



# Foundation of Faith

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THE JOY OF PENTECOST

THE CHURCH'S POWER OF ATTRACTION

NOT FOR MEN?

FASTING—A PRIVILEGE TODAY

## THE CHURCH AFTER PENTECOST



# Content

## THE CHURCH AFTER PENTECOST

### 4 The Early Church's Power of Attraction

*What do our churches look like today? The church of God should be a bright light that also attracts people today.*

### 5 The Joy of Pentecost

### 6 They Were All Filled with the Holy Spirit

### 7 The Power Behind Her Life

### 8 Life That Overflows

*Each of us is called to a life filled with the Holy Spirit overflowing with the fruit of the Spirit.*

### 10 Sanctification—A Command for Christian Perfection

RADIO BROADCAST

### 12 The Powerful Testimony

### 27 Announcements

### 3 Editorial

YOUTH PAGE

### 14 From the Working World (7)

### 15 Confess Christ—But How?

*Why might a testimony for Christ not be convincing?*

### 16 Fiery Coals

CHILDREN'S CORNER

### 17 A Light Shines

SOMETHING FOR THE FAMILY

### 18 And They Brought Children to Jesus

### 20 Not For Men?

### 21 „That's You, Joseph!“

### 22 Fasting—A Privilege Even Today

### 24 Missions Report—Bolivia

POEMS / SONGS

### 28 Yielding to the Spirit of God

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## *Editorial*

*Dear Reader,*

*Trees, bushes, and other plants all start by putting down roots before growing, blooming, and bearing fruit. Although most apparent in the natural world, this principle can also be applied to the kingdom of God and, more specifically, to His church. As the Son of God, Jesus put this principle into practice as well, saying, “I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18).*

*“There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots” (Isaiah 11:1). This godly root bears godly fruit, as we read, “Thus says the Lord of hosts, saying: ‘Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the Lord’” (Zechariah 6:12). The name Zemach, translated here as Branch, also means sprout or seedling. It refers to the Messiah, our Lord Jesus Christ, Who will branch out to build His unique, beautiful, and glorious church.*

*The temple of the Lord is the house of the living God; it is His church as revealed on Pentecost, when the group of twelve disciples grew to 120 people waiting to be filled by God’s Spirit. This figure rose to 3000, then 5000, and soon became too large to count as Jesus’ work and salvation brought together Jews and Gentiles, uniting believers from many communities and nations, including the Old Testament people of God.*

*This miracle was already envisioned in the Old Testament: “I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory . . . The glory of this latter temple shall be greater than the former . . . And in this place I will give peace” (Haggai 2:7-9).*

*The first house, the temple of Solomon, was magnificent, but what does our Lord say? “Indeed a greater than Solomon is here” (Luke 11:31). Salvation, peace, redemption, and eternal life can only be found in Jesus Christ, the Son of God.*

*H. D. Nimz*



# The Early Church's Power of Attraction

*“And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch. Yet none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly. And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women” (Acts 5:12–14).*

There was something about the early church that the people around them admired. The psalmist David could have been describing the New-Testament Church when he wrote, “Beautiful in elevation, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north” (Psalm 48:2). It also fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy that “it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the LORD’s house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it” (Isaiah 2:2).

This puts the church in an exalted light. It was elevated not by people but by God Himself, Who raised Jesus Christ from the dead, and Who raises us up today. Jesus says, “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself” (John 12:32).

This can also be applied to the church. If the church meets the Bible’s standards, Christ is exalted and draws people to Himself and to the church through His great power of attraction.

When placed in the light, the church of God has a great power of attraction. This became gloriously clear, both on Pentecost and later, when people from throughout the known world of the time found new life and were born into the kingdom of God.

The early church’s power of attraction can still be enjoyed by the church today—as long as it holds the same place and position in the world as the New Testament Church. That is an absolute necessity. Although it is true that some things have changed over time, humanity is largely still the same.

We should ask ourselves exactly what it was that made the First-Century church so attractive. It was the pure and unadulterated gospel; it was spiritual life, complete harmony, brotherly love, and unity combined with the great deeds done in the early church. These are the things that led people to hold the church in high esteem. The city of Jerusalem had seen many important meetings take place throughout its history,

but none drew as much public attention as the meeting of the one hundred twenty disciples on Pentecost. True, some people made fun of them, but the ones who had an interest in God respected the believers, and many were added to their number.

Some may say the people of the time were attracted by a sense of novelty. This may be true in some cases, but souls kept joining after Pentecost as well. The truly righteous were attracted by the spirit that lived within the disciples and the whole church, and they looked beyond appearances.

The church of today must return to the state of the early church at the time of Pentecost and following. For a whole congregation to be filled with the Holy Spirit would be a completely new experience in some places and certainly attract people’s attention to the local congregation. A congregation filled with the Holy Spirit and producing the fruit of the Spirit will exert an attraction on its environment and be well respected by the people, just as the early church was.

Do we not sometimes want to lower our eyes in shame when we see how poorly the church of God is represented in some places? The prophet Isaiah says, “Arise, shine; for your light has come! And the glory of the LORD is risen upon you” (Isaiah 60:1). “At evening time it shall happen *that* it will be light” (Zechariah 14:7). We live in a time in which the light of the church should shine as brightly and clearly as during the time of the apostles. Messengers of God should preach full salvation—a message aimed at showing the world a church that is as glorious and beautiful as it was at the beginning.

What could be more marvelous and sublime than the church of God in all its glory and beauty? That would be a church whose members have been sanctified and where all members do the Lord’s work in harmony, with the Holy Spirit in their hearts. Such a church will always have the power of attraction. Such a church is worthy to be called the church of God. ■

# The Joy of Pentecost

*“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him’” (John 14:23).*

As we celebrate Pentecost, we return in our mind’s eye to that time when the Holy Spirit filled the first followers of the Lord with His power and joy of victory. What a blessed time that was when weak, fearful men were transformed into men of faith! Not in vain had the Lord commanded them, “but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). Since this power had come over them, they could now testify of the crucified and risen Savior. Yes, such a fire filled the hearts of the disciples that those who knew nothing of the Holy Spirit said, “They are full of new wine” (Acts 2:13). But Peter, one of the Twelve, stood up and said, “These are not drunk, as you suppose” (verse 15).

The disciples were so full of joy, and their hearts were so filled with the love of God, that they had to proclaim it to others. The Spirit of the Lord could work on whoever was willing. The first thing that happened was that a great sadness came over their souls. In the anguish of their hearts, they cried out, “What shall we do?” Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” We read further on that “those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them” (see Acts 2:37, 38–39, 41). What success and what power the Spirit of God was able to work here!

Throughout the centuries, faithful people have been gripped again and again by this message of the disciples. There is a great multitude who have been seized by the power of the Holy Spirit and have been allowed to taste how glorious it is to have become a follower of Jesus. Every child today can rejoice and be glad to have fellowship with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The heart will overflow with gratitude,

and this thankfulness, which honors the Father, will reveal itself in a true and faithful Christian walk.

Jesus says in John 14:23, “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” In verse 21 He says, “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.” Yes, it is wonderful that the Lord loves us so dearly!

This certainty is always so precious and glorious to me, but at the same time it also makes me feel small and humble, because it shows me my small love, my weakness, and my helplessness. Only the thought that Jesus alone is my strength and my power always gives me new courage to throw myself before His throne with renewed devotion and to ask Him for the fullness of His Holy Spirit, as well as for this coming Pentecost celebration. We are to shine in this world, and we can only do that if we are filled with the Holy Spirit, Who makes the weak strong, the disheartened courageous, and the unsteady overcomers.

Jesus wants to reveal Himself to us, and where this happens there is joy, delight, and glorious bliss. Only when the Holy Spirit illuminates us with His fire does the joy of Pentecost set in, and only then can we testify with joyful praise of the great love and grace of our God and His Son Jesus Christ.

And how important is the word of our Lord and Master to His disciples in John 14:19, “A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also.” This word is also true for us, for we can see Him in His beauty and love. We can also clearly observe that the world cannot see Him. Don’t they also laugh at us? They cannot comprehend Him, but we can and may. Praise God, we may take hold of Him, and then we will have true joy at Pentecost!

*H. Schulz*

# They Were All Filled with the Holy Spirit

*“When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 2:1-4).*

In Christianity, three main festivals are celebrated. Of these, Christmas is the most prominent in the Western world. But what would Christmas be without Good Friday and Easter? And what would these great commemorative days be without Pentecost? Without Pentecost, the work of Christ would have remained unfinished, because ultimately humanity was to be brought into an intimate relationship with God, which can only be possible through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, Pentecost is then the culmination of the great work of redemption.

Today, the word “Pentecost” is unfortunately meaningless to most people, for they do not know the Holy Spirit. Is this not a testimony of great poverty? Must we count these as belonging to “the world” and apply Jesus’ word to them, for He said, “the world cannot receive [the Spirit of truth], because it neither sees Him nor knows Him” (John 14:17)?

What was Pentecost for Jesus’ disciples, and what was it for the first Christians? In Acts 2, it is stated that they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. This infilling with the Spirit was a tremendous experience for them. Each of them knew what had happened to him. There was no doubt or argument about it. For them, it was an experienced reality. The promised Spirit had come and taken possession of them. What the Lord had said shortly before His crucifixion was fulfilled: “If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him” (John 14:23). This was the great event of Pentecost among the first Christians. We must notice the great difference between then and now.

What is the Holy Spirit? He is not an idea, not an effect, not even a force or an energy, but He is God. After Christ accomplished the work of redemption and ascended to heaven, the Holy Spirit came to the orphaned disciples. He came to take the place of Jesus Christ in the lives of the people. Just as Christ came to reveal the Father, so the Holy Spirit reveals Him now. The sphere of His influence are people, whom He wants to bring into a right relationship with God. He produces knowledge of sins, gives divine sorrow for sins, and leads to the fountain of grace. He represents His own in prayer before God with inexpressible groaning and gives strength for the glorious service of God, even if this includes the way of the cross and suffering. Blessed is the man whom the Holy Spirit can fill with Himself!

The coming of the Holy Spirit brought the greatest transformation among the nations. Dark paganism, bound by superstition and sin, was broken through; rigid Judaism was overcome; and thousands found salvation in Christ. Without the work of the Holy Spirit, this would never have happened. Even more, without Him there would be no Christianity, no salvation, and no eternal life.

What the Spirit of God was in the morning time of Christianity, He also wants to be today. Without a doubt, He loves people, cares for them, and wants to bring everyone to a true conversion. Where He is given room to work, something happens that is very clearly proven by God’s Word and history.

Even today, precisely the same experiences could take place as they did at the time of the first Christians. The reason they do not is not because of Him, but be-

cause of those who profess to be Christians. The Holy Spirit no longer finds opportunity to work in churches and worship services as He could do when the great revivals took place in the last centuries. Worldliness and modernism displace Him, and a vacuum is formed which is filled by all kinds of entertainment and empty programming in churches.

And should the Holy Spirit still desire to work, He cannot, when the people attempt to do it all. This shows that the Spirit of God is deprived of His office. No wonder then, that society is spiritually dead and people are found of which the Scripture says, “that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (see Galatians 5:19–21). How differ-

ent it was at the time of early Christianity! Everyone was full of the Holy Spirit, and everyone possessed the element of spiritual life.

Every one of us needs the Holy Spirit. Without His presence, we are lost. We should pray this psalmist’s plea more than ever before: “Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me” (Psalm 51:11).

Yes, even more, God expects each person to surrender himself to Him as a living sacrifice consumed in the service of God by the Holy Spirit. Only when the Holy Spirit can fill a person can their life become purposeful and blessed. Therefore, see to it that you also are filled with the Holy Spirit!

*Gustav Sonnenberg*

## The Power Behind Her Life

One day, a Jewish businessman, wanting to learn about Christianity, approached a missionary who ministered to those of the Jewish faith. When the missionary asked about the reason behind his request, the businessman answered:

I observed Christians for twenty years and concluded that they were not in any way better than Jews. But yesterday morning, I gave one of my employees a task—nothing bad, just to fudge the truth a little, like everyone in business does. However, she refused, saying that it went against her conscience.

After my initial surprise, I grew angry and threatened to fire her, but she remained firm, saying that, as a Christian, she could not act against her conscience. This made me even angrier, and I called in another employee, who immediately did the task.

That evening, I sat alone in my office, going over the morning’s confrontation in my mind. I could not stop thinking about that

employee’s love of truth and her strength of character. Eventually, I got up and went to the apartment where she lived with her mother. Seeing me at her door, she stiffened in surprise, probably thinking that I had come to tell her she was fired. However, she quickly recovered from her shock, giving me a friendly greeting and standing tall. I felt a little self-conscious, but finally began.

“Miss, I have to ask you something, You told me today that as a Christian, you could not go against your conscience. Tell me, where do you get that much courage and strength? Is Christ really a power in your life?”

With shining eyes, she answered, “No, He is *the* power of my life!”

Our conversation continued from there, and I ended up requesting an address where I could learn more about this power that I had long been seeking. That brings us to today. So I am asking you to teach me about this religion. ■

# Life That Overflows

**W**e find the most wonderful promises from our Savior in God's Word: "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly" (John 10:10).—"But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14).

Such was the life of the apostles after the eventful day of Pentecost. Fearful, selfish followers became outspoken and heroic messengers of Jesus Christ, proclaiming His Gospel with wonderful power and joy. One was Stephen, "a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5), and Barnabas, "a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith" (Acts 11:24). The first deacons were "full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom" (Acts 6:3). Paul traveled from place to place on his great missionary journeys "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 13:9). We could add to the list God's messengers of times past who worked for their Lord in the power of the Holy Spirit. In Galatians 5:22–23, we read of the precious fruit that a life of the Spirit produces.

## **A Life of Overflowing Love**

See how the apostles were filled with a burning zeal to preach the gospel of Christ's love to all people. See how Stephen, Peter, and Paul lovingly committed themselves to reaching a dying world!

Also, in the last centuries there were people like David Brainerd, Adoniram Judson, David Liv-

ingstone, and John G. Paton who suffered greatly because the love of God filled their hearts and motivated them. They put their lives on the line to share the love of God with people on different continents.

Do we also live a life of overflowing love? Do we know its power, joy, and fullness? If not, then we are missing the high calling of the One who came that we might have love, not limited love, but overflowing love.

## **A Life of Overflowing Peace**

"But the fruit of the Spirit is . . . peace" (Galatians 5:22). "The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7).

There is a peace "that surpasses all understanding," a peace of which it is said, "You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You" (Isaiah 26:3). This peace is not dependent on external circumstances but on the indwelling Christ. This peace cannot be disrupted by any storm. It is peace in the fullness of the Spirit.

The surface of the sea surges, foams, and crashes, cresting and falling with every passing wind that moves it. But it also has depths that remain peacefully undisturbed for centuries, untouched and unmoved by wind and waves.

In the same manner, there are immovable depths of peace for

the fearful heart which can be explained by the wonderful words, "the peace of God." This is the peace of God that can keep our hearts and minds. It is not a man-made peace, attained by personal struggle or by self-discipline, but the peace that God Himself has, indeed, that He Himself is.

Jesus said in John 14:27, "My peace I give to you." He spoke this just before His suffering and death. If ever a soul should be seized with pain, terror, and fear, it would be at such a time. But instead of sadness or fear of what He would face, He spoke the wonderful words, "My peace I leave with you." God's overflowing peace will abide with you and remain forever.

## **A Life of Overflowing Strength to Serve**

"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you," Jesus said to His disciples (Acts 1:8). From then on, their lives were full of mighty deeds done by the power of the Holy Spirit. "Stephen," we are told, "full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people" (Acts 6:8).

At a conference where the most scholarly sermons could move no one to repentance and conversion, the entire assembly broke down in tears of remorse and repentance through the calm message of a simple man, who was clearly filled with the Spirit of God. A word, a prayer, an earnest testimony, or a song can have power when flowing from a Spirit-filled life. Moody



testified that he never knew anything of the fullness of power in his preaching until he experienced the fullness of the Spirit. Afterward, his preaching never failed to bear fruit.

The power of the abundant life is not limited to the preaching of the Word of God. God equips some with power in prayer, others to witness, some to sing, and others He gives strength to endure suffering. Everyone who has experienced the overflowing life through the Spirit touches the lives of others with a power, the impact of which is realized only when he stands before the Lord.

The fullness of the Spirit, however, is not limited to overflowing love, peace, and power. It is also a life of overflowing joy. “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10). A life of overflowing perseverance gives us patience in trials we could not otherwise endure. It is a life brimming over with gentleness, faithfulness, meekness, and self-control. It is evident that this fullness of the Spirit is not only for apostles, preachers, missionaries, or teachers but for all of God’s children. “For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off” (Acts 2:39).

Therefore, every Christian should believe and claim this promise. Believe that the Holy Spirit is waiting to fill you and dwell in you just as He did in the first disciples on the day of Pentecost and throughout their lives! ■



# Sanctification—A Command for Christian Perfection

Most Christians agree that sanctification is taught in the Bible. Yet they differ in their understanding of what it is, and its importance in respect to other biblical truths. Of all the New-Testament doctrines, the teaching of sanctification is the least understood. When we experience the blessing of entire sanctification, that which began with justification is brought to completion.

Jesus prayed, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth” (John 17:17). That the apostles taught and believed in sanctification is verified by Scripture. “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you *is* faithful, who also will do *it*” (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion . . . according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:1–2).

Expressions such as “perfect love,” “holiness,” and “baptism with the Holy Spirit” are synonyms when they are used to express the Christian experience of sanctification. “Be holy, for I am holy” (1 Peter 1:16). “Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48). “Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).

Would God command us to be holy, complete, and perfected in love if this could never be experienced? Would Christ and Paul pray for the sanctification of the believers if it could not be possible? When Jude writes his letter to those “sanctified by God the Father” (Jude 1) and Paul says, “Let us, as many as are mature [perfect—KJV] have this mind” (Philippians 3:15), do we think that they were falsely labeling their audience? No, they were not. God is not unjust. God has given us His promise to sanctify us and give us holiness of

heart. Would He promise something He is not able to give us?

Dear Friend, this promise was given to us to show us the immeasurable grace of God and to encourage us to give ourselves fully to Him so He may perform the wonderful work He intended for our souls. The longing of every Christian heart is for a holy life and a closer walk with God. The experience of sanctification turns this hope into reality, satisfies the human soul, and gives it joy.

## Does Sanctification Make Us Perfect?

Those who have been sanctified according to this New-Testament doctrine have attained a state of grace which is called Christian “perfection” (KJV) or Christian “maturity” (NIV). Obviously this does not mean absolute perfection, which can only be attributed to God, but it means to be perfected in love and therefore to be motivated by love. This is only possible because of the supreme sacrifice made “through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ” for us (Hebrews 10:10). It is not enough just to acknowledge that Christ brought a perfect sacrifice. Whoever wishes to be wholly sanctified must also fulfill the necessary requirements, giving oneself fully to God and believing God will do it. This perfection in love does not exclude the possibility of sinning again. Hebrews 10:29 shows us that it is even possible to insult the Spirit of grace and bring judgment on oneself.

Christian perfection or Christian maturity does not mean mistakes will no longer be made, or that we will be perfect in the knowledge of the truth, or that we will not make errors of judgment. Only God is perfect in all things. Those who are sanctified will still have temptations. Even Jesus was “tempted as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15), and likewise temptations can also approach sanctified children of God.



### **What Is Meant by the Sanctification that Perfects Us in Love?**

Entire sanctification does not cleanse our conscience. Our conscience is cleansed at the time of justification, but the sinful tendencies of the heart are removed. The will to sin is gone, and we have an intimate relationship with God since “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit” (Romans 5:5).

Entire sanctification cleanses us from sinful tendencies, gives us a firm resolve to do the will of God under all circumstances, and gives us the power to be victorious. Since we are sanctified by the blood of Jesus (Hebrews 13:12), sanctification therefore involves a cleansing. Entire sanctification is not the cleansing from guilt, which occurs at justification, but it is a cleansing of the inclination of the heart towards sinfulness.

### **Sanctification of “Your Whole Spirit, Soul, and Body” Includes Your All.**

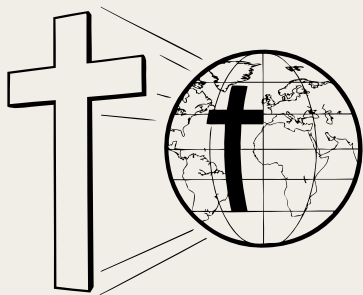
A fully sanctified person can remain obedient to the Word of God and is supported in this by the inclination of their heart to do the whole will of God. There-

fore, it is much easier for such a person to have victory over sin than for a person who is not wholly sanctified. The fully sanctified person has attained the state of Christian maturity. Through sanctification, the Holy Spirit now lives in the heart of the believer, since the fully sanctified person has dedicated his or her whole self, body, spirit, and soul to the Lord. Through the indwelling Holy Spirit, they have been perfected in love.

Now real growth in grace is possible because those things hindering growth have been removed. We do not grow into grace or into sanctification, but we grow in grace and in sanctification. The discernment of spiritual things, the understanding of scripture, and the attainment of wisdom will increase as the sanctified person walks in grace. He or she will be in unity with all the children of God and will fulfill the Holy Spirit’s role for them in the church. The Lord Jesus prayed that the Father would sanctify His disciples, the privilege of all God’s children.

Have you experienced this sanctification? Do not delay in dedicating yourself fully to God. Believe in the sacrifice made by Christ at Calvary to sanctify you, so you can attain this wonderful state of grace. ■





# Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs  
Kitchener, ON

## The Powerful Testimony

*Many modern efforts to win people for Christ fail because something very important is missing: the Spirit-filled life of those witnessing.*

With the experience of Pentecost in Jerusalem, the disciples had entered the official ministry of witnessing. Jesus clearly and earnestly laid this on their hearts when He said, “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8). Now the time had arrived. With amazing certitude, they stepped up to the witness stand of faith. In Acts 4:33, we find this confirmed: “And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all.”

A witness is one who has seen and can testify of events that have actually happened. The disciples were to proclaim Christ and the divine activity they had seen and witnessed and to establish faith and knowledge of God among mankind.

It was necessary to testify of meaningful truths which the natural man could not readily recognize. The works of God were to be believed, and for this purpose a powerful proclamation was necessary. But this could not be done without the Holy Spirit. Jesus was

concerned that His disciples would need a sure footing but that they also would face serious opposition. This explains His instruction to the disciples: “But tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). By receiving the Holy Spirit, an extraordinary divine power was to fill them, placing them in a life of fruitful service.

A testimony given only in human power does not bring about conviction. Spiritual knowledge and conviction are worked by the Holy Spirit and not by men. There was power in the testimony of the disciples, and this power enabled them to reveal Jesus Christ in such a way that even the most learned opponents could not resist them (see Acts 6:10).

Are we standing in the power and fire of the Holy Spirit today? Or why has our witnessing generally become so empty and powerless? Do we witness at all anymore, or have we given up? Jesus’ commission to witness is for all of God’s children. Jesus was not just thinking of tireless activity and busyness but of living in the power of His Spirit.

Our time is one of debate and critical speech, but what does it accomplish? Does it testify of what God





has done for us and of the saving grace we have experienced? Can people know the truth and be inwardly enlightened and won for God through constant debating?

In view of our witnessing ministry, we must ask ourselves how we relate to the Holy Spirit and how He relates to us. The fruitful ministry of our life depends on our relationship with the Holy Spirit. By this standard, the early church sought out godly men to put into service. When men were needed to look after the widows in Jerusalem, the disciples said, “Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (Acts 6:3). These men were found without great effort, but how rare are these kind of people today?

A church can do little in its community if it is missing people of good reputation in its circle. Therefore, it is not enough that we testify of the existence of the Holy Spirit, but it is vital that we are filled with the Spirit. The credibility and impact of our testimony will depend on it.

As in times past, our society also needs witnesses filled with the Holy Spirit. However, the effective witness does not depend on words but on an exemplary, Spirit-filled life.

In this sense, we can all become living witnesses of Jesus Christ. God also wants to use you as a witness of His light and truth. Therefore, let yourself be filled with the Holy Spirit and His power, and allow Him to form and shape you into the image of Jesus so your life will be a powerful and effective witness. ■

## From the Working World (7)

"Bless the LORD, O my soul,  
and forget not all His benefits."

Psalm 103:2

In previous articles, I reported on some difficult situations during my continuing education in which God had wonderfully helped. In conclusion, I would now like to give thanks for some good things God provided during that time, and not just take them for granted.

### I am sincerely grateful:

- For a nice room and the pleasant, freshly-renovated dormitory in which I felt very comfortable. Despite a normal rent payment, finding this particular apartment without struggles, and then being able to rent it felt almost like an undeserved gift. This is not typical in Frankfurt.
- For protection and preservation on the road. In these months, I traveled a lot on the Autobahn where you so often see accidents or car breakdowns. Sometimes you see serious accidents that make you aware of how quickly something can happen and that arriving safely should not be taken for granted.
- For a Christian passenger (while driving) with whom I could have some good and uplifting conversations. We were able to support and encourage each other well.
- For the fact that I completed the course before the COVID-19 pandemic. The final written exam did fall during the first lockdown and had to be postponed slightly; however, I was allowed to finish the course itself and all of the final exam preparations beforehand. A colleague of mine in a different line of training had to continue the lessons and the exam preparations partially online. She told me about some of the difficulties associated with this: uncertainty in planning, more limited teaching and communication, the necessity to buy more teaching material myself, etc. It was another reason for me to be grateful that I was able to finish almost everything on time.
- For a powerful and blessed time with God, in which I was able to experience His presence, help, and companionship in a special way. It was particularly the promise of God, "I am with you," that provided stability and a feeling of security in a foreign environment with its accompanying new challenges.
- Not least for my new job, which I have been happily and satisfactorily doing for about two years now.

*Dina Grötzinger  
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## *I Heard and Pondered— Confess Christ—But How?*

*“For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:20).*

I went into town and noticed a crowd of young people on a sidewalk. This was actually not out of the ordinary. But something had to be going on there, causing other pedestrians to become interested and stop. I also approached this group and slowed my steps.

A lively exchange of words was in progress. Two young men seemed to be the spokespeople. I could already hear what it was all about. One of the participants had apparently been stopped to engage in the exchange of words. “Have you ever even heard of Christ? Do you actually know who He is?” I heard one of them ask.

The one addressed replied, “Yes, I’ve heard of Him.” As I walked slowly past the group, the discussion went back and forth. “Is that all? Then let me tell you that you can’t really enjoy your life with gladness at all until Christ gives you the joy to do so.”—“And let me tell you that I am very joyful and live a happy life.”—“You’re just saying that now, and yet you don’t have any real joy.”

The exchange of words took a turn at this point and the last person addressed asked, “How do you know that? And how can you substantiate your claim?”

“I just know it, my friend, I know it,” was the reply. I then heard the words—but this time spoken by the other young man, “Is that all?” There was a short pause. Now I thought to myself, the “Christ professor” will give a testimony. I waited for it—and apparently so did the questioner and the rest of the listeners. Sadly, it did not come. Instead, in an ironic tone, the words of the last speaker were heard, “Your knowledge alone doesn’t help you either, so it’s not worth much.”

This put an end to the debate. The group dispersed. I also continued on my way. A few moments later, everything went back to normal, the incident forgotten. I continued to ponder it.

The Lord Jesus says, “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). Now here was a young man who had obviously confessed Christ. He acted on the word of Jesus; but how? His confession was apparently based only on theory. When Christ said that, did He mean just the mere confession of His name? Hardly, for making a confession for Jesus Christ involves more than theory, and more than knowledge of His person and teachings. “For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation” (Romans 10:10).

According to this word, confession with the mouth is preceded by something very important: faith of the heart, a personal experience. Personal experience of the transformation of the heart—justification by Jesus Christ—must be central in a genuine confession for Him. Then it will be convincing and effective.

Please read the following scriptures: Acts 4:18–20; Acts 7:55; Acts 26:24–29. These three cited testimonies of Jesus Christ are convincing. Why? Personal experience and confident faith are expressed.

If you have the opportunity to make a confession for the Lord Jesus in the near future, let it be convincing. Do not get entangled in theory, but share from experience about your adventures with the Lord. Confess Christ—confess properly!

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# Fiery Coals

A large crowd had gathered outside the village courthouse. Judging by the commotion and heightened chatter, confusion was evident among the group. Only one stately, older man, leaning on his cane with a serious expression, looked silently up into the air as if searching for something above. The people had all attended as witnesses to the trial of the master blacksmith of their village, who was accused of premeditated arson.

About a year ago, this older man's barn had burned down. All suspicion immediately fell on his neighbor, who allegedly had maliciously started the fire. The stately head of the village had already been compelled several times to confront his neighbor rather severely in official matters. The last time, the man had sworn revenge on him. Over his brandy glass at the inn, the evil thoughts of his heart had recently come to light. In addition, during the night of the fire, a light had been seen in the forge, and the next morning, coals had been found from there to the scene of the fire, scattered all about. The man was therefore arrested and ordered to stand trial. The hearings had just ended; he had been acquitted!

"Didn't I tell you earlier," the innkeeper addressed the old man, "that he would just lie his way out of it?"

The old man nodded with a smile. "Well, good people, just calm down and wait and see. He will end up in prison after all."

"But how do you know that?" The shouts came from all sides. They wanted answers.

"Just let me look after that," he replied.

About a year later the acquitted blacksmith crept up to his neighbor's house late at night. This time he did not seem to have any evil in mind as he quietly and timidly knocked at the window. When the old man's gray head appeared at the door, he asked just as quietly and shyly whether he could speak to him in private.

The old man opened the door and led him into the little parlor. "What's the matter, Neighbor? You look so miserable. Are you sick?"

"Yes, sick and miserable to the core of my heart. I can't stand it any longer."

"What is it?"

"Oh, it's the fiery coals! Those awful, fiery coals!" he exclaimed.

"Which fiery coals do you mean?" the old man casually asked.

"Well, the ones I carried into your barn, that you then later gathered on my head! Oh, how they burn! It couldn't be any worse if I were in prison! I feel as if I were in hell!"

The older man said, "So now you honestly confess to be the arsonist? Well, let me say that I am one too. You see, I have repaid you. But do not despair. I took my coals from Christ, our Lord and Savior, Who died even for His enemies. And He helped me in starting 'the fire.' So He will also help me in putting that fire out."

The people in the village wondered at the change that gradually took place in the village blacksmith. After his prison sentence, he remained introverted and somber. But his broody, sinister nature had completely left him. His neighbor had immediately put him to work again, and gradually, others followed. The blacksmith was no longer seen drinking at the inn. Instead, he diligently went to worship services. Most noticeably, the two neighboring homes were on such friendly terms with each other.

Finally, the innkeeper could no longer refrain from asking the older village chief exactly what had transpired. After all, he had wanted to put the man in prison. "He did sit in prison," the older man replied.

"Why?" asked the innkeeper.

"That remains a secret," the stately gentleman maintained. "Remember, there are two kinds of fiery coals. There are those the devil takes from hell and throws into the soul of Judas Iscariot, for example. Those are meant to kindle hatred, wrath, anger, discord, and the like. Afterwards, he lays them on their conscience, and there they burn like a fire that consumes both bone and marrow. Only the blood of Jesus Christ can extinguish them, otherwise they become a fire that burns forever.

"The other type of coals are the ones gathered by the gentle, merciful love of God, our Savior, and laid on the head of His enemies. These are the benefits and blessings which He pours out upon men that they may continue to glow down from their heads into their hearts. They move the heart to meditate upon the words, 'This have I suffered for you; now what will you do for me?' Or, do you not know 'that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?'

"The followers of the Savior go and do the same: When their enemy is hungry, they feed him. In this, they overcome evil with good and thereby become more and more like their Savior, Who even laid down His life for His enemies." ■



## A Light Shines

It was a damp, chilly day. The sun remained hidden behind the dark clouds. The wind relentlessly drove the rain against the window. Dorli looked out at the street. “What a dreary, boring day!” she thought. No one was there to take care of the little girl, to play with her and pass the time. Dad was at the office, Mom had a headache, and the baby, Dorli’s little sister, had been crying for quite some time.

Dorli stood at the window, her elbows on the sill, her little nose pressed to the glass. If only her grandmother were here!

Grandmother had once said that if you read a passage from the Bible in the morning and then tried to act on it throughout the day, you would not have time to feel alone and sad; you would not be bored.

Dorli retrieved her New Testament. She had time now to learn the memory verse for Sunday School. She quickly found it, in the gospel according to Matthew, in the fifth chapter: “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all *who are* in the house. Let your light so shine before men.”

Dorli was thoughtful. It was a gloomy, unfriendly day. But shouldn’t a little light be brought in? Shouldn’t she let her light shine to all who were in the house?

The baby was still crying. Dorli went into the nursery, carefully lifted her little sister out of the crib, took

her in her arms, and sat down with her on the edge of the bed for a while to burp her. When she laid her down again after a while, she was soon asleep.

Next, Dorli went into her mother’s bedroom. Mother had to lie down because she had such a bad headache. She said, “It was sweet of you to soothe the baby. I couldn’t have done it now; I don’t feel well at all.”

Dorli was very pleased with this praise. She ran into the bathroom and came back with a damp washcloth. She put it on Mother’s forehead. Then she pulled the window curtains closed so it would be dark, and quietly left the bedroom. Her mother smiled after her. “My sweet Dorli!”

There was also work to be done in the playroom. It needed to be thoroughly tidied, followed by the kitchen. After all, it was almost 5 o’clock, and Father would be coming at any moment. “I’m sure he’ll be happy that I’ve set the table for him,” Dorli thought.

She had hardly finished when her father arrived. “Well, my little Sunshine, you’ve worked very diligently!”

When Mother felt a little better and was able to get up, the baby laughed and kicked after her nap, and Father sat down with his Dorli and began to play with her. The world looked very different again for everyone in the house than it had at noon, even though the sky outside was still gray and the wind was still driving the rain against the window pane. ■

## *And They Brought the Children to Jesus*

Is there any work in the service of the Lord that gives greater joy and produces more glorious fruit than bringing children to Jesus in their tender youth? The disciples did not recognize this fact, because they rebuked those who brought the children to Jesus, since it did not seem worth their while to trouble the Master for the sake of such little children. Jesus describes the relationship of children to the kingdom of God in the following words: “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:14). If the kingdom of God belongs to those who are like children in simplicity and humility, then they themselves must also be capable of receiving spiritual blessings. Leading them to Jesus cannot be a pointless nuisance.

How easy it is to underestimate the importance of children’s conversion! A man who had indulged in the lust of the world for years before seeking the Lord and finding forgiveness for his sins gave a testimony of God’s saving grace in a church meeting. He said he

had the very greatest cause to thank God for saving him from a life of sin and shame. He had been devoted to drinking and gambling for years, but the Lord had delivered him from all bondage.

In the same meeting, a young sister stood up and said she believed she had the greatest cause to praise the Lord because He drew her to Himself out of sheer goodness before she fell into any grievous sin. And she was right!

Why are people often suspicious or even dismissive of children’s conversions? We should stand amazed at the spiritual capacity of children. Their perception of divine things is much clearer, their conception of the sinfulness of their hearts much more definite, and their thoughts about spiritual things much deeper than we are usually accustomed to assuming.

Paul gives young Timothy the testimony that he had known the Scriptures from childhood and had recognized the saving power of them from his own experience. For this reason, Timothy, even as a young



## SOMETHING FOR THE FAMILY

person, had a powerful confession of faith before many witnesses.

Even if our children are not theologians, they have a childlike understanding of spiritual and divine things. Their love for Jesus and their childlike trust in God in their prayers can often be an example to adult Christians of how to trust the Lord Jesus. Therefore, we should pay attention to children and try to influence them for good. We should try to introduce them to Jesus, so they can soon be touched by His love and come to know Him as their dear Savior.

A little girl asked her mother one day, “How old do I have to be before I can love Jesus?” To the mother’s counter-question, “How old do you have to be before you can love your mother?” the child replied, “Oh, I love you already!”

So the mother replied, “So you can love Jesus already.”

Although children have little understanding of the natural sciences, they are full of admiration for a beau-

tiful, colorful butterfly. They delight in the colors of flowers and their fragrance. They jump for joy when they see a rainbow in the sky. And just as a child can delight in the glorious works of creation, so the child can love Jesus without understanding anything of the evidential grounds of the Christian religion. The appeal to the heart of the child in religious matters often achieves a deeper and more lasting success than in the adult.

If we put a larva in a cold place, its development into a perfect insect may be slow. But if we put it in a greenhouse, in a brief time a butterfly will unfold its wings, shimmering in all its bright colors. Similarly, surrounded by a cold, icy atmosphere, many years may pass before our children develop spiritually to awaken to godliness. In a warm spiritual atmosphere, however, they will be far more receptive to the effects of divine grace, to open their hearts to the love of Jesus, and to develop into a Christian character rich in all the heavenly virtues and fruit of the Holy Spirit. ■





## Not for Men?

“Once again, my friend, I tell you, religion and going to church may be good for women and children, but it’s not good for men,” said Jonathan Winter, an old miner. He had just concluded a conversation with his young friend Martin Reinhard, who, being gripped by the Word of God, was determined to confess Christ in his job as a miner.

“Depend on it,” he continued, “once you start becoming religious, you won’t be a man any longer. You’ll even be scared of your own shadow.”

The young man almost wanted to lose heart at this half-mocking, half well-intentioned speech of his friend. But months passed, and Reinhard remained loyal to his Master despite all the mockery, so that gradually the mood changed.

Returning from the village one day after having to fetch some things, Reinhard got into the pit cage to go underground. When he reached the bottom, he gave his equipment to a young man, Benjamin, and was about to get out when he heard a strange sound. Rushing water! The water pipe must have broken somewhere. Now the water was pouring into the tunnels. Only a short time and all his friends would be lost!

He was still in the pit cage. One tug on the rope and he would be safe. But his fellow miners? With one leap, he jumped out of the cage, helped Benjamin into it, and said to him, “Tell them at the top that the water is coming. We will try to save ourselves on the other end of the right tunnel!” A tug on the rope, and the cage went up with Benjamin.

Reinhard ran as fast as he could to the miners and alerted them of the impending danger. They willingly followed him to the end of the tunnel, to the highest point of the mine. Despite rising water, they reached their destination and immediately set about excavating an even higher chamber. For the time being they were safe, but their situation was still very serious. The available provisions would not last long. If they could

not be rescued soon, they were doomed to starve. Terrible hours followed. Reinhard cried out to God. His mates no longer mocked him as he pointed them to the only Savior for time and eternity.

Above ground, Benjamin had properly passed on the message. For many days and nights, they used all their strength to drive a shaft to the place where they suspected the unfortunate miners were. On the morning of the fifth day, they heard faint blows coming from the buried men indicating their location. After a few hours, the site of the accident was reached. Several miners were no longer alive. Those rescued were in horrible condition, psychologically and physically. For days they had been locked in their prison among the bodies of their deceased coworkers. Despair and fear had filled their hearts.

Martin Reinhard was among the survivors. This experience left an indelible impression on all of them. Jonathan Winter confessed, “I was a fool to think that religion would make a man a coward. If reading the Bible can make a fearful person lay down his life for others, then it must be good for all of us. From this day forward, Reinhard’s faith shall be my faith as well.”

“I was a fool!” Are you also one of those fools who think that reading the Bible or praying is something a man should be ashamed of? Where is the much-lauded manliness when it comes to standing up for truth and justice or showing your own ego who is master over its desires and claims to dominance? And where is real fearlessness, even in the face of death or when it is necessary to lay down one’s life for others? It is there where one has come to terms with God and can say with faith in Christ, “If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31).

Only the Bible can show you the way. He is not a man who has to bang his fist on the table to get his way, but he is a man who can pray and is not afraid to risk his life for others. ■



## “That’s you, Joseph!”

A merchant, who loved the Lord Jesus and sought to serve Him however and wherever he could, had filled some displays in his store with Bibles and New Testaments. Above them, visible throughout the store, was written, Here the Christian’s sword is sold.

With one of these swords, a soldier of the heavenly King will achieve glorious victory.

One morning, a crowd of boisterous young men came up the street, followed by a large number of curious people. They had dressed up quite colorfully so that one could mistake them for a troupe of wandering comedians. In their hands they carried various musical instruments. They stopped just in front of the merchant’s house and began to sing and perform all kinds of tricks. After they had performed a few funny ditties, one of them, a young man with interesting facial features, stepped out of the rows to collect offerings in a tin can from the bystanders. His whole demeanor showed that he had known better days. After making the rounds, he also went into the store where the merchant had been watching the strange goings-on of the young people. At his request for an offering, the merchant took a Bible from the drawer and said,

“Listen, my friend, I will give you ten dollars and this book on top of it if you will promise me to read to your comrades a passage, which I will describe to you in more detail, so loudly that all bystanders can hear it.”

Laughing, the young man picked up the Bible, stepped into the doorway, and called out to those outside,

“Here’s something to earn, boys! The gentleman here wants to give me ten dollars if I read you something.”

While everyone looked expectantly at the speaker, the merchant opened the Bible at the fifteenth chapter

of the gospel of Luke and asked the young man to begin reading at the eleventh verse.

“Well, get to work, Joseph!” one of the troupe shouted with a laugh. “Earn your money like a man!”

Joseph took the book from the merchant’s hand, stepped among his comrades, and read:

“Then He said: ‘A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to *his* father, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to *me*.” So he divided to them *his* livelihood.’”

The strangeness of the circumstances, as well as something in the voice of the reader, caused a complete silence. The young man’s face suddenly took on a serious expression. He faltered for a moment, but then continued reading:

“And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.”

“That’s you, Joseph!” one from the troupe called. “That is exactly what you told me about you and your father!”

The reader continued: “But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.”

“That’s you again, Joseph!” the same voice could be heard.

“Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*.”

“That’s how we all feel,” the previous speaker said. “We are all beggars, and yet we could have it far better. But read on!”

The young man followed the request, but his voice trembled noticeably.

“But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough ▶

and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father.”

That was as far as he got. His voice was choked. No sound interrupted the breathless silence. The young man stood there as if glued to the ground. His face twitched while his eyes remained fixed on the book he held in his trembling hands. The story he had just read contained almost exactly what he himself had done. He, too, had wantonly abandoned the home of his wealthy father and squandered his fortune on an empty life. Now, he also suddenly remembered, like the prodigal son in the parable, the grieving old father, the love that had surrounded him at home, the servants

who never lacked food and drink, while he himself, the son of such a rich father, was not tending a herd of pigs in a foreign land but was nevertheless sadly earning his meager bread.

That day became the turning point in the life of this prodigal son. With the merchant’s support, the young man wrote to his parents, and the result was that after a long absence, he returned to his parents’ home in deep repentance. The story of the prodigal son was beautifully fulfilled in him. He came back completely. Jesus Christ became his Savior and his Lord, and the Father of his Lord and Savior, God, now became his Father in truth. ■



## Fasting—A Privilege Even Today

In James’ epistle we read, “The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much” (James 5:16). In the Old Testament, earnest prayer was often accompanied by fasting, and the earnest petitioner covered himself in sackcloth and ashes.

We read, for example, that Daniel wrote, “I set my face toward the LORD God to make request by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:3). Also, when David prayed earnestly that God would spare his child, we read, “David therefore pleaded with God for the child, and David fasted and went in and lay all night on the ground” (2 Samuel 12:16).

In David’s case, God did not answer the prayer. However, when a fast was proclaimed in Nineveh, and God saw that the city repented, He answered their prayers. Scripture says, “So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them. . . . Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it” (Jonah 3:5, 10).

In James’ epistle, Elijah is considered the model of an earnest praying man. “Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the land for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave

rain, and the earth produced its fruit” (James 5:17–18). However, we do not read that Elijah fasted during this time. Nor did he fast when God raised a young man from the dead through his prayer (1 Kings 17:22).

But when a great army came against Judah to fight, we read, “And Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah” (2 Chronicles 20:3). God answered the fasting and prayer and saved His people. We read how God intervened: “So when Judah came to a place overlooking the wilderness, they looked toward the multitude; and there were their dead bodies, fallen on the earth. No one had escaped. When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take away their spoil, they found among them an abundance of valuables on the dead bodies, and precious jewelry, which they stripped off for themselves, more than they could carry away; and they were three days gathering the spoil because there was so much” (2 Chronicles 20:24–25).

We read in Psalm 66:18, “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the LORD will not hear”. In that case, fasting doesn’t help either. Fasting is meant to demonstrate that a person is in great need, and thus fasting strengthens their cry for help to God. But God’s pleasure does not rest on outward fasting, but on the right attitude of the heart. We read in 1 Samuel 15:22, “Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice.” And God speaks through the prophet Isaiah: “Is it a fast that I have chosen, a day for

a man to afflict his soul? Is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread out sackcloth and ashes? Would you call this a fast, and an acceptable day to the LORD? Is this not the fast that I have chosen: To loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; when you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh? Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of the LORD shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the LORD will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, 'Here I am.' If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger, and speaking wickedness" (Isaiah 58:5-9).

We also read about fasting in the New Testament. The Pharisees were conceited about their fasting and thought they would be more pleasing to God because of it. Jesus rebuked the prayer of the Pharisee who praised himself in prayer, saying, "I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:12). Jesus taught, "Moreover, when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to be fasting. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But you, when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:16-18). We see here that God publicly repays what is done in secret. When we wrestle with God in earnest, persistent prayer we can support our prayers with fasting.

When the disciples were unable to cast out an unclean spirit, they asked Jesus, "Why could we not cast it out?" So He [Jesus] said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting" (Mark 9:28-29). Jesus gives us another wonderful weapon in regard to prayer. He says, "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven" (Matthew 18:19). I can still remember a time in my young life when I needed help. I went to my mother and grandparents and asked them if they would help me fast and pray for my need. They agreed and God answered us.

The disciples were accused of not fasting. Jesus was asked, "Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?" (Luke 5:33). We know, however, that followers of Jesus also fasted. We read, for example, that the church in Antioch fasted (Acts 13:2). We also know that Paul fasted (2 Cor. 6:5, 2 Cor. 11:27).

I have not fasted much in my life, but when I wanted to take a day to fast, I sometimes fasted from morning until sunset. Since the Biblical calendar was different than today, one did not count a day as from midnight to midnight, instead, the day began at sunset and extended to the next sunset. Therefore, one could also fast from sunset to sunset. Most do not eat or drink anything during the fast. I know of a pastor who suffered from terrible headaches when he fasted. But if he only refrained from eating during the fasting day and still drank water he could bear it better. God looks at the heart. We must be careful not to harm our health because of fasting. God has no pleasure if we hurt ourselves by fasting. Instead, our fasting is to show that we are very serious. Although our fasting should be done in secret before our Father in heaven, it is not wrong for a church to announce a fasting day and let the brothers and sisters know that we are also fasting on that day (if we feel so inclined).

If we are married, our spouse should know we are fasting. Paul writes, "Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control" (1 Corinthians 7:5). I know of a pastor whose wife knew when he was fasting. But when visitors came on fasting days, she did not tell the visitor that her husband was fasting. She also called her husband to the table when she served coffee and cake to the visitor. To observe Jesus' teaching, he then continued his fast on another day. Jesus emphasized, "so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly" (Matthew 6:18).

We have no rules or laws about how often one must or should fast. But we have the great privilege to make use of fasting when the Holy Spirit guides us to do so.

*Gerry Mielke  
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Picture of the Whole Group



## Missions Report–Bolivia

January 28 through February 20, 2022

**A**t the end of January 2022, a group of thirty brothers and sisters from several congregations in Germany traveled to Bolivia to support the brothers and sisters there with various building projects and also to participate in the local worship services.

On Saturday, January 29th, we landed in Santa Cruz de la Sierra in the center of Bolivia. We were greeted there by brothers and sisters with a bus and brought to our first stop, the Children's Home.

The Children's Home of the congregation is located about one-and-a-half hours northeast of Santa Cruz, near Pailon. Further north from there is the Shalom church of God, near Valle Esperanza. Not far from there we find the Spanish-speaking congregation "Cinco de Junio." One hour south of Santa Cruz is the congregation of Via Gracia, where the ministry in Bolivia had its beginning. All three of these locations have schools.

On the first Sunday, we arrived in Via Gracia around 9:15 a.m., af-

ter a blown tire on the bus had to be changed en route. Here we had the first worship service, in which the brothers and sisters from Germany contributed choir and group songs.

Evening services were held in Shalom from Wednesday to Friday with Brother Kowalski from Hamm, Germany, ministering from God's Word. On Saturday, a children's day was held for children from the congregation as well as from the community. On Sunday, two more services were



New Roof for the Children's Home



held, followed by a shared meal. In Shalom, about one hundred to one hundred twenty people, including children, gather for worship.

Themes of the Services in Shalom:

- He bears all things with His powerful Word.
- Pay greater attention to the Word.
- I've sinned—now what?
- The Father is waiting.
- A question for all God's children.

The following week in Via Gracia, five services took place from Wednesday to Friday in the evenings and two on Sunday. Br. Kowalski's messages were about the prophet Habakkuk, among others:

- Habakkuk's stand despite ungodly times.
- Habakkuk waits for an answer from God.
- The stiff-necked and the believer
- Futile flight.
- The effect of sanctification on the disciples.

The New School in Shalom at Our Arrival . . .





... And the New School in Shalom at Our Departure

About fifty to sixty people gather in Via Gracia for worship services. In these services, three brothers and sisters from Germany participated with songs. In addition, three sisters conducted Vacation Bible School sessions for the children. They were divided into three different age groups, and the sessions continued for several days.

One evening, together with the local pastor, Brother Stieben,

we visited the rehabilitation center “Guia de Paz” located near the Children’s Home. Here, patients receive three months of therapy for various problems they are dealing with. Brother Stieben gave a short message regarding the value of the Word of God, and we had the opportunity to sing a few songs for them. The Children’s Home takes care of the children of these patients, mostly Old Colony Menno-

nites, during the three months of therapy.

We were divided into two groups to do work in the Children’s Home and in Shalom. In the Children’s Home, a roof was installed over an inner courtyard, and solar panels were then applied to the roof. A second project there was to convert a residence for the staff into two apartments, with new plumbing, bathrooms,



Work in the Workshop in Shalom



walls, and a porch. In Shalom, a new school building is being constructed, still in the shell stage, and here we assisted with sanding and filling work on the walls. The preliminary electrical wiring was also prepared.

In order for the school to start on time in February, a temporary school building had to be completed on short notice, which is also located on the church property. Windows and doors were installed in this building, as well as the sanitary facilities and the electrical system. The old school desks were completely restored with new wood for the tables and chairs.

Across the street, houses are being built for the Günter and Stie-

ben pastor families, and the brothers and sisters helped with the construction here as well.

At the building for the Spanish-speaking congregation, concrete floors were poured in the outside area so a summer kitchen can be installed there.

Most of the travel group flew back to Germany after two weeks, on February 12, while four brothers and sisters stayed on site for another week to help with the work on the new school building. Brother Kowalski conducted the Wednesday service during this final week before we returned to Germany on February 19.

We are incredibly grateful to God for His help during the trip.

Despite the many uncertainties regarding the entry requirements due to the pandemic, there were no difficulties. God also protected us from serious injuries during the labor. Some brothers and sisters experienced stomach and intestinal problems and required treatment by a doctor, but again, God was gracious and helped everyone.

We are grateful for the blessed fellowship with the local brothers and sisters and the blessings we were able to receive through the worship services. May God continue to bless the work in Bolivia!

*Michael Peters  
Hamm, Germany*

## 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](http://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](http://www.lagerversammlung.de)

### **Church Conference in Edmonton**

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

Service times and more information can be found at [www.edmontonchurchofgod.com](http://www.edmontonchurchofgod.com)

# Yielding to the Spirit of God

*O guide me softly with Your gentle presence,  
O Holy Spirit, Spirit of the Lord.  
Let joyful yielding be the very essence  
Of my response when I receive Your Word.*

*O take possession of my life and being  
That I may live here for the cause of God.  
My heart and soul is readily agreeing  
To give You all while here upon this sod.*

*Seal me anew and fill me, Holy Spirit,  
Spirit from God and the beloved Son!  
O glorify Thy name for all to hear it  
And sanctify my heart to be Your throne.*

*Filled with the Spirit, guided by His presence  
To be obedient each hour, each day,  
That is my prayer, my goal, desire and preference;  
I will be true and walk the narrow way.*

*And if my nature perish, let that never Deter me.  
Come what may I will be true.  
It's worth the cost; Your kingdom is forever;  
What an inheritance I have from You!*

*So take my all, forever to be Yours, Lord,  
And fill me with the Spirit of Your love.  
Spirit of truth and power, teach me Your Word  
And sanctify me wholly from above.*

*Eva von Thiele-Winckler*