- For our leaders to return to God’s commandments and do His will (1 Timothy 2:1–2).
- For revival to sweep our land as we lift up our hearts in prayer (v. 3–8).

Life is Fleeting

As the clouds drift, gently floating
On the breezes of the sky,
Always moving, never resting,
So our years are passing by.
Like a ship upon the ocean
Sailing onwards to its goal,
So our life is moving closer
To the harbor of the soul.

As we welcome spring with pleasure,
Glad that it has finally come,
Summer closes on this treasure,
Far too soon the season's done!
We greet summer with its leisure,
But autumn's coming, as we know;
And before its length we measure,
We're confronted with the snow.

Vivid fields laden with flowers
Soon look barren, bleak, and bare;
And the places that were ours
Do not know that we were there.
Healthy people, young and pleasant,
Beautiful as roses fair,
Fade like grasses in the sunshine,
For decay is everywhere.

As a flag changes direction
When the wind blows contrary,
So the things of earth are turning,
Changing, aging, as we see.
Only God and heaven's treasures
Will remain consistently.
Those who love Him, they are blessed,
Ready for eternity.

H. P.