

Foundation of Faith

In Times of Fear

Look Through the Clouds

When Will Christ Return?

Image of a Mother

Encouraging Hope

Content

ENCOURAGING HOPE

4 The “Wasted” Day

God can still make something great out of that which is seemingly lost.

5 Spiritually Homeless

6 In Times of Fear

What drives fear out of our lives?

8 Look through the Clouds

9 What Would I Do without Jesus?

10 “Do Not Be Afraid; Only Believe”

12 I Am Leaving But Will Return

What was to happen between Jesus’ resurrection and His return?

14 When Will Christ Return?

15 “To Be Continued”

RADIO BROADCAST

16 Quiet Mothers

It’s not always the disposition—why have they become so quiet?

3 Editorial

YOUTH PAGES

18 From the Working World (6)

19 How to Bring Joy to a Mother’s Heart

20 No Word Shall Return Void

CHILDREN’S CORNER

21 Dear Children

22 The Image of Mother

23 Calling to Remembrance Mother and Grandmother

24 The Christian Home

SENIORS’ PAGE

26 Choose Joy

TESTIMONIES

9 Wrong Number?

27 Announcements

POEMS

13 The Joy of Ascension

28 A Mother’s Heart

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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 20 Issue 5

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,

Many of us have probably heard of the motto, “Liberty, equality, fraternity!” Yet what do we see today, and what must we conclude?

“For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and deep darkness the people” (Isaiah 60:2).

Oh, how terrible and miserable the world looks! Dark clouds threaten the earth, and many live in dark night and terrible unbelief. Lies, deceptions, and lawlessness are rampant. Like our Lord foretold: uprisings, wars, pestilence, troublesome times, earthquakes, tribulation, hatred, betrayal, many false prophets, and overt deception. “And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold” (see Matthew 24:7–12).

But, my dear Reader, need we sink into gloom? No, and again, no! Children of God know that light and divine help are promised to us and are still available today, because Jesus Christ is here, a reality for all people of all times.

Darkness may cover the earth and humanity. “But the LORD will arise over you, and His glory will be seen upon you” (Isaiah 60:2), states the promise. Oh, how great is this divine “but”! But the Lord, but be confident, but what a faithful God! Yes, despite all the trouble, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, remains even today. To Him is given all authority in heaven and on Earth!

Therefore, whoever seeks Him and serves Him and remains true to the end will be blessed, and will be with Him for all eternity. Yes, He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us, whatever may come.

H. D. Nimz

The “Wasted” Day

It was a cold, stormy day. The streets and alleys were almost deserted, especially in the section of the cosmopolitan city of Paris where an evangelist presented his message every Sunday afternoon. The hour had long passed for the start of the meeting, but apart from the preacher, there were only two women present in the hall. With great disappointment, he let his eyes roam over the empty rows of chairs. What was he to do?

“Surely I can’t preach to just two women,” he thought for a moment. But then he turned to the Lord in silent prayer. There he received the conviction that he certainly could preach the Gospel to the two souls whom the Lord had sent, just as well as to a large audience. With this in mind, he opened the meeting in the same manner as if the hall had been filled to capacity. They sang and prayed. Then he read a passage and presented his sermon, just as he usually did. Then they sang and prayed again, and the meeting was over.

Depressed, the pastor returned home that evening. He told his wife with sadness about the events of the day. She was also deeply saddened. She shared with her husband the disappointment of the “wasted day” as they commiserated together.

But what transpired? Three days later, the preacher received a letter from one of the two women

who had been in the meeting. The author of the letter had taken great pains to locate his address. In the letter, she asked him to visit her son who was dying of tuberculosis. She also asked the pastor to read to him the comforting chapter on which he had preached last Sunday. Enclosed with the letter was some money to cover the cost of the short trip.

After reading the letter, it occurred to the pastor that in the end, last Sunday had not been completely “wasted,” as he and his wife had initially thought. He immediately set out to visit the sick man.

In the apartment indicated, he found a very sick man whose days were obviously numbered. The pastor was by no means kindly received. As soon as the sick man heard the reason he had come, he vehemently asked him to leave the room.

“I don’t want to see a person who reminds me in any way of a priest. And I don’t want you to talk to me about religious things!” he cried loudly and sharply.

“Then I will leave again,” the pastor replied calmly. “It is because of your mother’s express wish that I have come to you. Do you not agree with me that a mother’s wish should always be sacred to her child?”

“That is different,” the sick man replied a little more calmly, though still not kindly. “If you come be-

cause of my mother’s wish, I will hear you. Please, take a seat.”

Gratefully, the pastor pulled up a chair and began a conversation of a general nature. The sick man seemed to be interested in politics. He spoke of the political situation in France at the time, including the well-known General Boulanger. After some time, the visitor rose and began to take his leave.

“Will the pastor perhaps visit me again?” asked the man politely. “No,” he replied, “I think not. It does not interest me to converse with you about politics and General Boulanger.”

“For what reason did you actually come?” asked the ailing man, apparently having forgotten that he had asked his visitor to leave when he wanted to talk about God.

“As I indicated, I came for the purpose of reading something from God’s Word to you,” the evangelist replied. “Your mother wrote, asking me to read you the same chapter that had made a deep impression on her last Sunday.”

The tone of the man’s voice changed significantly.

“Well, if that’s the case, please read it to me.”

The pastor gladly took his seat again, reached for his Bible, and read the glorious fourteenth chapter of John’s gospel. Observing the impression God’s Word made on the sick man was marvelous. Clearly reflected on his pale face

was interest, amazement, awe, and admiration, all of which were alternately expressed in his ailing, sunken features.

When the chapter was over and the evangelist was about to leave again, the man asked him most cordially to come back soon. This time, the pastor happily agreed.

The patient lay there for a long time and pondered the words he had never heard before. A ray of

light had fallen into his gloomy, cheerless soul, a divine Light that began its work.

At the pastor's next visit, he found a man who had become aware of his many sins, indeed, of his utterly lost condition before God. Now, he was anxiously seeking the way to salvation. What a joy it was to share the wonderful gospel with this searching man. The pastor explained the free grace

found in Jesus Christ and pointed him to the One Who died on Calvary's cross for lost sinners. With rapt attention, the sick man obeyed what was read, as God blessed His Word. As once the jailer in Philippi did, the dying man also believed the message of Jesus. Before long, he was able to joyfully proclaim that he had found everything he needed in Christ: forgiveness of his sins and peace in his heart. ■

Spiritually Homeless

An elderly professor once offered me some insight into his life. He recounted: "Do you know I was once spiritually homeless? Like so many during the war, it was as though my home had been flattened by a bomb. It is a terrible thing to be homeless! Both of my sons were killed in the war, and my wife died of a broken heart. Afterwards, I got sick, had to give up my job, and saw no way forward for my life. I fell into the grip of a deep depression. I asked myself, "Why are you still here? You've lost everything that gave your life value and meaning. You would be best off losing your pointless life too!"

That is how I was thinking. In those dark times, I came across a quote by Goethe, who had written, "Throughout my life, I exchanged all my smaller coins for progres-

sively larger ones until I ended up with a gold coin."

"It is enviable," I thought, "to be able to say such a thing." But is there really a gold coin at the end of the road for us to aim for? Is there anything we can pursue in the knowledge that, once we have it, we will need nothing else?

God's leading is so wonderful! One day during this difficult time, I came across the New Testament my late wife had always been reading. I absentmindedly flipped through its pages until, all of a sudden, my attention was caught by a parable. It was a story about a merchant who sold everything he owned in order to purchase a valuable pearl. I recognized that this valuable pearl was a metaphor for Jesus Christ.

I was gripped by the desire to get to know Him beyond what I

had learned in long-ago religion classes and the occasional sermon or devotional. I had never had direct communication with Him, no real relationship. That was probably why my life had no power, peace, or goal. Deep inside, it was probably why I was homeless—desperately so.

I began doing something I had never done before: I prayed to Jesus. I wrestled with Him like Jacob wrestled with the angel, saying, "I will not let you go unless you bless me. Reveal yourself to me and speak to me!"

My prayers were answered! As I later realized, they had to be answered because Christ promised to fulfill anything we ask in His name, which means our requests must be in keeping with His Spirit. I know my prayer had been spoken in accordance with His Spirit ▶

because He wants everyone to find help and salvation.

In Christ, I had now found my “gold coin.” As the highest value and the greatest treasure, He gave my previously empty life substance, purpose, significance, and a goal.

You can imagine how happy I was. A homeless man had found a home: a place where he was accepted and loved, where he could rest,

and where he received the strength to prevail in life and in death.

My life now has an additional purpose as I try to show the spiritually homeless the way home, but not just through words. I believe love is far more effective than words when it comes to bringing people to Christ, Who is Love incarnate.

For a spiritually homeless person to find a new home is inex-

pressibly beautiful. I recognized that the soul’s home is on high, in the light, not here. Anyone not at home at the Savior’s bosom is eternally homeless.”

* * *

With these words, the old professor concluded his story, his eyes shining as though already seeing beyond the bounds of time into the glory of God. ■

In Times of Fear

We live in a time where our lives seem to be enveloped by fear and fear-mongering. Fear of accidents, war, poverty, difficulties, loss, sickness, old age, and loneliness; fear of sinning and being sentenced to damnation; fear of death and eternal judgment.

While such a life still has meaning, does it need to be filled with fear? Should it not be possible to be free? Or must these dark clouds of fear hang heavily over every life? As children of God, we must not live in constant fear.

How many diseases and difficulties do we suffer in our minds without them ever actually happening? This can rob us of so many happy hours in our lives. Reading the Word of God and finding comfort there is so much better than worrying about potential threats and diseases in an imaginary future. Faith and trust are two effective weapons in this fight against fear.

A Christian woman from Korea once shared a testimony about what Christ had done for her. “The greatest blessing God gave me was in an area that might not seem nearly as important to you as it has been to me. Before I knew Jesus, I spent several hours lying awake

almost every night, tortured by terrible thoughts and worries about what kinds of illness and suffering, evil spirits could cause in our family. However, since accepting Jesus Christ, I have been putting my family and our possessions into God’s hands every night. Once I’ve done that, I go to bed and sleep peacefully through the night.”

When the fear of difficulties trouble us, we have God’s promise in His Holy Scriptures: “I will be with him in trouble” (Psalm 91:15). In times of trouble, we find comfort in the words “I will fear no evil; for You are with me” (Psalm 23:4). When we suffer a loss, Paul reminds us, “We know that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28).

When illness confines us to our beds, let us remember the words of the Lord, Who commanded, “Do not be afraid; only believe” (Mark 5:36). Even when old age sets in, and the years draw near when we say, “I have no pleasure in them,” the Lord promises, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Even in financial difficulties, when fear threatens to overwhelm our hearts because the bills are piling up and we don’t



know how we can possibly pay them all, we can draw new strength from the Scriptures, which tell us, “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

God’s Word also contains many promises for sinners, a fact we can easily verify in a search of the Scriptures. Jesus died on the cross for our sins: “He *was* wounded for our transgressions, *He was* bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

When our sins have been forgiven, we need no longer fear judgment. We need no longer be afraid to one day face God and reap what we have sown. Thinking about the end of our lives no longer needs to be terrifying. Regardless of whether death comes swiftly or slowly, we can entrust ourselves into the hands of the Heavenly Father and know that everything will be all right. “Do not be afraid of sudden terror . . . when it comes,” we read in Proverbs 3:25.

Years ago, I suffered just such a sudden, terrifying shock. I had been getting ready for the first morning service of a revival meeting when I was bitten by a highly venomous spider. I recognized the spider and knew that its bite could be fatal.

For a moment, I stood very still. I remembered what happened when Paul was bitten by a venomous snake in the book of Acts: the poison could not harm him, doubtlessly because of his faith in God’s limitless power. I was reminded of the scripture, “You shall not be afraid . . . of the arrow *that* flies by day” (Psalm 91:5). Many other comforting verses and promises also came

to mind, and filled me with a deep peace. I knew God would take care of me. I got into my car to make the 100-kilometer (62 mi) drive home. Along the way, I sang reassuring hymns and recited one promise after another.

By the time I arrived home, the spider’s poison had brought me to death’s door, but I was not afraid. I was able to call a doctor myself. He immediately asked how swollen the area surrounding the bite was and began to prepare me for my end. However, when I looked at the bite so I could answer the doctor, I noticed that the area was not swollen. After a few days, the pain receded. How wonderful are God’s promises when fear threatens to ambush us as we go through our lives!

The best way for us to conquer our fears is to love Christ with all our heart, strength, and soul. “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love” (1 John 4:18). This does not preclude the existence of difficulties and dangers, but God’s love for us and our love for Him let us be absolutely certain that He will be there for us and take care of us.

“*I am* your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you” (Isaiah 41:10). In the midst of all fear, our lives can have a purpose, but only if God’s love fills our hearts. Our love of God should go hand in hand with our prayers. As the psalmist writes, “I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears” (Psalm 34:4).

H. D. Nimz

Look Through the Clouds

Every act of God's judgment ends with an extension of grace. The story of the Flood has a profound ending, one that needs to be acknowledged throughout our life of faith.

In Genesis 9:12–16, God assures us five times that He has set a sign of His covenant in the clouds: the rainbow. When people see it, they know there will never be another worldwide flood. The wonderful thing about verse 16 is that every time God sets a rainbow in the sky, He will remember the covenant He made with every living creature on Earth. People need never tremble in fear because the rainbow is in the clouds. God observes it; we need to observe it, too. This outward sign of the covenant confirms that God remembers His word.

We know there are dark clouds that can threaten us daily in life and in the struggle of faith. How wonderful that we have the rainbow as confirmation of His divine promises!

Above the Clouds of Sin—An Arc of Grace

When clouds of guilt loom over us, when accusations strike us because of guilt, and we hear God's judgment say, "But you have burdened Me with your sins, you have wearied Me with your iniquities" (Isaiah 43:24), then God's arc of grace shines through the dark clouds of guilt: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name, you *are* Mine" (Isaiah 43:1). We can leave our guilt under the cross as if it had never happened.

Above the Clouds of Worry—An Arc of Promise

When clouds of worry gather, when the future makes you anxious, look to the arc of divine promises: "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). God keeps His word, even for you. Therefore, cast your sorrow and pain on Jesus, for He will help you in a mighty way.

Above the Clouds of Depression—An Arc of Faithfulness

When clouds of depression surround you, when your soul becomes dark and joy seems far away, when you think God has abandoned you, then His arc of faithfulness shines through your night: "For the moun-

tains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall My covenant of peace be removed," says the LORD, who has mercy on you" (Isaiah 54:10). His faithfulness will hold you.

Above the Clouds of Fear—An Arc of Peace

When clouds of fear surround you, when demonic forces subdue and threaten you like storm clouds, look to the arc of peace. God says, "Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand" (Isaiah 41:10). God drives out fear and gives you peace.

Above the Clouds of Suffering—An Arc of Comfort

When the clouds of suffering gather around you and floods of anxiety rise, you ask, "How much longer? Where is the love of God? Has He completely forgotten me?" Then take the Word of the Lord, and find the arc of comfort that shines forth with this promise: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3). Further, "and we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28). Floods of affliction pass away, but Jesus, our faithful Lord, stands forever."

Above the Clouds of Judgment—An Arc of Victory

When the clouds of judgment threaten and you must also suffer in this fallen world, when you live in fear and think we will all perish in the coming judgment, then know this: There is no judgment for believing Christians. "He who believes in Him [the Son of God] is not condemned" (John 3:18). In Christ, we can rejoice and have valor and need not fear judgment as a sinner would. We have escaped eternal judgment through Christ's blood, and we see the victory arc of God above the floods of that final judgment.

Above the Clouds of Death—An Arc of Hope

Then, when the clouds of death approach and surround us, we know "Jesus lives, and I with Him." And through these last clouds shines the arc of hope of eter-

nal life: Dying is my gain! These clouds of death guide us into the Father's house.

Therefore, we not only stand under many a cloud on our earthly pilgrimage, but we can see the arc of

God shining through the darkness and be filled with joy. Heaven and earth will pass away, but God's Word will stand forever. Let's remain under God's arc!

Daniel Schäfer



TESTIMONY

Wrong Number?

For quite some time, I have been in contact with a young man and his family, who live in a Hutterite colony in another province. For a while already, this young man has been asking for sermons, which I was to load onto a USB stick and send to him. I was busy and didn't get to it. Last week, he left a message on my office phone asking again for sermons, and leaving his cell number to contact him.

I got to work right away and copied sermons to a USB stick, found a fitting envelope, and prepared everything to take it to the post office the next day. Then I texted him to expect the USB stick in the next few days. I checked my phone, and it showed "read." Good, he now knows, I thought. Yes, I expected an answer, but none ever arrived. Was something wrong? Did something happen?

The next morning, I connected with him via email like I had always done in the past. I asked if everything was okay or if the text had gotten into the wrong hands. He wrote back, telling me he never received my text message. He gave me his number again, which solved the riddle. I had sent the text to a different number. I imagined somewhere there was a person out there who received my text, informing him his sermons are on the way and that he can expect them to arrive soon. That must have raised some questions for sure.

I took my phone and sent another text to the same wrong number, apologizing for what happened and explaining the situation. The person answered, "No worries. I kind of appreciated the blessing. I was in a car accident yesterday. What were the sermons about?" I asked about the seriousness of the accident and explained the sermons' topics, and that they were intended to encourage a friend. In reply, the person texted that everything was fine, no serious injuries, and "I feel like I'm losing my trust in the Lord. I would appreciate an encouraging sermon too."

Now it seemed appropriate to exchange names, so I asked. Maybe it was a bit daring, but I had nothing to lose. At the same time, I explained who I was, where I lived, and that I was a pastor and grandfather. The person gave me her name and added, "I am a 21-year-old woman and live in . . ." For some reason, I was under the impression I was dealing with a man similar in age to me.

Text messages went back and forth, and I encouraged her not to let go of the Lord but to turn to Him for help and to trust Him. I pointed her to our church's YouTube channel, the "52nd Street Church of God in Wetaskiwin." Once she was done working, she planned to log on. With that, we said goodbye to each other. I was glad I could help.

Then came one last message. "To be honest, your text saved me from doing something I would have regretted later. Thank you. God bless you, Pastor Semenjuk"

Wrong number? Just a coincidence? I have no idea how I received her number. The area code was the same as my friend's, but the number was completely different. There is just no way this happened by chance. No way. Wrong number, yes, but right person and right timing.

I believe in God's providential hand working, a hand that controls, leads, and directs our paths. God is aware of a seeking person and orchestrates a meeting with another person who can help. We don't meet by chance but because God has planned it that way. I remembered how I had often prayed God would give me opportunities to be a blessing to others. This was one of the days God had answered my prayer.

Over the next few days, I will check to see how this woman is doing.

Harry Semenjuk

“Do not be afraid; only believe.”

With these words from Mark 5:36, the Lord Jesus comforted the ruler Jairus, who had come to Him for help for his daughter. When he had gone to Jesus, his daughter was still alive. Now he received the news that she had died. Pursuing help any longer seemed pointless. However, after Jesus' words of comfort, Jairus believed, and his daughter was restored to him.

This incident shows us what a true blessing our living faith imparts. Having a clear, pure conscience toward God, His Word, and our fellow man is so important, in order for our faith to maintain its firm foundation. Many people want to practice faith, but their conscience troubles them because they do not live justly according to the Word of God. By preserving the mystery of faith with a clear conscience, we can bring our requests and needs before the Lord with fearlessness and justified courage. However, practicing our faith daily is so important, because active faith imparts God's blessings.

In Isaiah 43:1–5, we read among other things, “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; you *are* Mine. . . . Fear not, for I *am* with you.” This encouraging exhortation of the prophet also applies to us, for it says in the seventh verse, “Everyone who is called by My name, whom I have created for My glory; I have formed him.”

“I am with you,” applies to us. Who is the One Who calls out to us? The Almighty, present, faithful God Who loves us. If our God is with us, why and of whom should we be afraid in times of worry, inconvenience, and temptation, and trials? We may worry about our natural well-being, concerning the present or the future, or worry about victory over sin and doing God's will. God says to you and me, “I am with you.” We must believe this as absolute truth.

We are too easily inclined to look at circumstances and ourselves in times of trials, sorrows, and struggles as the cause for defeat. Precisely during these times we should immerse ourselves in the truth that God is with us. Faith makes us calm and gives us comfort. The same is true in times of illness and need. The fear and anxiety that impose themselves on us must be countered by fearless, bold faith that God, Who loves me, cares for me, has the best in mind for me, and is with me. Through this living faith, the fiery arrows of the evil one that inflame and irritate us, are cut off, and the enemy is chased away.

The story of Jesus calming the storm may serve as an example for us. In Luke 8:24–25, we read, “And they came to Him and awoke Him, saying, ‘Master, Master, we are perishing!’ Then He arose and rebuked the wind and the raging of the water. And they ceased, and there was a calm. But He said to them, ‘Where is your faith?’ And they were afraid, and marveled, saying to one another, ‘Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and water, and they obey Him!’”

The disciples were in the ship with Jesus, Who was sleeping. As waves crashed over the ship, it was threatening to sink. Overcome with great fear and anxiety for their lives, the disciples woke Jesus, and He calmed the storm. Jesus then asked them, “Where is your faith?” If the disciples would have had unwavering faith, they could have said to themselves, “Jesus is with us. He is the Messiah, the Son of God. Surely nothing can happen to us.” But they let themselves be overwhelmed by anxiety and fear.

We find another illustration in Genesis 28:10–22. Fleeing from his brother, Jacob found himself in a grim and desolate situation. In the evening after the sun had set, Jacob, tired from wandering, found nothing but a stone for a pillow. Undoubtedly, he would

have felt lonely in this less-than-ideal situation. But at this point, God appeared to Jacob in a dream. After awakening, he got up from his camp, blessed the place, and said, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I did not know it.”

Here we learn an important lesson. We often find ourselves in life’s most extreme and difficult circumstances where it seems as if our sun has set. But the Lord is with us in these situations, as He also made clear to Jacob. In his dream, Jacob saw a ladder which reached from the ground to heaven, to the very throne of God. The angels ascended and descended, showing Jacob that the bond between him and God was still there.

There is also a bond between us and our God. God’s Word says of the angels, “Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:14). This we must remember. The angels are there to serve us.

For this we are told in the Word of God, which endures forever, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” What a reason we have to rejoice, to hope where there is nothing to hope for, to wait, even if we do not immediately receive help according to our own wishes or understanding.

Still, we have every reason to remain silent. Even if our desires are thwarted, one thing is certain: God, Who loves us, is with us and cares for our very best. Like Jacob, in our moments of trial and difficulty, we too can anoint the stone of remembrance. The Lord is also with us in these difficult places and perhaps primarily in such times. Therefore, faith in the word “Fear not, only believe,” will keep us victorious and confident for the time to come. May we experience our faith as strong enough to be victorious in overcoming the world.

R. Girke



“I Am Going Away and Coming Back”

At first glance, leaving only to return again appears to be a meaningless exercise. But if we can penetrate deeply enough to grasp the true meaning of this significant act, we will understand that this short phrase contains a meaningful, and for the plan of salvation, an overarching important truth. Greatly distressed, the disciples felt deep sadness at His departure, but for Jesus it was the one great means for the right implementation of His monumental task.

Jesus had just said to His disciples, “Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. . . . 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 14:1–3). This was a precious promise. Here, a second personal coming of Christ is clearly predicted. Surely, He will come at the end of the age, like He promised. This is a glorious hope, a joyful day for which we long.

However, Christ goes further with these words of comfort. During the period between His going away in the clouds and His coming again in the clouds, what was to happen? Were they to be abandoned to themselves? Oh no. “I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also. . . . He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him. . . . [A]nd My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (verses 18–23).

Christ could not remain on earth forever as a man and spread His dominion with men over all parts of the earth. His withdrawal from His human life was as necessary for a time as His walk in the flesh. Therefore, He said, “It is to your advantage that I go away.”

Thus, Jesus refers to the necessity of a change in the administration of His spiritual office and considers it vital to be taken away from their sight. He meant that He would come to them again in a new spiritual relationship. Going away was necessary for Him to advance His work. True, He had to reconcile the world through His death here on earth, but it also remains true that He could not have continued His work from here. He would become the leader of a small crowd but never the head of a universal kingdom, the Church.

For this purpose, He could not be bound to one place but had to be invisible and yet spiritually present everywhere. Therefore, we have a Savior Who can say, “Lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20).

He wants to be with us, present in every heart that loves Him, and present as friend, helper, comforter, counselor, and leader. He is with us everywhere, even in the middle of the ocean, on a sinking ship, high in the air in an airplane, and in dark prisons. He is with us in the darkest hour of the night. He is present to comfort every afflicted one, to give us help and support in every trial and temptation. His presence is beneficial. Even if we cannot see Him with our natural eye, we may talk with Him, hear Him, walk with Him. We can be with Him even amid all our labors. Never are we separated from Him, either at home or far away, on land or sea, in living and in dying. He will even be with us in the valley of the shadow of death, comforting us.

“The world will see Me no more, but you will see Me” (verse 19). This describes the relationship between Him and His followers. He is always present. “We [Christ and the Father] will come to him and make Our home with him” (verse 23). “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever—the Spirit of truth” (verses 16–17).

“Christ lives in me” (Galatians 2:20). This was the experience of the apostle Paul, and this is the relationship He maintains with every disciple who faithfully follows Him. He is present just as if we had Him with us physically. And Christ maintains His close relationship, not only with each individual, but also with His church. He is the Head, and all the members are joined together in Him. “For we are members of His body This is a great mystery; but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Ephesians 5:30, 32).

Christ wants to enter every heart. Sinner, won’t you open yourself to Him and let Him in? Child of God, won’t you give Him more room? Blessed is the heart that is completely open to Him, in which He has room, in which He dwells. Has He entered your heart? Only then, when Christ has made His dwelling in your heart and you see Him with your spiritual eyes, will you be able to see Him face to face with joy when He returns in the clouds.

E. Martin

The Joy of Ascension

*Victorious King and Prince of Peace,
Thine is the highest Majesty.
All heaven bows down at Your feet,
Praising celestial royalty.
Should I refrain from serving Thee?
No, let my heart rejoice with glee,
Relate the wond'rous story.
In faith I see Your glory.*

*You ascended into heaven;
Now You are at God's right hand.
To Your voice the angels hearken,
Singing praises to the Lamb.
Should I not join the angel song,
Sing it loud and sing it long?
Hallelujah to the King,
In victory my song I sing!*

*Should I not drink Your cup, o Lord,
Since Your glory I can see?
I am encouraged through Your Word,
For Your grace is there for me.
I will trust my loving Savior,
Resist the world and, too, its favor.
Jesus, I submit to Thee
Now for all eternity.*

Gerhard Tersteegen

When Will Christ Return?

Forty days after Christ's resurrection, the Lord Jesus gathered His disciples on the Mount of Olives for the last time and blessed them. He was lifted up from among them and ascended to heaven. As the disciples gazed heavenward, two men in white robes appeared before them and said, "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). But now the question arises, "When will this event take place?"

Many have wrestled with this question. There is no dispute that Jesus has already once been here on Earth. But now they are anticipating His second coming. Many do not want to think about it, but true believers wait for it and long for the day when He will appear in the clouds. Not an impatient waiting, but a silent looking out. In quiet times, apart from the every-day hustle and bustle, the question comes to mind, "When is the Lord coming?"

Over the course of the past years, several people have tried to calculate the timing of this event. However, these calculations presumed that God would act according to such a schedule. Every time, these turned out to be a miscalculation. The peculiar thing is that such people never seem to give up. They attempt to recalculate, to find possible errors in their first calculation. They obviously do not believe in Jesus' words where He said, "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, but My Father only" (Matthew 24:36).

In fact, we are two thousand years closer to the second coming of Christ than the first Christians were. During this period of time, many great events have taken place. We can look back on them for guidance. Unfortunately, so many people choose not to. They do not consider that many events which were then in the future for the apostles have now already taken place. But why do people always look to the future?

Doctrines are being devised that do not have a true biblical foundation. Often, a lot of imaginative fantasy is added to them to make them appear impressive. Thus, Christ's gift purchased during this time of grace

is all but forgotten. Instead of finding salvation in Christ, the promise of salvation is projected into the future, along with the expectation that the blessings of God in all their fullness are still to come. But Scripture says, "Behold, now *is* the acceptable time; now *is* the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Have you ever waited for someone to arrive? When you heard footsteps outside, you listened to see if they were familiar, trying to determine if it was the expected person. Then you went to meet them. Shouldn't it be possible to judge His coming by certain events that can be considered equal to the Lord's footsteps? Let us consider what is to precede the coming of Christ and how much of it has already occurred. By this, we can better determine whether He is already at the door and if we should prepare ourselves for His coming.

The apostle Paul writes in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, "Let no one deceive you by any means; for *that Day will not come* unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition." According to this word, the Lord will appear only after the "falling away" has occurred. Unfortunately, many see this happening in the future, but let us not forget that at the time of the dark Middle Ages, Christianity was nothing but dressed-up paganism.

Why did the Reformation need to happen? Precious, long-lost spiritual truths needed to be resurrected and restored, because the governing system at that time was corrupt. How many of God's children were murdered at that time just because they could not go along with it? The Scripture says, The Lord will "consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming" (2 Thessalonians 2:8).

In like manner, other events have been foretold, and many of them have come to pass. Therefore, let us be watchful, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Everything is ripening for judgment. Blessed is he whom the Lord finds waiting. The Lord said, "And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!" (Mark 13:37).

Gustav Sonnenberg

“To Be Continued”

A generous and wealthy woman gave someone a considerable sum of money with the request that it be given to a man in particular need of help. However, the delegate thought it would be too much to give the large sum to the person in question all at once. Therefore, he sent him a letter with only a small part of the money and wrote the words “to be continued.” After a while, the poor man received a second letter with the same content and the same words: “to be continued.” One letter after the other followed at certain intervals, always with the same sum and the same words. In the end, the happy recipient became so accustomed to the kind messages, that he simply always trusted in the words “to be continued.”

Is this not a beautiful illustration of the delightful Word of God from Psalm 23:6, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever”? The psalmist spoke these words sincerely. He had surely learned this practically in the great school of life that was perhaps already behind him. How much of the Lord’s goodness and mercy had this man of God not already experienced! He had walked over mountain peaks of splendor and glory but also through dark valleys of tribulation and bitterest suffering. Nevertheless, he was allowed to experience how one “continuation” replaced the other: continuations of the goodness and mercy of God. Even if the dear heavenly Father did not consider it good to give him everything at once, He surprised him from time to time with His benefits. Another time, this man of God confesses, “I have been young and *now* am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken” (Psalm 37:25).

Do these experiences not repeat themselves in the lives of all those who serve their God with all their heart? Yes, most certainly! If we could hear the voices of those who have already reached the future land of glory, they would confess to us that goodness and mercy have followed them all their lives, even though their paths have often seemed

darkened and the waves of tribulation have surged over their lives.

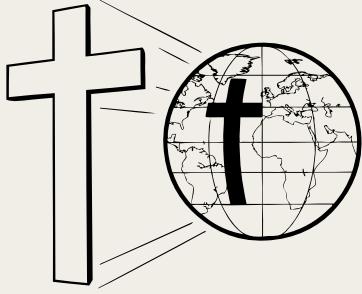
Every single child of God, wherever he may be, under whatever circumstances he may live, can gratefully testify how the continuations of God’s goodness and mercy take place in a perpetual manner. God has given us thousands of promises in His Word. These are all letters that have precious, valuable content. We have certainly all sufficiently experienced that these letters have always been delivered to us at the appropriate time. If we go through waters of tribulation and through the burning heat of temptations, the Lord sends us a letter through His Holy Spirit: “When you pass through the waters, I *will* be with you; and through the rivers they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you” (Isaiah 43:2).

It wouldn’t do us any good if God were to give us all the blessings at once. We would not be able to bear them. In His divine wisdom, He sends us one of His letters from time to time. In other words, He opens our eyes to a special promise that we could not perceive before because of our spiritual blindness. Then when we see it in the right way, we can also apply it to ourselves and receive great blessings.

God’s children have only one desire: “that I may dwell in the house of the LORD, all the days of my life” (Psalm 27:4). They also know that the continuation of all the goodness and mercy received will be for all eternity. If they have remained faithful, they will also remain in the house of the Lord for all eternity. But those who have not found the house of the Lord here will not find it for all eternity. For them there is a continuation in darkness, eternal night and despair.

Today, everyone can still reach the protective shelter of the heavenly Father and find a dwelling place in His house. Therefore, come all and “taste and see that the LORD *is* good” (Psalm 34:8).

A. Borbe



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Quiet Mothers

Do we know mothers who carry their burden quietly and patiently, without grumbling? Who are a silent light in their surroundings? If we were to look deeper into their silence—where it comes from—we would certainly be surprised more often than not, and give them special recognition.

Mother's Day, celebrated on a Sunday in May, elicits divided opinions on how it should be celebrated. Flowers and large or small gifts are usually given, but whether it is really a day of remembrance and thanksgiving remains to be asked. Truly, our mothers who give themselves sacrificially to their families, and especially those who have patiently endured years of hardship and borne much heartache, deserve to receive special recognition and thanksgiving at least once a year. We really owe our mothers a lot in this respect.

Being forgotten and cast aside would really hurt. Yet this is precisely what many mothers must endure as they grow older. We can hardly imagine how much suffering and pain weighs on the hearts of our nurturing mothers. Not surprisingly, many mothers avoid the fake attention of their children on Mother's Day. The flowers and gifts placed in their laps are not necessarily signs of love and appreciation. They can sometimes come from a guilty conscience, especially when their aging mother sits abandoned and forgotten in a retirement home all year long. Which today brings us to the thought of sharing a little about "silent mothers."

I have often seen and admired silent mothers and have been impressed by them, but I had never really asked myself why they were so quiet. I now know that it wasn't always their disposition but rather, their silence due to various circumstances.

For example, there was a woman living in our neighborhood whom I occasionally met doing her gardening. One day, she told me she was going to sell her house and move in with her son. However, just a few months later, I happened to meet her in a retirement home. She was quiet, but she asked me to come to her room, which she shared with three other women. Here, a stream of tears burst from her, and I saw a mother's heart filled with pain, betrayal, and brokenness.

A few years ago, I was about to leave for a trip abroad. Someone I knew heard about it and asked if I could possibly visit his mother, since she lived there. I knew her from previous visits and gladly promised to see her. One day I was sitting opposite her in her room where she lived in her children's house. It was a wet and cold winter day and unpleasantly chilly in her room. But she said nothing about it. Not a word of complaint or accusation passed her lips. Behind this reticence, however, I clearly recognized a heavy mother's heart. Finally, I was able to probe a little deeper into her silence. Her pension money helped with the payments of the house, but she was strictly forbidden to make the room any warmer. I tried to comfort her with compassion, and her grateful handshake and smile are still very much in my memory.

I saw another silent mother who had a large household. Every day, she was busy doing various hard tasks,



for she had to care for her family and the animals. There were not enough hours in the day to complete everything, so she worked till late into the night. Her tireless self-sacrifice and caring efforts were often rewarded with unkind, rude words. Silently, she had to accept the moodiness and dissatisfaction of her often-agitated husband. A single word of dissent could lead to dire consequences. She learned to tolerate and carry these painful injustices and be silent all the time.

“Silent mothers”—there are certainly not just a few.

In 2 Timothy 1:5, the mother and grandmother of Timothy are mentioned: “I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.” Both grandmother and mother had a strong faith, which they passed on to their son and grandson. What an exemplary life of faith they must have led! Paul could point this out

uninhibitedly and in grateful remembrance. Both of these women seemed to be “silent mothers.” We are told nothing about them being in the front ranks or of having any special standing. They had certainly learned “to be still in the Lord,” which was outshone only by the light of eternity. This quiet, light-filled life could obviously have had an effect on others and created great blessings.

We desperately need mothers like this in our families and communities today. They are true “home missionaries,” where the beginnings of an effective mission for this world lie. Mothers of faith and love provide the happiness for the children and the family.

Someone said, “I know I lack the eloquence to express what fills my heart at the thought that God gave me a mother who prayed for me.”

We owe our mothers special thanks and high recognition, but not only on Mother’s Day!

From the Working World (6)

Now that my course was over, the exams would soon follow. As so often before, I was hopeful and trusted in God's help this time as well. Yet when the results came, I had to face the reality that I had not achieved the score necessary to pass. Initially, this was a setback, a completely new situation for me.

In some ways I felt like Peter sinking in the water, the bottom disappearing beneath his feet, and the storm and waves dominating his vision.

Similarly, a storm arose in my mind, bringing with it worries, discouragement, and questions without answers. Doubts rushed at me, urging me to give up. I began to pray that God would direct my thoughts and bring clarity.

Remembering the first week of the course, I recalled our instructor saying something to the effect of, "You will come to a point where you only want to give up—and this point will come. But we are not giving up!" A guest preacher once passed on similar words to us in a discussion after the service, especially in relation to our life of faith: "Never, never give up!" Very quickly it became clear that giving up would by no means be the right option.

The following Sunday, I was especially encouraged by the message in the worship service. The preacher spoke about the purpose of trials, temptations, and difficulties in our life of faith. God wants to shape us, strengthen us, and cause us to grow through the hard times. Such spiritual trials mold us and bring us closer to God.

Following God's path does not mean we won't face difficulties and challenges, but God has prom-

ised to always be with us and to help us in all situations.

After some prayer, I was once again able to become quiet and confident inside. I still didn't know how things would turn out, but God gave me a special sense of security in His loving Father's hands.

At that time, I had two new jobs lined up. Although I still wasn't finished with the degree as planned, a door had already opened, allowing me to have a new employment contract.

In the meantime, the first Coronavirus lockdown came. While most of my colleagues were working from home, I was allowed to start my new job in the middle of the lockdown. Later, in view of the many unknown circumstances surrounding the pandemic, my boss mentioned how they had briefly considered whether I could really start the training phase, but they had then decided to go ahead.

It was a miracle for me, with striking proof of God's faithfulness to us. My faith and trust in God were greatly strengthened through this.

In the second round of examinations, I tangibly experienced God's closeness and support, and passed the exams with His help. For this, I am grateful to Him from the bottom of my heart!

"My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation. I will sing to the Lord, because He has dealt bountifully with me."
Psalm 13:5-6

*Dina Grötzingler
Eppingen, Germany*

How to Bring Joy to a Mother's Heart

"I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth" (3 John 1:4).

We mothers who love the Lord also have no greater joy than to see our children living in the truth and serving God and people.

choice of career and how they can use their gifts to God's glory rather than only living for themselves (Colossians 3:17).

What a joy when . . .

. . . our children have been born again and it is evident in their lives.

. . . they gladly fellowship with God and His Word.

. . . they read their Bibles daily and also follow a Bible reading plan in order to become rooted deeper in all of God's Word (Colossians 3:16).

. . . they allow themselves to be admonished by the Word of God and take seriously what God says in it (2 Timothy 3:16).

What a joy when . . .

. . . our children believe in the power of prayer, bring all their worries to the Lord, and also intercede for others in prayer (Ephesians 6:18).

What a joy when . . .

. . . our children gladly participate in the worship services, youth meetings, choir and instrument practices and faithfully fulfill their duties there. It is so nice when you can count on them to be actively involved (Hebrews 10:24-25).

What a joy when . . .

. . . they use their gifts in the church, for example, by singing, playing instruments, working with the children, baking, cleaning, helping with the media work and with building, or even if they are simply an encouragement to someone in the church through their testimony or friendliness (Colossians 3:23).

What a joy when . . .

. . . our children set good goals for their lives, when they consider which gifts God has given them in their

What a joy when . . .

. . . we notice our children trying to use their time wisely, and while cleaning the house they listen to a sermon or memorize Bible verses.

. . . they also have good spiritual fellowship with their friends, contemplating (studying) God's Word together and praying together (Colossians 4:5).

What a joy when . . .

. . . our children show love toward the family and others too, and can laugh together and treat each other with love and respect. How spoiled we feel as parents or even grandparents and friends when they cook a special meal for us and serve it in the garden.

. . . they write nice thank you cards, detailing what we as parents or friends mean to them (Matthew 19:19).

What a joy when . . .

. . . their highest priority in life is to please God (Matthew 6:33).

What a joy when . . .

. . . we all can count on God's grace and strength, for we can do *nothing* in our own power! (2 Corinthians 12:9).

Thank you to all young people who bring great joy to their parents and to their Lord and Savior, by God's grace *alone!*

*Jeanette Stieben
Shalom, Bolivia*

No Word Shall Return Void

As the sun shone warmly, a woman sauntered joyfully down the country road, carrying a heavy basket. It contained all kinds of goods she hoped to sell to people on her way to the villages.

This godly woman was known throughout the region. Everyone liked to see her and buy at least a little something from her, because her friendly nature won the hearts of the people. If at times her devout words risked annoying some, they nevertheless tolerated them because it was clear they came from the heart, and her life exemplified her faith.

Suddenly, the woman stopped. At the edge of the meadow sat a shabby wanderer bathed in sunlight. Yet he did not look happy or content despite the sunshine and the beautiful scenery.

The woman couldn't help but walk up to the man, wish him a friendly "good day," and inquire about his plans.

"I just go from place to place," he replied. "Where there's food, I stay a little longer."

"And where is your home?" the woman asked.

The wanderer shrugged his shoulders. "I have no home. My father and mother died long ago. As for anyone else, no one cares about me anymore."

The woman's eyes begged to question him, and this must have inspired the man's trust. He began to talk. He revealed all manner of wrong choices, which he had formerly shared only with his wandering brothers, though in a completely different manner. What he had previously always touted as heroic deeds he now confessed as sin and error.

The woman allowed the man to talk. Then she spoke. An open heart waited for the words addressed to him. No one had ever spoken to him like that before.

Neither of them realized how long they had been talking, when suddenly the woman said, "But now I must go, otherwise I won't make it home before evening." She gave him a coin and also pressed a tract into his hand.

As the wanderer watched the woman leave, he began to read the tract. What she had told him became even more meaningful.

Years passed by, and one Sunday, the woman was at a missions conference. She had aged quite a bit. When the meeting ended, a man suddenly approached her. "Do you remember me?" he asked.

The woman looked at him with surprise. No, she really didn't know him.

Then the man, now a preacher, told her, "I am that wanderer to whom you gave the tract on that country road years ago. You encouraged me so kindly, and since then I've become a different person, glad to be able to witness of the restoring grace of Christ. But I also know, next to God, I owe the change in my life to you and the loving encounter we had!"

How often we struggle to know whether our kind words or distributed tracts bear any fruit! We see so little of it. We do our duty day in and day out. Time will tell what has become of the seeds we sow. Only one thing is required of you: faithfulness. Faithfulness brings blessing! ■

Dear Children,

I want to write to you about obedience to your parents, because I love you children very much and want you all to go to heaven. And I believe you want that also.

I often see children being disobedient, and Jesus does not like that. He wants you to obey your parents. Listen to what God's Word says. In Ephesians 6:1-3, we read, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. 'Honor your father and mother,' which is the first commandment with promise: 'that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.'"

Now, dear children, there is a deep meaning in the expression, "May it be well with you." You would like to have this well-being. But the other thing God demands is not followed by many children, which is why they cannot be well either. On the other hand, those children who love their parents and appreciate and obey God's Word are well.

You children who know God's Word have already heard about Samuel, how incredibly obedient he was to Eli the priest by whom he was raised, and how well things went for him. The Lord spoke to him even when he was a boy, for God loved it when Samuel was obedient. And later, the Lord was also able to use him and let him live long, as God's Word says.

But Eli's children were disobedient. We see that

things did not go well for them, nor did they live long, but they perished in war. God punished them for their disobedience. But that is not all. If the disobedient are already miserable here, how will they be in eternity?

O dear children, may God help you to obey the commandment to be obedient to your parents, that it may go well with you!

But it is not meant that only the little ones should follow this commandment. No, it applies to you children who are almost grown up too. You should obey your parents too, if you want to be blessed. I have seen how 15-year-old children carried out their own will and did not listen to their parents. Dear young people, if you act like this, it cannot be well with you. Obey your parents, who do the best for you and seek your welfare.

I want to tell you something from my own experience. I am no longer young, but I was with my dear parents for a long time. I tried to be obedient to them all the time. I don't know if I ever said, "I am old enough; I can do what I want!" If something happened that grieved my mother, I asked her forgiveness. Now she is dead, and I am very sorry about that. But I am glad I was able to honor my mother. And if I still had her, I would try even harder to do this.

Dear children, do not insist on your own will, but remember God's Word and obey it, and it will go well with you.

Anna Ebel

The Image of Mother



Many years ago, five young men from Pennsylvania moved to the promising “Northwest.” Perhaps it was the thought of a better income opportunity that drove them far away. Some of the things they encountered out there they had never seen in their little hometown, including many of their temptations.

After a long time, they all came home one after the other, and soon recognized how they had changed. Of the five, only one came back without sin and burden. Their lives testified to this. What had made the difference in the one?

“Say, how is it that you didn’t go the way of the world like your friends?”

“Because I carried an image with me.”

“Oh yes, a picture of a loved one from home.”

“Oh no, not a picture like that but a different kind. It was my last morning at my parents’ house. We sat at the breakfast table as usual. The awareness that I would be saying goodbye in a few hours somewhat inhibited the conversation. After eating, Father reached for the Bible to read a passage from it, as was his custom. But

no sooner had he begun when tears choked his voice, and with a wave of his hand he handed the book to Mother. She finished reading the chapter, and then we all knelt down to pray. Father began to pray, but again tears choked his voice. Then Mother put her hand on his shoulder and prayed fervently:

“O God, we thank You for our Jim. We thank You that You have kept him faithfully believing until now. Now that he is leaving us, we want to entrust him to You who alone are able to protect him, even in a foreign place. Let his feet never depart from the path of truth, honor, and purity. We beseech Thee, Father in heaven: bring him back to us as faithful and pure as he now departs from us.”

“This last experience in my parents’ house and their dear prayers remained unforgettable to me. I was determined to love my Savior and Redeemer, Jesus Christ, and to serve Him in all circumstances. In doing so, I would bring my parents joy and pride and uphold their reputation with honor.”

Proverbs 23:25 says, “Let your father and your mother be glad.” ■



Calling to Remembrance Mother and Grandmother

Timothy, a co-worker with the apostle Paul, had two great advantages. First, he knew the Holy Scriptures since childhood (2 Timothy 3:15), and, secondly, he could “call to remembrance the genuine faith” that dwelt both in his grandmother and mother (2 Timothy 1:5). Although not prerequisites for a godly life, these advantages are a huge blessing. Looking back at the influence of my own grandmother and mother, I see these benefits in my own life. Both my grandmother and mother exhibited the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). Their lives exemplified what a Christian walk should look like. Some people claim that it is impossible to live a holy life, but when I look back on these two people in my life who exhibited holiness, I cannot use the excuse of some, who dismiss all Christians they claim to know as hypocrites.

Proverbs 22:6 says, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.” From a very young age, I was taken along to church on Sundays and to prayer meetings on Wednesdays. Other children were allowed to stay home on Wednesday, but we were expected to be at prayer meeting. This is a habit that has stayed with me. Missing a prayer meeting on Wednesday, unless there is a really good reason, is not an option. It is a habit I am glad my mother instilled in me. I remember times when Mother and I would pray together and claim the promise Jesus gave us in Matthew 18:19, “that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.” I remember answers to prayer. Now that my mother has passed on, when there is a special burden that is pressing, I have the privilege of uniting in prayer with my wife. Finding someone to pray with when you are down or when you have experienced great joy is a habit that brings great benefits. When I was with my grandparents, I remember them doing devotions and kneeling down to pray together. These memories are inspirational. Reading the Bible was not something that you did only on Sundays.

I remember Grandmother sitting at her sewing machine and singing. She told me that when she had times of affliction or temptation, she would start singing songs of Zion, and then the tempter would flee. How often since have Christian hymns been an inspiration and a blessing to me. The Bible says, “In everything give thanks” (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Listening to the heart-breaking stories of the war, where my grandmother and mother experienced hunger and great danger at times, I was impressed by the thankfulness they exhibited to God for bringing them through. Instead of complaining bitterly about losing all they had, they praised God that they did not starve to death and that He had spared their lives. Grandmother experienced much suffering in her lifetime and bore it with patience. She would often testify of how she experienced God’s direct intervention and help. In particular, she wrote in her diary of a miraculous, instantaneous healing that she experienced when she was still in her twenties. This was later verified by X-ray. Her strong faith in God was not just for the spiritual but also for her physical and natural needs. She was a prayer warrior and one who helped bear the burdens of others.

The last time I remember being with her was in the hospital. She had stomach cancer and had grown so weak that she could not even sit up on her own anymore. She was in pain and very frail. All at once, she turned to my grandfather and said, “Rudolf, do not pray that I get better. I would like to go home” (by which she meant heaven). And then she said, “I am so happy that I could just jump for joy.” In a weak voice, she started to sing, “I will sing hallelujah, for there’s joy in the Lord, and He fills my heart with rapture as I rest on His Word.” The legacy my grandmother and my mother left me is worth more than a rich earthly inheritance. Like Timothy, I am truly blessed.

Gerhard Mielke
Hamilton, Ontario



The Christian Home

The Word of God contains instructions on how to have a happy home, full of joy and harmony here on Earth. Unfortunately, there are many unhappy homes in the world, even among those who call themselves followers of Jesus, because Jesus does not control neither heart nor home. Where Jesus is Lord, there is peace, joy, and abundant blessing. If Jesus does not rule in a person's heart, then that person is spiritually dead, and true peace cannot exist in the heart or home.

To start, we want to look at God's Word about a woman's role. In 1 Peter 3:1-4, we read, "Wives, likewise, *be* submissive to your own husbands, that even if some do not obey the word, they, without a word, may be won by the conduct of their wives, when they observe your chaste conduct *accompanied* by fear. Do not let your adornment be *merely* outward—arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on *fine* apparel—rather *let it be* the hidden person of the heart, with the incorruptible *beauty* of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious in the sight of God."

Peter teaches us how women should act towards their husband. Even if a woman is married to an unbeliever, her godly walk can win him without words. Her beauty should not be merely outward but also inward, the hidden beauty of the heart and a gentle and loving spirit—that is to be the beauty that adorns a Christian woman.

Colossians 3:18 also talks about a submissive role but adds "as is fitting in the Lord." A woman cannot submit to her husband in things that are contrary to the Word of God. A Christian husband will not demand such a thing. Yet what if a wife experiences salvation, but her husband has not yet become a Christian? Paul also gives advice for such a case.

Now we want to look at a husband's role. In 1 Peter 3:7, the apostle Peter addresses husbands. He says, "Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as *being* heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered." Here, the apostle gives important instructions about how the

husband should live with his wife. The husband should show her due respect and honor so his prayers aren't hindered.

This exhorts the men to be loving in their relationship with their wives, not bitter, but kind and courteous. In Ephesians 5:25, Paul writes that husbands are to love their wives in the same way that Christ loved the church. In verses 28 and 29, they are told to love them as their own bodies. If these scriptures are lived out, there will be no strife. In such a home there will be happiness and harmony, and as a result, such a home will be light to the world and salt to the earth.

Raising children is also an important part of home life. In Ephesians 6:1–4, we read, “Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother,’ which is the first commandment with promise: ‘that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.’ And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Here we have instructions for both children and parents.

Children's obedience and honor to their parents has the promise of long life: “That it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth.” Then Paul tells the fathers not to “provoke [their] children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.” Children must have full confidence in the faith of their parents and in the parents themselves if we expect them to become faithful followers of Jesus.

If pride is planted in those young hearts instead of reverence for God, then it will be difficult to lead the children to the Lord. The parents first need to be a good example, otherwise they will not be able to influence their children in the right way. The wise man Solomon said, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it” (Proverbs 22:6). It is very unwise to sow seeds of malice into the hearts of the young. The Lord expects parents to raise

their children in such a manner that includes “training and admonition of the Lord.” We see the tragic result in the case of Eli, the priest, who did not admonish his children in the fear of the Lord. God's punishment was severe (see 1 Samuel 2:22–31; 3:10–14).

Family devotions are also very important. It is a sad state of affairs where reverence for God and family devotions are missing in a home. True Christianity is lacking there. Children cannot be raised to God's glory in such a sad home.

Children must learn to respect the Word of God. If parents do not exhibit love for God, for His Word, and love for God's people, how are the children supposed to acquire it? If parents speak disrespectfully about their brothers and sisters in the Lord in front of their children, then the children will have a similar attitude.

I personally know of parents who would openly criticize other Christians in the hearing of their children. They were surprised that their children did not give their hearts to the Lord. When a visiting pastor came, they asked him to speak with their children to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. The pastor spoke with them, and they replied that they were not willing to take that step because the people at church were hypocrites and did not live up to what they professed to be. The pastor asked what made them think so. They replied, “We hear about it all the time.”

The pastor told the parents that they were the reason their children did not want to follow the Lord. Recognizing their sin, they asked God to forgive them, called their children, and asked the children to forgive them as well. The Lord was gracious, allowing a revival to break out, and moving the children to turn to the Lord. All of them found salvation.

Such cases are not rare. May God grant repentance to all who are in a similar situation, that they may recognize their offenses and clear up the matter with God and with their children. ■

Choose Joy

At first glance, this challenge may seem like a contradiction, at least in an article addressed to seniors. Such an invitation would be more appropriate for those with life ahead of them. For someone who is already “over the hill,” what would be the reason to rejoice?

Paul saw this from a different perspective. Not only did he choose joy, he also invites others to rejoice. If you read his letters, sooner or later he talks about joy. For example, in 2 Corinthians 7:4, he writes, “I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation.” The ESV translation expresses it this way: “I am overflowing with joy.” Despite the most difficult circumstances and adversities, Paul found reasons to rejoice. What might these reasons have been? If we take a closer look at his letters, we find repeated references to them. Let’s take a look at Philip-
pians to see what Paul was rejoicing about. Why don’t you open your Bible for a little Bible study to answer the following question: What was the cause of the apostle Paul’s joy?

Philippians 1:3 – His Relationship with God

Immediately following the greeting, Paul brings God into the picture, calling Him “his God.” He has a relationship with the living God, the God “Who made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:2). He not only knows something about God, but knows Him on a personal level. In addition, God is also called the “Father” Who knows about the needs of His “children” before they ask Him, and He provides for them.

Philippians 1:12–14 – God’s Guidance in His Life

Paul refers to “the things which happened to me” in verse 12 and subsequently speaks of his “chains.” His

condition would certainly have given him reason enough to sing a lament. But he does the exact opposite and writes to the brethren about God’s leading in his life and how God is using even this difficult situation to further the gospel. As long as Christ is preached, he rejoices (verse 18). He declares that “his God” knows what He is doing—even in his life.

Philippians 1:21a – The Bond to the Son of God, Jesus Christ

We have access to the Father through His Son Jesus Christ. The dividing wall of sin separating us from God was removed by the death of Jesus. This makes

it possible for us to have fellowship with God. Repeatedly in the New Testament, we come across the words “through Him,” or rather, “through His Son.” Consequently, Paul gives the Lord Jesus Christ a place of honor in his letters. In Philip-
pians for example, he mentions Him over forty times. He emphasizes this by writing, “For me to live is Christ” (1:21). Similarly, he gives Him preeminence in Philip-
pians 3:7–8.

Philippians 1:21b – His Hope for the Future

“To die is gain.” He does not cling desperately to life on earth. If you look at his life, you find it was filled with many tribulations and hardships. He was all about spreading the Gospel, or as he calls it, “bearing fruit” (1:22). It is said he traveled some 21,000 km (13,049 mi) on his missionary journeys during a time when there were neither cars, trains, nor airplanes. Dying would have ended all hardships. But that was not the crucial reason for his statement. He knew that when he closed his eyes here, he would be in heaven with Jesus. In the interim, his earthly and mortal body, the old, slowly



decaying body, would transform into a resurrection body and live henceforth without infirmity. His heart's desire was "if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead" (3:11). He repeatedly associates the thought of dying with the Second Coming of the Lord and thus the end of all suffering on earth.

Philippians 3:12-14 – The Victory Prize before Him

Not yet having reached his goal, Paul speaks of this overwhelming longing to be there. You can literally sense it when he uses words like "press on" and "reaching forward." In the same context, he mentions, "forgetting those things which are behind." He could say this because his past was in order; thus, he writes, "I was . . . but no longer." With the goal of victory before him, he makes every effort to reach the prize.

Philippians 4:13 – His Peace in the Lord

Paul had experienced the peaks and valleys of life; consequently, he speaks of knowing "how to be abased, and . . . how to abound. Everywhere and in all things . . . to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (4:12). He had learned to accept and deal with every situation. He also lets us know how he accomplished that. The peace he found in Jesus Christ made him strong. With Christ, he could face and handle any situation.

Philippians 4:6 – The Power of Prayer

He directs the readers of his letter not to worry, but to pray in all situations. "Let your requests be made known to God" was his recommendation. No doubt he was speaking from experience. Praying was a matter of course for Paul. When he was helpless, afraid, imprisoned, despondent, or in turmoil, he simply gave his worries to the Lord. Through prayer, he found help, encouragement, and strength, and received direction for the next step.

In summary, Paul found his joy not in circumstances or material things but in his relationship with the Lord. Pardoned and blessed, he lived with the Lord as his constant companion, and lived for Him. He waited for His return, sustained by the hope of being with the Lord forever (1 Thessalonians 4:17b).

In Philippians 4:4, he also urges the recipients of the letter to rejoice: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" The defining words are "in the Lord." For us, this means, "though our outer self is wasting away, our inner self is being renewed day by day" (2 Corinthians 4:16). In plain language, even if despair and doom is everywhere, no one can take away our inner joy.

The Lord bless you as you reflect on God's rich blessings. Again and always, choose joy!

Harry Semenjuk

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Pentecost Conference 2022 - Herford, Germany

Due to the current situation, the June 4-6, 2022 meetings will be primarily livestreamed.

Access and more information can be found at www.gghf.de

Germany Camp Meeting 2022

August 13-18, 2022 services will be held in Blaubeuren, Germany.

Exact times, further information, and registration can be found at

www.lagerversammlung.de

Church Conference in Edmonton

Special worship services will be held in Edmonton, Canada, on September 3-4, 2022.

Service times and more information can be found at

www.edmontonchurchofgod.com

A Mother's Heart

*A mother's heart, faithful and true,
Will care for you in joy and sorrow.
If others don't care what you do,
Your mother thinks of your tomorrows.*

*Heed her advice, it serves you well;
She's there, though others may despise you.
She'll love you always, you can tell,
Her precious time she's set aside too.*

*When you have erred and need a hand
To guide you in your consternation;
If no one else may understand,
A mother's heart will hear with patience.*

*If you're cast out and in despair,
And others mock and they mistreat you,
A mother's heart will always care
And pray that trouble will retreat too.*

*A mother's love, faithful and true;
Say, who can fathom such a blessing?
The comfort that is there for you,
What can compare when it is missing?*

*The love of God is richer still,
His heart and mercy even greater.
Should Mother's love fail then He will
Be faithful, as your God and Maker.*

*As long as Mother still is here,
Thank God and help to ease her sorrow;
For there are few on earth so dear
Who give us strength for our tomorrows.*

H. G. Babel

