



Foundation of Faith

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Wonderful Grace of God

Out of Sin into Grace

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A Flight of the Soul

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

King David resolved, “I will sing of mercy and justice; to You, O Lord, I will sing praises” (Psalm 101:1). Let us follow his example and sing of mercy and justice; but let’s also share this news with people who have not heard it before. How great and wonderful is God’s grace, the proof of His great love and goodwill towards us! From the majestic heights of heaven, it is offered to all people from all tribes and nations. “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11).

In the Old Testament, God gave His law to the people of Israel through the Ten Commandments and other requirements. However, it is through Jesus Christ that the heavenly Father offers His wonderful, healing, and saving grace. This grace is a gift from God; it is a sign of His forgiving and faithful love for lost people.

We have the opportunity to share how rich and abundant God’s grace is. As the apostle testified, “and of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). God offers us His grace through Christ, but we need to accept this offer through faith in order to escape the bondage and shackles of sin. God’s grace is powerful enough to lift even the worst sinner out of the pit of despair, set him on the rock of salvation, and give him salvation and peace.

What matters is remaining in the grace of God, growing in it, and never leaving it. Paul writes, “I do not set aside the grace of God” (Galatians 2:21). We are also urged to “[look] carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God” (Hebrews 12:15).

Therefore, dear Reader, place your hope in His grace that is offered to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ (see 1 Peter 1:13). It is our wish and prayer, as in the very last verse in the Bible, Revelation 22:21, that “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”

H. D. Nimz

Though Your Sins Are like Scarlet

When we hear of serious criminals in the news, hardly anyone believes such people can be helped and that they will ever change. But what is impossible with us is possible with God.

The evangelist Charles G. Finney tells the story of what happened while he was conducting revival meetings. He had been preaching one evening when a sinister-looking man approached him and requested, “Mr. Finney, I ask you to come with me.”

Some of the evangelist’s friends warned him, “He is one of the most dangerous people in this town, a murderer.” Finney thought about it. God had removed all fear from his heart, and he replied, “This man has invited me, and I will go with him. Pray for me!”

His friends had great concern for him, but Finney followed the man through dark back alleys. Finally, they came to a door, and the man said, “Come in, Mr. Finney,” as he locked the door behind them and lit a candle. Finney looked around the room. There were several guns, and near him lay a revolver.

Finally, the man started talking. “Mr. Finney, I have been one of the worst people in this area until now. But I heard you preach tonight about the blood of Jesus, and it made a great impression on me. Now I need to hear your honest and straight-forward opinion.”

He pulled a revolver out of his pocket and said, “I have killed four people with this and caused the death of several others. Do you honestly believe that a murderer like me, whose hands are dripping with blood, can be redeemed?”

Finney looked at him and said, “I have preached that ‘if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness’ (1 John 1:9). This is God’s promise.”

“Yes, but that’s not all I’ve done,” the man continued, pulling a pack of cards from his pocket and tossing them on the table. “Mr. Finney, I’m also a professional gambler. This is a gambling house. The fights and brawls that have taken place here have been gruesome. Some have committed suicide here. So, I am not only a murderer, but also a professional gambler who has robbed many an unsuspecting man of all his money. Do you think God will forgive me?”

Finney replied, “I will tell you, my friend, God has commissioned me to preach His Gospel. No matter what and how many sins you have committed, if you are willing to confess and forsake them, ‘the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin’” (1 John 1:7).

“But,” the man continued, “that’s not all. I have also been selling brandy here for years without having a license to do so. I have taken the last penny from a poor man’s hand for liquor, although I knew his wife and children didn’t have anything to eat; in fact, they were almost starving. Often, I saw his children passing by here in the middle of winter and noticed how their shoes were so torn that their toes were visible in the snow, and

their clothes were only rags. And despite all this, I took the last dollar from their father for liquor.

All the misfortune I have caused, the misery I have brought upon others, do you really think God will forgive me?”

Finney replied, “I am commissioned by God to preach His Word. He says, ‘But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin’” (1 John 1:7).

“But, Mr. Finney, that’s not all. I have such a good wife; I’m sure you wouldn’t find one better. But she only knows my heavy fist and the toe of my boot. I have beaten her often and hard. And I have a little daughter, eleven years old, and she’s never had a kiss from her father. My little girl is afraid of me, and rightly so, because she’s received many a kick from me too. I have a beautiful home, but I’m a murderer, a gambler, and a cruel man and father. Mr. Finney, be honest and open with me. Do you really believe God will forgive me?”

Finney looked at him and replied, “My friend, you have unrolled before me the picture of one of the darkest lives I have ever seen. But I tell you, God’s Word says, ‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be



as wool” (Isaiah 1:18). If you confess and forsake your sins, I believe God will have mercy on you.”

The man then gave Finney the address of his home and said, “Please, come and have lunch with us tomorrow.” He opened the door and let Finney out into the night.

This man began to clean up. He threw the playing cards into the fire. He rolled the liquor barrels out of the room and poured their contents into the street gutter. After he had cleaned up after his many vices, he began to do the math. He had accumulated a large part of his possessions through fraud. Although he was very rich, he could only return 80% of what he had fraudulently acquired.

The night after his conversation with Finney, he couldn’t sleep. Not until morning did he go home and then sit on the edge of his bed. About breakfast time, his little

daughter called him to the table. She spoke to him through a little crack in the door, “Papa, Mama wishes you to come to breakfast.”

In a soft and kind voice, he replied, “No, Sweetie, Daddy doesn’t want to eat this morning.”

The girl ran down the stairs and called out to her mother, “Mommy, Daddy called me Sweetie!”

Her mother retorted, “I can’t believe it; go and call him again.” This time, she was already braver, opened the door, and said, “Daddy, come to breakfast!” Again, he called her Sweetie, and she ran to tell her mother. The mother sent her to call her father for the third time.

The child seemed to have lost all fear of her father and smiled at him, and he beckoned her to come to him. She entered the room and sat down on her father’s knee. He wrapped his arms around her and kissed her. The child’s heart was

moved by her father’s actions. She looked up at her father in amazement and could not understand what had happened.

The mother soon followed the child, and looking through the door, she saw her sitting on her father’s knee. He beckoned her too to come in, and she came and sat on the other knee. He said to her, “From now on, you’re no longer a rich man’s wife.”

She replied, “I would value your love much more than all the wealth in the world!”

He replied, “Forgive me, my Faithful One, forgive me!” Moved and overwhelmed, all three of them sank to their knees and worshiped the One who had performed such an unspeakable miracle on their family.

Divine grace is able to make a child of God out of the worst sinner. ■



Wonderful Grace of God

Can a person who is deeply entangled in sin and superstition become a child of God and live according to the commandments of the Most High? By God's wonderful grace, this transformation, the greatest miracle on earth, can occur.

What is the greatest miracle of God? The highest, most amazing, most wonderful work is not the universe with its countless stars, nor the human body with its myriad of blood vessels and nerves. Certainly, God's keeping of all the stars in their orbits is awe-inspiring. His placement of countless minerals, raw materials, and treasures in the earth's soil, and His ability to create a human being who can think, act, develop, and worship.

But it's even more amazing that God is able to remove utter selfishness, lusts of the flesh, and stubbornness from a person of this sinful race dominated by these sins, and transform him into a Christ-like person with a godly character.

A biblical example is the transformation of Saul from a bitter

persecutor of Christians to a zealous, passionate believer.

This dramatic change in one's life was not limited to early Christianity. There are many thousands of examples of God transforming lives, even in our time.

C. T. Studd, the famous cricket player, found Christ, turned from his sins, gave his wealth to the work of God, and became a missionary in China and later in the Congo.

God enlightens and delights in creating order out of chaos. No wonder we can sing so enthusiastically,

*O grace of God, wonderfully
have you saved me.
I was wholly lost,
was blind, but now I see!*

How great is man's guilt when he falls into sin through Satan's temptations! Humans are the only creatures that can change their nature so completely. A dog cannot take on the nature of a cat, nor a cat the nature of a mouse. But humans can negatively change their nature beyond recognition. Histo-

ry tells us of people who lost their innocence through sin and later behaved worse than wild animals. We are told horrible things about the Roman emperor, Nero. This inhumane man killed his wife, brother, and mother. He was a seducer, corrupter, and sadist. He took pleasure in the cries of anguish of burning Christians, laughed at their death throes, and mocked and scoffed at their tears.

But we don't have to look far back in history to find examples of those who have sunk to the bottom. Sometimes, we only need to cross the street, go to the next block, or perhaps even look in the mirror.

However, the most glorious, most wonderful miracle is that God can lift us out of the depths of our guilt by granting us His redemptive grace. He raises us to a height that even the angels are not able to reach. Angels are always in the state of serving, while children of God are heirs with Christ.

From the Old Testament, we have a beautiful example in King Manasseh, who repented while



in prison after a period of great ungodliness. He was the son of Hezekiah, one of the godliest kings in Judah. Manasseh came to the throne of Judah when he was twelve years old, and immediately introduced an ungodliness that defies description.

One of his first acts as king was to reinstate the Baal priesthood, an act that endeared him to the people because they served the Canaanite gods. The main facets of this frivolous, raucously evil religion were lust, sensual desire, depravity, wickedness, stubbornness, and obstinacy. Its general practice was carnal gratification and free love.

When King Manasseh reinstated Baal worship, he was doubly guilty. Having been raised in a pious home, he knew how his father loved the Lord and had destroyed the altars of Baal. No doubt Manasseh had heard of Elijah's challenge with the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. He knew that Baal had failed the test and that the Lord God had won by accepting the sacrifice brought by Elijah that day. He also knew how the Lord

had healed his father Hezekiah when he had been near death.

Manasseh also knew that the Lord had delivered his father from the Assyrians when he was attacked by the forces of Sennacherib, and that the Lord had led the Israelites out of Egypt through the Red Sea and across the Jordan River. Despite this knowledge, Manasseh arbitrarily despised these things and still performed these wicked deeds.

But the day of reckoning also came for Manasseh when the Philistines, who had paid tribute to him up until then, revolted, causing his source of income to dry up.

After the Assyrians came and defeated the land, they bound Manasseh with chains and led him into Babylonian captivity like a wild animal.

His well-deserved humiliation came quickly. There was no way he could have feigned ignorance. He had committed his transgressions, crimes, and iniquities with his eyes wide open. However, when he went to prison, he began to repent, and to pray. "Now when he was in af-

fliction, he implored the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD was God" (2 Chronicles 33:12-13).

What was the result? God heard him, wonder of wonders! God freed him from prison in Babylon and brought him back to Jerusalem, allowing him once more to sit on the throne in Judah. As a result of God's grace toward him, Manasseh had the altars of Baal torn down and re-established the worship of the true God.

These events seem unbelievable, but they are true. Who ruled the longest in Judah? Was it the kings who feared God throughout all their lives? No, it was Manasseh, who reigned fifty-five years.

In His marvelous grace, God forgave Manasseh. God's grace has not run dry. Today, He still wants to extend His gift of grace to anyone who turns to the Son of God with a sincere, repentant heart. ■

Out of Sin into Grace

All of us are born with a sinful nature. If we do not wish to be eternally lost, we need salvation in Christ, which is offered to us by God's grace. But before we can escape the bondage of sin, we must recognize our lost condition. God's Word clarifies this: "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Ephesians 5:14). Sin robs the soul of peace, for there is no peace for the wicked, says God (see Isaiah 57:21). Sin follows sinners throughout their lives; even in death, it continues to pursue and torment them eternally.

Sin blunts the soul against the working of the Holy Spirit. The deeper one sinks into sin, the deeper their sinful slumber becomes. The sinner dies a spiritual death, which means the soul's separation from God. God uses many means to convince the lost of the error of their ways. It may be hardships in life, a thundering proclamation of the gospel, or the wooing, gentle love of God. But one must recognize their guilt and lost condition if they are to be saved. Otherwise, they will be lost forever.

After recognizing their lost condition, they must then step out of sin into salvation through repentance. One genuinely seeking salvation will deeply regret his sins and experience a change of heart and a change in his way of living.

"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation" (2 Corinthians 7:10). Sorrow over sin is not repentance in and of itself; yet there is no true repentance without godly sorrow.

When sinners awaken, they begin to see their lost state. They realize they have sinned against a loving God to Whom they owe everything, and they will feel bitter sadness and remorse. No one can come to the realization of having sinned against God and the Creator without feeling sadness of heart. Once the conscience has been awakened, the sinner will submit to the conditions of God's Word, and will then have assurance that God has forgiven him and accepted him as His child.

Let's take a look at the conditions: "Let the wicked forsake his way" (Isaiah 55:7). None of us has the power within ourselves to save our soul from evil. However, we each have the ability to decide to leave the path of sin.

It is important for us to forgive all those who have wronged us. "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). If repentance is genuine, we will seek out the people we have wronged and ask for forgiveness. As much as it depends on us, within the realm

of possibility, making amends for our sins committed against others is just as important.

Then it is necessary to confess our sins. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). "He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" (Proverbs 28:13).

Most importantly, we ask God for forgiveness. When we have fulfilled God's conditions, we are only one step away from entering the Kingdom of God. The final step is faith.

When we have fulfilled God's requirements for salvation, and rely on the mercy of God by crying out, like the tax collector, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" then we must have faith. "But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him" (Hebrews 11:6). It is not enough to believe that Jesus died to redeem the world. Rather, we need to embrace Christ's atonement very personally for our own sin-stained soul. By having faith, we see ourselves on the cross in place of Christ. God forgives and accepts us as His children.

Without faith, none of our repentance, struggling, weeping, or begging for forgiveness will lead

to salvation. “He who believes . . . will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mark 16:16). Do not rely on your feelings. Human feelings are not part of faith. Feelings are not a substitute for faith. Faith is an indispensable necessity for salvation. No one is saved who does not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Redeemer.

If we embrace God’s free gift of grace, offered to us in faith, the Holy Spirit confirms our acceptance from God and will not fail to come. “He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself” (1 John 5:10). While the testimony of acceptance from God may elicit some positive emotions, it is confirmation from the Holy Spirit that solidifies and strengthens our faith. Faith is grasping the fact that God has forgiven us, and then receiving conviction from the Holy Spirit that we are God’s children. Only faith in God can produce this testimony. “Your sins, whether many or few, are all forgiven.”

With the witness of the Spirit and the grace of God, as born-again children of God, we can then live a holy life. God’s good pleasure, His power and His love will accompany us. In return, our love for God, for His Word, and for holy things and people will then fill our hearts and lives. Thanks be to God for complete salvation in Christ! ■

By Grace You Have Been Saved

In his natural state, man disregards the grace of God. His foolish pride resists having to be pardoned, just like a criminal sentenced to death. If only he could have pinned a rag of virtue from the stained clothing of his own righteousness to the saving garment of Christ’s righteousness, he would have turned to the Lord sooner. But to receive salvation as a free gift of grace like a beggar and to have to renounce all his own virtues, which he thinks of highly, is so difficult for the self-righteous man. It seems too difficult for him to give up his own self-love, his own self. Many a man would rather be lost by his own merit than be saved by Christ’s merit. So miserably blinded is the proud heart of the self-righteous sinner; so stubbornly does he insist on his own worthiness.

But when the Lord takes off the blinders from his eyes and reveals his inner ruin to him, then suddenly the cobweb of his own righteousness breaks. Then with trembling hands, he may come to grasp the lifeline thrown to him from above—the grace of God in Christ Jesus—to let himself be pulled out of the stream of ruin. When he realizes that his feet have been pulled out of the mire of sin and placed on the rock of salvation, he sinks down in worship on the eternal rock of salvation and praises the great grace of God. ■

Mercy at the Eleventh Hour

“Then one of the criminals who were hanged blasphemed Him, saying, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’ But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, ‘Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong.’ Then he said to Jesus, ‘Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom.’” (Luke 23:39–42).

There are many who hope for the “eleventh hour of grace.” They believe if it’s actually true that we must be saved, then we can still do so in the last moment of life. What a fatal error! All those who rely on this will certainly not receive “last-minute grace.” Nowhere does God say in His holy Word, “Wait until your end” or “Wait until tomorrow.” Rather, He says, “Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:15).

After all, you don’t know if you’ll live to see the next five minutes, let alone the next day. So it’s important not to postpone salvation.

The thief did not obtain this grace easily. After he and his guilty fellow condemned had reviled the Lord Jesus, he began to reflect. Surely he observed the holy, pure, and peace-radiating face of the Man in the middle. Why had He been crowned with a crown of thorns? Why the inscription fastened to His cross, “This is the King of the Jews”? Then he heard the wonderful words from His mouth, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.” Could an ordinary man dying in such agony pray for his enemies? Impossible! This man was completely different than all other people.

He grew more and more convinced about the One who had been innocently condemned. He could no longer bear the other’s insults and therefore rebuked him: “Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation?” (Luke 23:40).

What was he saying? Had he himself feared God? No, but now his conscience was awakened. The thief recognized his sin and guilt. He knew that what had

happened to him was justified punishment for what he had done. “And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds” (verse 41). He passed judgment on himself, acknowledging not only his guilt but also the punishment as just.

Most precisely, the important point is to recognize ourselves as sinners deserving of condemnation but also to acknowledge God’s judgment on us as being just. How difficult this is! However, divine grace is granted to each one of us who does so.

Then the thief vindicated the Man in the middle: “But this Man has done nothing wrong.” Seven times in this chapter God Himself declared the innocence of His beloved Son. Yes, the holy, spotless, and pure One was innocently convicted and put to death.

Crucifixion was a terrible, agonizing punishment that inevitably led to death. The thief also knew this. In a few hours, they would all have to die. But what did he say? “Lord, remember me when You come into your kingdom.” This was faith beyond all reason, laws of nature, and human understanding. He believed that this Lord and King had a kingdom of which He would take possession. He believed in the resurrection. The Lord acknowledged this faith. This faith saves. “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; but he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him” (John 3:36).

What wonderful words the thief heard from the mouth of the Lord: “Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.” Death had lost its sting for the former criminal. To be with Him, his Lord, in



paradise filled him with joy even in the face of death. Now he could die. For him, death was only the passage to paradise. Paul says, “For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better” (Philippians 1:23).

What could be better than to enjoy the foretaste of heavenly bliss in the presence of the Lord, where all earthly suffering is forgotten?

These two criminals crucified on the right and left of the Lord Jesus symbolize two groups of people: the one rejects Jesus, scorns and reviles Him; the other

comes to Him, the Son of God, in repentance and remorse, convinced of their lost condition, and accepts Him in childlike faith as personal Savior.

To which group do you belong, dear Reader? There is still time to repent and seek forgiveness. How quickly you can be called away! Many have no deathbed, no five minutes to still seek salvation. How many people die at the roadside! Yes, the path to eternity is not long.

How terrible it would be for you to be in the eternal place of torment, in eternal night! Come to the Savior today. Jesus is calling you too. ■

Can a Child of God Fall from Grace?

In these days of nominal Christianity, it is imperative to sound the warning that those who have become children of God can lose their salvation if they turn away from their heavenly Father and once again serve sin. Unfortunately, there are people who have set up their own doctrines according to their preferred taste and desire.

They teach that a true, born-again Christian “can never permanently nor completely fall from grace and will always persevere until the end and is thus eternally secure. To fall into grievous sin and to live in sin for a time is allowed. Nobody by their own strength, nor by the grace of God, is able to keep the commands of God fully, but everybody transgresses daily in thought, word, and deed.”

This doctrine claims that when someone comes to the Lord and receives pardon for their sins, they have eternal life and cannot lose it, even if they should turn on the Lord. God must accept them because they once believed in Him.

The Holy Scriptures, however, say that eternal life is only through Jesus, and to know Him is eternal life (John 17:3). Only if a child of God, saved by His grace, lives a life of victory over sin, will he or she be sure to persevere until the end and remain in grace. If one lives in sin, they alone are responsible for being sent to hell on the Day of Judgment.

Since God has given humans free will, the possibility exists of choosing to walk from God’s grace and His blessings. We have examples of this in the Bible.

When a sinner is born again, the decision to accept God’s grace is completely contingent on his free will. It is also his decision to remain a Christian or not. God does not take away someone’s free will once salvation has occurred. Whether or not we live a life pleasing to God depends on each of us. God’s Word does not only say, “He who believes in the Son has everlasting life” (John 3:36). But it also says, “But he who endures until the end will be saved” (Matthew 24:13). So we can see that it depends on our resolve to endure to the end. The decision to believe in the Son is left to each of us.

What Does Scripture Teach?

The Bible teaches that, in His omnipotence, God has promised to protect the believer from Satan’s power. No power can snatch out of His hand those who remain true to the Lord. But the prerequisite is that the Christian remain true to the Lord.

The Bible also shows us that Christians can fall into sin again and can lose their salvation. If one dies in their fallen state, they will be eternally lost, the same as if they had never come to the Lord. Yet if they return to the Lord in true repentance and sorrow for their sins, God will forgive them. No one can keep God’s commandments by relying on their own power. It is only through God’s grace that we can remain obedient to Him.

Scripture affirms that through the power of God we can persevere. Paul writes, “I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day” (2 Timothy 1:12). Also, in Philippians 1:6 we read, “being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.” Jesus Himself says, “No one is able to snatch them out of My Father’s hand” (John 10:29). These scriptures, along with others, show us God’s faithfulness towards His children. But they do not claim that a Christian can never leave the state of grace.

Reasons for Falling

One who has been saved continues to have free will. One commentator says that “salvation places the believer into an impenetrable fortress, in which through God’s help they are safe. No attacks of the devil or of the world can penetrate into this place of safety that God has provided. But a Christian is not locked up inside this fortress. And if the fortress is locked, the believer has access to the key. If the Christian decides to open the door to let the enemy in or to leave the fortress, then God will not stop him.” This means that a Christian can depart from God’s grace. However, the cause does not lie in the failure of God’s power but in



man's free decision to choose evil and to hold God's grace in low esteem.

In the Old Testament, as well as in the New, there are many Scriptures that show us the possibility of one losing God's grace and becoming eternally lost. "When I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, but he trusts in his own righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous works shall be remembered; but because of the iniquity that he has committed, he shall die" (Ezekiel 33:13).

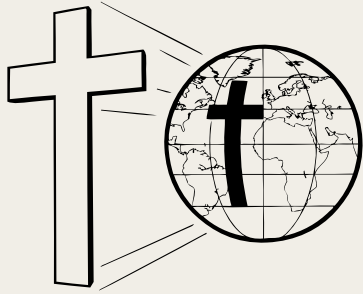
In the fifteenth chapter of John, the Lord teaches us: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them in the fire, and they are burned" (John 15:5-6). "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away" (John 15:2). Only true Christians

can be branches that abide or remain in the Lord. But even they can be taken away and be lost if they do not bear fruit. (Also see 2 Peter 2:20-21; Hebrews 10:38-39; James 5:19-20.)

Further evidence can be seen from the lives of Saul, Solomon, Judas, Demas, and others. Paul even speaks of some believers, who "concerning the faith have suffered shipwreck" (1 Timothy 1:19). And Peter says, "They have forsaken the right way and gone astray, following the way of Balaam, the son of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness" (2 Peter 2:15).

Therefore, it is extremely important for us to stay away from teachings that encourage us to sin and to love the world. Only if we bear fruit by being totally dependent on God's grace can we find joy, comfort, and peace and in the end be assured of eternal life.

A. Miller



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

An Hour of Grace

Who knows if he ever had hope of being freed from his misery. But when Jesus passed by he recognized the one and only opportunity. Do not miss your hour of grace when the Lord encounters you.

In Luke 18, we read that Jesus was on His way to Jerusalem, accompanied by a large crowd. Just as they reached Jericho, an unexpected incident occurred, involving a blind man. The blind man was sitting by the roadside begging, when strangely, he became the central figure of quite a commotion. Who actually purposefully pays any attention to a blind beggar? Compassionate people throw a few coins into his cup and go on. This was different. The beggar suddenly attracted the attention of Jesus and the crowd. He must have heard many things about Jesus, and now Jesus was passing very close to him. He believed he could be freed from his misery, so he cried out for mercy and help. He believed and understood that this special hour of grace was before him. But when we put ourselves into the position of this poor man, we recognize how merciless the people were, who threatened him to be silent.

I read an article entitled “Overcome your Imperfections.” The first sentences already impressed me. The article said, “Just knowing our imperfections should teach us to always have a humble attitude. There are actually very few perfect things in this world. The perfect picture has never been painted. The perfect song has never been sung. The perfect sermon has never been preached” In his article, the author wrote

about a young blind woman and shared some of her personal testimony. She did not seek to gain pity, but she knew how to use her talents effectively. She was a gifted singer, and facing a large audience, she said, “I have never been able to see in my life, but God has placed me in a beautiful environment that even I can experience. I have found the greatest happiness, the peace of my soul!”

Let us assume that the blind man in our story was born blind. He had never seen a sunrise, a sunset, the moonlight, the mountains, the sea, or the starry sky. He had never seen a flash of lightning or a rainbow, never seen a sprouting seed, a ripe harvest field, flowering meadow, or ripe fruit. He could never have seen the vibrant shades of birds, a blooming rose, or the lovely smile of a child. He only knew the constant, never-ending darkness around him. This gives us a little insight into the deep distress of this blind man. He was helpless. Who could expect him to let this opportunity to gain his sight pass by? So he cried out from the depths of his heart, which was actually all he could do. While the people rejected him and threatened him, Jesus did just the opposite. He listened to his cry of distress, stood still, and asked that this man be led to Him. Now the blind man knew for certain that a special hour of grace had come to him.



Let's examine this incident more closely. We must not overlook the fact that Jesus was already on His way to Golgotha. What might His inner reflections have revealed? He was facing the greatest struggle and the most bitter suffering of His life. When someone is preparing for a monumental task, he usually won't pay much attention to a beggar by the roadside.

Jesus intimately understood the misery of the people. John writes, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). The Son of God was ready to go to Golgotha to sacrifice Himself for our guilt and sins. Yet He did not pass by the suffering of a blind beggar. Jesus saw his need, stopped, and had him brought to Him. This man was to experience a special hour of grace. Imagine if that had been one of us!

The moment this blind man was called, he knew he would experience a major turn of events in his life. He was transferred from constant darkness into glorious light. By crying out, he demonstrated clear proof of his faith, and this faith helped him. "We're living by faith in the Savior alone, who suffered on Calvary for sin to atone," a songwriter wrote.

We find that the poor man sitting beside the road near Jericho apparently knew more about Jesus than anyone realized. The people had said to him, "Jesus of Nazareth is passing by." He cried out, "Jesus, Son of God, have mercy on me!" He knew Jesus was of the royal line of David. As He passed by, he realized, that Jesus is the Savior of the world! David says in Psalm 34:18, "The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit." The blind man had been allowed to experience this in a literal sense!

The distress of the blind man is comparable to the state of distress in the world. Many people of our time lack discernment or godly insight. In the prophecies pointing to Christ, we read, "the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings" (see Malachi 4:2). Unfortunately, the vast majority of people have not seen anything of this Sun and its light. This is indeed an unfortunate reality. But only in this light can we recognize ourselves, and our intrinsic need for Jesus Christ, our Savior and Redeemer. Therefore, anyone who lives in inner darkness should earnestly cry out to the Lord for mercy so he can obtain help and salvation for his soul. ■

The Fear of the Lord—A Necessity Today

Have you too heard how Christians—mostly older ones—complain that the younger generation today is lacking a sense of the fear of the Lord? Is this complaint justified? And what exactly is “the fear of the Lord”?

Sometimes, certain terms become clearer when we first look at their opposite. So, my question to you is, “What do you think is the opposite of the fear of the Lord?”

Maybe the answer will surprise you, because it is nothing other than ungodliness. People who do not fear the Lord are therefore ungodly. We find their description in 2 Timothy 3:1–5 and 2 Peter 3:3–7. In summary:

1. Their interpersonal relationships are marked by a lack of respect, selfishness, loss of love, pride, etc.
2. Moral decline is shown, among other ways, in an undisciplined lifestyle in which desires are fulfilled without restraint.
3. Ungodliness pushes away the fear of the Lord. The Bible mentions unholy people, as well as mockers.

This seems to describe precisely our current society and therefore the people today. I read a newspaper article a little while back with the title, “Mother Complains about the Crudeness of Society.” Are our interactions with each other becoming more and more crude and unfriendly? In times of crisis, many people often show their true colors, a piece of their true character. We must admit that, ever since the COVID-19 crisis, our world has become colder and cruder. An atmosphere of hostility and disrespect takes over and

pushes out real camaraderie. Recall for example, the physical altercations in the supermarkets in regard to toilet paper, and the cold-blooded shooting of a gas station clerk because a customer was asked to put on his mask The list could be long.

How important it is for us to counter this trend of general viciousness—a result of the prevailing godlessness—with a genuine fear of the Lord.

While mutual respect is vital in each interaction with others, fear of the Lord requires an even higher level of respect. The fear of the Lord is a respectful humility toward God, as well as the awareness of living your life under the watchful eyes of God. Genuine fear of the Lord should lead to a lifestyle that is pleasing to God and is in harmony with His will.

Why Specifically Do We Need the Fear of the Lord?

1. What Does the Bible Say About the Fear of the Lord?

There are many Bible verses about the fear of the Lord, making it fascinating to search the Scriptures. We can summarize that the fear of the Lord is a law of God (Deuteronomy 6:2; Joshua 24:14), the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), as well as the conclusion of the whole matter (Ecclesiastes 12:13). In the New Testament, we are advised to pursue the fear of the Lord (1 Timothy 6:11), to practice it, (1 Timothy 4:8), and to conduct our lives according to it (1 Peter 1:17).

2. God-fearing People in the Bible—What We Can Learn from Them?

Consider Abraham when he was to sacrifice his son. Did he not need to disregard his understanding and his heart? Yet Abraham obediently submitted to God.



Later, he received the testimony that he feared the Lord (Genesis 22:12). *Fear of the Lord leads to obedience.*

I am also impressed with the two Israelite midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, who had the courage to go against Pharaoh's order, because they "feared God, and did not do as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the male children alive" (Exodus 1:17). *Fear of the Lord conquers fear of man.*

A less commonly known God-fearing person was Obadiah (1 Kings 18). He was in charge of King Ahab's house. The king was married to Jezebel, who made it her goal to kill all the prophets. To save the prophets, Obadiah hid them in caves and took care of them. This required much courage. *Fear of the Lord gives courage.*

3. People from the Bible Who Encountered God—Their Reactions

A number of people had a special encounter with God Almighty and were able to experience a little bit of heaven. For example, Moses at the burning bush, the people of Israel at Mount Sinai, the prophet Isaiah and also Ezekiel. The Bible ends with a special revelation of God's glory experienced by John on the island of Patmos. Even here, we get a little foretaste of God's holiness and majesty. We read of the powerful white throne before which all will stand.

Impressively, the prophet Ezekiel describes how the splendor of God appeared, and even God Himself. Read it in Ezekiel 1:26-28; it will help you understand Who we are dealing with. You will get an understanding of how great, majestic, all-knowing, and holy God is.

In summary, we can say that the natural reaction of those who have experienced God was an overwhelming sense of holy terror and falling on their faces to

worship God. Often, we read that people in the holy presence of God truly recognized their own sinfulness.

4. Blessings of Fearing the Lord

The fear of the Lord is not just a heart's attitude through which we small humans may encounter the great God. God chooses to bless us and to give innumerable promises to those who fear the Lord. Here are a few of the promises: Those who fear Him will be given knowledge (Psalm 25:14); God watches them (Psalm 33:18); He promises them His mercy, presence, and help (Psalm 34:7 and Psalm 103:11). For those who encounter God with fear, God calls out, "Do not be afraid."

Let us revisit our initial question: Are we lacking the fear of the Lord? The answer regarding our society is clear. The evidence seen in the maliciousness of our society is a direct result of the ungodliness around us. I believe the waning fear of the Lord has also reached our "Christian circles." How else can we explain our lack of knowledge of God, the lack of recognizing our sinfulness, the lack of worshiping God, and our lack of service to Him? God also speaks to our generation:

"Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning; So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm" (Joel 2:12).

Therefore, decide this day to submit to God's authority by walking in the fear of the Lord. From God's perspective, you will then be standing on the winning side of life (1 Timothy 6:6). Yes, blessed is the one who fears the Lord and walks in His ways!

Renate Schwarz
Herford, Germany

Purchased by the Blood

Long-ago, a Scottish nobleman, on his way home to the coast, was traveling through Africa, loaded with products from this region. He had just crossed a river when he heard a shriek behind him. Simultaneously, an indigenous man rushed out of the jungle, plunged into the river, and swam desperately toward the far bank where the Scotsman was. A few moments later, a horde rushed out of the jungle, chasing the fugitive with shouts and spears. Just as the African man reached the shore, a spear from the pursuers hit him in the arm. Bleeding, he fell down in front of the white nobleman and begged him for protection. The Scotsman removed the spear, washed the man's wound and bandaged it.

The screaming horde had already reached the other shore and rushed towards the escaped slave. With fierce words, they demanded he be handed over. This slave had escaped from the chief, which could only be punished by death. The Scotsman offered the chief all his ivory to buy the slave outright, but he refused. "Only blood can atone for the disobedience of the runaway slave; we accept nothing less."

Again, they drew their spears and aimed at the trembling man. In a flash, the Scotsman jumped in between and intercepted a spear with his own arm. The pursuers stopped, startled, for the nobleman's arm was bleeding profusely. Now the wounded Scotsman spoke up: "Blood you have demanded as the only atonement. I have bought the slave with my

own blood." Finally, the horde departed.

The slave fell at the Scot's feet in gratitude. "I am your blood-bought servant. I will serve you all my life, for without you I would now be dead."

"You may go with me as far as the coast," said the Scot. "That is how long you may serve me, but then you are free forever."

"No, I will willingly serve you all my life, even in a foreign land. I am your blood-bought servant."

So the rescued man moved with him to Scotland to serve his master at his castle, where he subsequently led a very different life than he had in the jungle.

Like the screaming horde, the devil, when he is not disguising himself as an angel of light, runs after us like a roaring lion seeking to devour (1 Peter 5:8). As long as we serve the devil and remain in our sins, he leaves us alone. But if we try to get away and escape from his dominion, he comes after us with shouting and fighting. If we try to be freed from bondage, we realize we are slaves to sin. Jesus Christ helps us out of this misery. He shed His blood for us to buy us free from the dominion of sin and the devil. Often, we must face distress in order to realize how desperately we need Jesus.

After having purchased us through His own blood and wounds, He asks, "Will you remain in the jungle of this world, wandering in your own ways, until you die in your own sins? Or, since I have bought you with My blood to be My own, will you serve Me all your life?" ■

The Hidden Doll

Nobody could tell stories like Aunt Elli could. Today, she shared a story from her childhood.

“I had a dear, kind, and gentle sister. I loved her dearly. Unfortunately, I sometimes tormented her very much. Our sweet mother often called out to us, ‘Children, please love each other.’ Sometimes she would also say, ‘You must never let the sun set on your anger. The night is long.’

“One evening, my conscience bothered me. I had caused my little sister all kinds of trouble during the day. I broke her cup, and then I hid her favorite doll in the garden hedge. That had been naughty, because I couldn’t find her doll anymore. At night, we lay in bed together.

“‘Lizzy, forgive me,’ I begged.

“‘You say that every night, but in the morning you don’t think about it anymore!’

“‘Please, Lizzy, forgive me!’ I meant it this time, but the pain caused by the lost doll had thrust too deeply into her heart. She turned her head to one side and

pretended to be asleep. ‘Please, please, dear Lizzy, forgive me!’ No answer. ‘Forgive me this once!’ But Lizzy was silent and tried to breathe deeply.

“I couldn’t take it any longer. I jumped up and shook her by her shoulders. Then I shouted, ‘Will you answer me already? Will you forgive me properly and love me again!’

“We both started sobbing. Then we held each other in our arms and finally fell asleep amidst our despair.

“The next morning, I awakened first. My little sister was lying next to me with disheveled hair, and traces of tears still on her cheeks. I dearly loved her. Quietly, I got up and crept to the window. Our housemaid, Jenny, was already working outside in the garden.

“‘Jenny, could you please run quickly to the other side of the arbor? Lizzy’s big doll is hidden somewhere in the hedge. Quick, Jenny, please run and find her!’ Thankfully, after a short time, she was able to find her. A smile covered my whole face. Quietly, I placed the beautiful doll on Lizzy’s bedspread. This sealed our sisterly love once more.” ■





Four Different Marriages

*Don't get married to become happy.
More importantly, get married to make
the other person happy.*

In marriage, two people live together for many years. Unfortunately, experience has shown us many different ways that married couples live together. While some marriages seem like a foretaste of heaven, others experience a daily hell. On the one hand, marriage can be filled with deep joy, love, and satisfaction; but on the other, it can be filled with misery, hardship, and despair. Let us roughly categorize marriages into four different groups.

There are marriages where spouses live in opposition to each other. These are quiet—or sometimes loud—theaters of war, characterized by constant struggle. Love has died. This is where couples live inconsiderately and

selfishly, regularly hurting each other. In such relationships, there might be violence, at least psychologically and emotionally. There is often a tense atmosphere. In such marriages, it is hopeless until both become renewed through repentance and salvation. The hopeful message is that such marriages can be reconciled by the grace of God.

There are marriages where couples drift apart. The danger zone in such marriages is great. The rift deepens, estrangement increases, and the rupture point draws near. Everything that the day, job, life, and difficulties bring should draw us not apart from one another but towards one other. If both seek this, things will go better.

There are marriages where couples really live together. That sounds beautiful. These harmonious marriages are like two rails that form the track, always running parallel. In joy and sorrow, at work and at home, in the community and the world at large: always nicely side-by-side. When this togetherness is outwardly apparent, it can be such a blessing. But even this is not the ideal marriage. It needs much, much more.

Finally, there are marriages where the spouses live for each other. This should be the goal and foundation of every Christian marriage. To achieve this, both partners must make sacrifices. “For each other” means to see, to do, and to fulfill everything from the perspective of “the other.” This means to love each



other, to support, to help, to bring each other joy, and to strive to make each other happy. It means to take “the lowly way,” not to insist on being “right,” to do without, to be silent, to forgive. Above all, it means helping each other get to heaven.

When I mentioned these four types of marriage in a service some time ago, I was approached by a couple afterward. “We have lived through and suffered through the first three groups in our marriage, but now we have arrived at the fourth.”

Whatever your marriage may be, dear Reader, believe this: “With God nothing will be impossible.” He can help you shape your marriage so it is not a burden but a pleasure and a joy.

Daniel Schaefer

Just a Drop of Oil

My sewing machine no longer runs as easily and smoothly as when it was new. What can be done? There is one small, simple fix: a drop of oil, and the wheels will turn smoothly once more.

One drop of oil can make a huge difference, but not only in the gears of a sewing machine.

Oil is also the secret to a happy family life. The oil of love mellows our spirits. The oil of friendliness gives our feet wings. The oil of forgiveness heals wounds in our souls. The oil of gentle correction builds trust. The oil of kind, gentle words dissolves the stress of interactions with others. Happy is the home in which everyone carries these oils and applies the right ones at the right time.

A word of appreciation is balm to the soul of a weary mother. A wife’s word of loving concern drives the worry lines from her husband’s forehead. A child’s word of thanks causes parents to forget all their worries and cares, and a word of grace helps children clear difficult hurdles. All of this is caused by the wonderful oil of true love.

In some homes, there are plenty of oils for burns, cuts, and other injuries, but there is no oil for the soul—there is no oil of love. In these homes, the un-oiled gears squeak and screech when in use.

When our oil vessels run out, we can refill them through the power of the Holy Spirit. It can be difficult to see the need for a refill in ourselves, so it is good for us to warn each other, “Your oil has run dry.” When we have spent some time in silent reflection, we can return to add the saving drop. The dose cannot be too large or too small. But added in the right proportions, these oils will work wonders throughout the home.

*Love is felt in every corner
Like a gentle breeze from heaven,
Melting selfishness and other
Blocks to reconciliation.
Love can heal the deepest woe
And bind seeking hearts together;
May our love be always so.* ■

Progress

Progress is the opposite of stagnation or decline. Progress among God's people means spiritual growth. It is God's will that His church show progress and growth in Him. The church must grow spiritually and be endowed with glory and power from on high. When growth occurs, we should examine ourselves and ensure that we remain Christ-centered, and grow and increase in His grace.

To stand still is to decline. We must move forward, or we will die spiritually. The grace we possessed will soon be consumed, and we will be lacking the power of the Holy Spirit. The end result will be our knowledge of the right doctrine but not the power. We will then be counted as those who have the appearance of godliness but deny its power.

Correct doctrine is important, but if it does not come alive in our souls through the power and the Spirit of God, it is of little use to us. Dear ones, let us be satisfied with nothing less than a real experience of God's grace and biblical salvation, including the life and power of God in our souls. Satan cares little whether we possess the truth or even preach it, as long as he can keep us in a dead and spiritless state. It is the Holy Spirit Who keeps us alive. We must live and pray in the Spirit. Formal prayers cannot develop our faith. Prayer must rise in the spirit, come from the heart and depth of the soul.

If the devil succeeds in placing us into an indifferent state, where we are satisfied with an empty confession as long as we do not fall into "major" sins, then we will not feel the need for spiritual progress.

The church in Laodicea (see Revelation 3:14–22) fell into the terrible state of being lukewarm. They thought they were rich, satisfied, and in need of nothing. Yet they did not know that they were naked, wretched, miserable, and blind. How terrible! Is it possible that Satan can succeed in deluding and misleading dear souls so they do not perceive it? The Savior says that such a thing is possible.

But, praise God, it doesn't need to be like this. If we live humbly, vigilantly, and prayerfully before God, we can be sustained in His love and realize our spiritual condition, as well as our needs. Even as redeemed children of God who have been forgiven and sanctified, we are still in need of true spiritual progress.

Peter exhorted the saints to apply all diligence to add to their faith virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love (2 Peter 1:5–7). If we live close to the Lord, we will see the need for growth in one or more of these areas. We may realize our need for more of the love and grace of God, more power from God against the devil, sickness, etc.

When we truly realize our needs, we will humble ourselves and cry out to God and approach Him with all earnestness. As the deer cries out for fresh water, so will our soul cry out for God. We may see the need for more grace and power, but if our soul does not make use of it, we will remain as before.

Many know they are sinners and need salvation, but make little to no effort to be saved until their souls are convicted by the Holy Spirit of their lost condition. Likewise with our spiritual needs. Every child of God will recognize the need to grow and make progress. But, when the Lord makes you aware of this, what do you do? Does your soul plead with God for the help it needs? Hebrews 11:6 tells us that "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." We are to be very diligent, which excludes all indifference, slothfulness, and lukewarmness.

Our hearts should cry out to God with all earnestness and desire until our needs are met. But to wish for progress is not enough. Dear Brothers and Sisters, let us strive to make spiritual progress and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ!

W. Ebel

“That you should not be made to stumble”

| *“These things have I spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble” (John 16:1).*

“**T**o stumble,” as applied in some places in Scripture, has the meaning, “that you will not be offended” or “that you won’t abandon your faith.” From Matthew 11:2–6, we learn how this is to be understood. John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod. Threatened with death by the hostility of Herodias, he was in prison and inquired about Jesus. He was unsure of what he thought of Jesus and also of his own God-given mission as a messenger. John himself had testified with the words of Isaiah (John 1:23): “The voice of one crying in the wilderness: prepare the way for the Lord” (Isaiah 40:3). Thus, John had referenced the word of Isaiah, who had said of this coming Messiah that He would free the captives and redeem those in bondage.

Now, there he was, a prisoner in bondage. Not surprisingly, as he found himself in this difficult situation, he experienced some doubt and asked Jesus through His disciples, “Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another? (Matthew 11:3). Jesus answered him by pointing out the glorious fact that the disciples saw with their own eyes: lepers were cleansed, the lame walked, the blind saw, the deaf heard, the dead were raised, and the gospel was preached to the poor. He added the powerful words, “And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me” (Matthew 11:6).

In John 16, after speaking of persecutions and hatred of the world, the Lord says, “These things have I spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.” The danger exists today of becoming disillusioned about God’s wonderful ways, His faithfulness, and the glory of the Lord. It’s also a risk for Christians who have left everything and endured great suffering for the sake of their faith. Satan thrives on using weakness of spirit and body through prolonged trials to raise questions in our hearts: If Jesus Christ is truly the Lord, the True and the Almighty, why must I endure all this?

Similar thoughts must often arise for Christians living in countries where they suffer because of their faith. What crosses the minds of those who, due to

an unfair judge, are suddenly taken from house and home, wife and children, beaten, thrown into prison, and sent into exile for many years? The danger of becoming angry or turning away from the Lord’s unfathomable ways is great.

These dangers also exist for believers going through lesser trials. But the Holy Spirit gives light, strength, comfort, peace, and joy to the righteous. As a result, in the history of the Church, we find so many glorious examples of people who were lonely, imprisoned, isolated, and subjected to the cruelest hardships and torture for many years, yet who never strayed from the path the Lord led them on.

In southern France, near Marseilles, there is an ancient tower called the “Tower of Constance.” During the time of Louis XIV, Christians, poor men and women, were imprisoned in this tower for the sake of their beliefs. They were at the mercy of the cold of winter and the heat of summer and were hardly fed. Some sat in that tower for 30 years. In a room at the top of the tower, there is a spot where the word “Resist!” was etched. These faithful children of God resisted. They stood firm and could not be swayed to deny their faith. They did not take offense at the dark path upon which they were led; instead, they glorified God.

In our lives, too, trials may come during which we personally experience suffering or are sorely disappointed by people we love. Then it is important to remember the word, “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of Me.”

I remember being in such a situation myself years ago. I had spoken to a small circle of believers about this word from Matthew 11. It wasn’t long after I had presented this study from Scripture and was in my room when I received a letter that caused me deep pain, and a tremendous disappointment in a person who was very dear to me. Although I had just spoken about this Word, I must say I needed grace to not get angry at God’s methods and tests. But to God be ▶

the glory that He helped me even in this trial and led everything to a glorious and blessed outcome.

Therefore, whatever may come, let us bow our hearts, our heads, and our knees before the Lord in

the hour of trial and say, “Lord, Your ways are perfect; Your teaching is perfect; You work all things for good.”

Georg von Viehbahn

Three Soldiers in the House

One evening, the army came to a small town in the countryside. The announcement that the troops would be billeted with the inhabitants came as an unpleasant surprise for the reluctant hosts, including the owner of a small business and his wife. The wife, who kept her small house in perfect order, imagined everything thrown about, with bowls and plates smashed and furniture destroyed. As she prepared for the arrival of these wild warriors, her heart pounded anxiously.

When the knock finally came, it was soft—far gentler than the heavy blows of rifle butts she had been dreading. “Who could that be?” she thought. “Surely not the soldier!” But it was.

“Good evening, ma’am!” he called, reaching out to shake her hand. “I am sorry for the extra work this causes you,” he added. “But I’ll make as little trouble for you as possible. May God bless you for your efforts, even if it’s just some bread and water.”

The good woman could hardly believe her eyes and ears. Waiting for the other shoe to drop, she stood there, frozen in apprehension. Eventually, the young soldier asked, “Is it just up the stairs there, ma’am?”

Making his way past her and entering the living room at the top, he met the man of the house with a friendly handshake. The young man then leaned his gun against the wall in the corner and went to sit down. Not being overly tired, he passed the sofa and headed for a wooden chair by the table.

“It must be a distressing imposition to have a stranger suddenly show up for food and a bed. Right, ma’am?” he asked, again extending his hand to the

woman, who was still staring mutely. “Do you have children, too?” he continued.

She finally opened her mouth to respond. “Yes, sir, one married daughter and a son abroad.”

“And do you hear from him?” the soldier asked sympathetically.

“It has been five months since the last letter. God only knows what has happened to my Fritz!” A tear seemed to shimmer in her eye.

This sudden surge of emotion was not only due to the thought of her son, however, but also relief at how unexpectedly well the visit from the soldier was going. Although in uniform, he seemed so human and decent. Realizing that he must be hungry and thirsty, she quickly set the table and served the food. The soldier drew his chair closer to the table and quietly folded his hands, remaining totally still, in prayer for some time. When he had finished, he unfolded his hands and began eating with perfect manners, casting a grateful glance to his hostess, who suddenly found herself battling tears once again.

“I do have one big request,” the soldier began. “Two close friends have been put up elsewhere tonight. I have invited them to come over. Would you permit us to spend an hour together here, ma’am?”

The woman was reminded of all the terrible things she had feared earlier. In her imagination, she again saw and heard the carousing of the drunken soldiers. Noticing her concern, the young man added, “We just want to read a chapter from the Bible together and sing a few songs. But if you’re uncomfortable with that, ma’am, my friends won’t come.”

But that was cause for worry, too, thought the woman, since sending the soldiers away could surely



enrage them to violence and destruction. Being a wise woman, she said, “Let them come.”

It did not take long for the expected guests to arrive. Accepting their friendly greeting, the woman brought out some chairs for them and asked them to take a seat. She then went to join her husband, who had settled in on the couch.

The young men began singing a hymn that flowed from their hearts like a stream of living water, carried by their pleasant voices. Next, each of them pulled a small testament from his pocket and one after the other read a verse aloud from the first chapter of the gospel of John. The second half of this chapter recounts how the first disciples were led to Jesus, each in his own way. When they had finished reading, one of the young men drew attention to this, remarking that each Christian is led to Christ in a unique way. “Why don’t we all take a moment,” he added, “to share how we came to be saved?” So they did. Each one had something wonderful and glorious to tell about the wisdom, faithfulness, patience, and mercy of their God.

In the meantime, both spouses listened from the dimly lit sofa. They had never experienced anything

like this in their lives. Just when the third soldier had finished his story, the wife breathed out a sigh so deep and loud that she shocked herself. The billeted soldier turned to her with the friendly words, “Now, ma’am, tell us your story.”

Wiping her eyes with her apron, the good woman replied, “I don’t have one.”

It was a revealing answer, although the one asking had already suspected that neither wife nor husband had experienced what repentance, salvation, and faith in the Crucified One could offer.

That gave the young men an opening to lovingly and kindly show the receptive woman the way to having her own “story.” The evening came to a wonderful conclusion as the three friends joined the husband and wife on their knees to ask the God of all grace that the dear hosts would also experience salvation.

The wife was not able to sleep a wink that night. She, too, wanted to experience her own story, and after a few weeks, she was indeed able to write to the soldier they had billeted, with whom she had been corresponding, that she and her husband now each had a story of their own to tell. ■

A Flight of the Soul

“He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall, but those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40:29–31).

Faith has no physical or logical limits. In faith, by God’s grace, we can soar with wings like eagles.

On November 12, 2021, the coronavirus entered our home. My wife fell ill first, and on November 14, I fell ill as well.

It was the beginning of deep suffering that lasted for weeks. The fight for survival began, as I thought that all effort must be given to overcome this virus. My knowledge of the coronavirus was too little at that time to realize that you can’t fight a virus with willpower.

The illness increased, and my symptoms were mainly fever and nausea. For 10 days, I hardly ate or drank anything.

After 10 days, my doctor called me late in the evening and found that I was close to suffocating. I had hardly noticed the breathing difficulties, but according to the doctor, it was high time to call an ambulance. After that, everything happened very quickly, as I was taken to the hospital together with my wife. After both of our examinations were completed, my wife was discharged the next day, but my stay continued, specifically in the intensive care unit.

In the ICU, I was prepared in the best possible way in case of an emergency. My body was fitted with all kinds of sensors to detect any changes. All my important physical data was monitored via the devices in order to be able to intervene quickly and if possible, to prevent further damage.

Everything pointed to the need for artificial respiration. In order for the doctors to continue to provide

treatment, provisional documents had to be signed as quickly as possible. But then the Lord decided to put a stop to the illness: “This far and no further!” It was the day of fasting and prayer of our community for all the sick. I am grateful from the bottom of my heart for God’s grace, and for this commitment from the Body of Christ.

The Sunday before we were admitted to the hospital, my son asked the congregation to pray for us. When the congregation did so, God’s first miracle occurred. I was suddenly healed of my longstanding back pain that had been with me for so many years. Then when it was time to go to the hospital on Monday, I knew the Lord was going with me to the hospital too, and that was significant for me.

In the Hospital

There were two things I wished to take with me to the hospital: First, a heart satisfied with everything (because a satisfied person carries only half the burden of what a dissatisfied person has to carry). Secondly, I wanted to take advantage of this time in the hospital to draw closer to the Lord.

In overflowing measure, the Lord gave me more than I had asked. Contentment came immediately. Even while I was in the ambulance, I felt it deeply. I cannot even describe it: on the one hand, a ruined body; on the other hand, a satisfied soul in the Lord our God.

Yet the Lord had more in store for me. Christian nurses surrounded me in the intensive care unit. When they learned that I was a pastor, they prayed earnestly

for me. I kept hearing, “We won’t leave you alone; we will support you; you will make it through.” I felt carried by heavenly powers—yes, I had the best care. It was like a flight of the soul.

On the second day in the ICU, another patient was brought into my room. He was affected even worse than I was. At night, I heard him crying. Maybe he had already come to terms with his own life ending, because later I learned that his best friend had died of the coronavirus within three days.

I really felt sorry for this man. I was completely surrounded by God’s goodness here, and he had no one to intercede for him now. I wanted to help, so I prayed for his body, but especially also for his soul.

After two days, I was allowed to move to a non-ICU room. The crisis was over, and recovery began.

In God’s Presence

Here, something new began. I was all alone in the room and thought, “Now I want to take time for my soul to draw closer to God.” I wanted to be all alone with God, as it says in the song, “Alone with God, the world forbidden, alone with God, o bless’d retreat!” My desire was so indescribably great; my soul longed for it dearly.

I thought about how I should do this and how God wanted to speak to me. In the process, I came across a tract by Brother Girke on sanctification. The thought came to me, “This is exactly what you need.”

I devoured the tract in one reading. Sanctification became so great to me, and it became so clear to me that a person cannot and doesn’t need to contribute anything to the purification of the heart. The Lord does it Himself, just as with the rebirth of the soul. It became important to me that God does not require anything from me, only the surrender of the heart, to the best of my knowledge and conscience. And that is exactly what I did anew!

I had peace with God; nothing separated me from God. I had experienced sanctification years ago and lived it out. But I felt the need to reaffirm the experience and to consecrate myself anew to God. I surrendered my life to Him without making promises, because the Lord knows me better and knows how I mean it. He can guide and direct me. My surrender was simple but definitely real. I knew the Lord accepted it.

Then I was allowed to go with the Lord to the Garden of Gethsemane. I felt as if I had been transported

back 2000 years and was there. I could not see Jesus’ disciples, nor the surroundings, but I could see Jesus! I saw His struggle and also His decision to die for us. I saw how difficult it was for Him, and yet He gave Himself.

As long as I was in the hospital, a deep current of peace came over me every morning since that day of renewed surrender. It was so extraordinary. I felt carried by God and was so grateful! Again, I thought, it is like a flight of the soul.

On the third day of my stay in the non-ICU room, the patient with whom I was already together in the intensive care unit came to my room. When he realized he had recovered through my prayer ministry, he became so fond of me that he tried to imitate me in everything. He did not fully understand that the source was God, but I was able to show him the way to God’s salvation.

Closing Thoughts

One day, the whole team that had been taking care of us came together to see how we both were doing on the road to recovery. They recalled the time and our condition when we arrived at the hospital. We laughed heartily about some of the small and big things we had experienced together. They visibly rejoiced in the fact that their work on us was also not in vain and was bearing good fruit.

Some called us the “best patients,” the others the “sun beam of the department.” But it was not us, because we only reflected what God did for us.

While still in the hospital, I had some conversations with various brothers from the congregation. From the conversations, I first realized that many brothers and sisters in different locations had prayed for me. For this I am sincerely grateful. According to the richness of His fullness, God heard the petitions.

This was a profound experience with many feelings. However, they are not earthly feelings but heavenly ones, anchored by my faith in Jesus Christ. I have never been as close to God as I was in the hospital. It was supernatural.

It was a flight of the soul away from temporal things!

*Andrei Albrecht
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Lord, Thank You for Your Grace

Lord, thank You for Your grace and mercy;
I am Your child through grace alone.
I'm on the narrow path to glory,
All through Your merit, not my own.

T'was grace that found me, lost and lonely;
Through grace You saved me from my sin.
You made me whole, and it is only
Through grace that I found peace within.

It's grace that keeps me true and faithful
Upon the narrow path of life.
I walk with joy, for which I'm thankful,
And by God's grace I'm freed from strife.

It is by grace that I'll reach glory
When I have run the race below,
And with the saints relate the story
How God His wondrous grace did show.

Lord, thank You for Your grace and mercy;
What would my life be without You!
Eternally I'll see Your beauty;
It's grace alone that brings me through.

Edeltraut Nimz