

Foundation of Faith

Steps to True Riches

THE ROAD TO PROSPERITY

RICH THROUGH GRACE

EVERYTHING IN CHRIST

RUSH OR REST?



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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

In these end times, we are reminded of Jesus predicting war, rumors of war, hatred, tribulation, pestilence, suffering, and times of want (see Matthew 24: 6–14). Where do these things come from? They arise from a desire to wield authority, power, wealth, money, status, or fame. Brutality, murder, and bloodshed are commonly employed while untruths and lies are loudly proclaimed, and the truth is crushed underfoot.

Years ago, an old man told me how he had to watch enemy soldiers stop a refugee mother and her children by the roadside, and take their warm blankets and some of their clothing by force. They stuffed the stolen items into their backpacks, eager to enrich themselves at the refugee family's expense before taking off down the road, where they were soon out of sight. However, it was not long before he caught up with the soldiers: They were lying in the ditch, themselves shot dead, with the softly falling snow starting to cover the stolen goods scattered around them.

In Job 27: 19 we read, "The rich man will lie down, but not be gathered up; he opens his eyes, and he is no more."

Dear Reader, God's Word tells each one of us, "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad" (2 Corinthians 5: 10).

Now let us examine the other side: love instead of hate, peace instead of war, God's comfort instead of sorrow, and godliness instead of godlessness.

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, came to earth to give us forgiveness, salvation, peace, and eternal life. "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us . . . [desires to] show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (please read Ephesians 2: 4–8). Yes, the Son of God wants to make us rich in grace, rich in faith, and rich in eternal treasures; He wants to give us our inheritance in Heaven, together with Jesus. What a privilege, and what wealth!

H. D. Nimz

The Road to Prosperity

Reading this headline, some may think, “Prosperity? For me? It’s more likely my life will amount to nothing at all.”

I can almost “read the thoughts” in some people’s minds. But before dismissing it all, there is another side to the story. We have a testimony from a man who has discovered the true path to prosperity.

Though we are speaking of the road to prosperity—it is not earthly, rather, of the heart. Does it exist? Yes, in Jesus Christ, the Crucified. In Him, we find immeasurable and eternal prosperity. As I was also able to experience this, I will confess to the glory of God how I found the way to this prosperity. Praise be to God for the great deed He has done for me!

When I think back to my life before I sought to know anything of Jesus, I have to say I was like the prodigal son. My soul knew no resting place. I had left the Father’s house, tried to master life on my own, and chose the lusts of this world. The devil knew how to take advantage of me constantly with new temptations. Deeper and deeper I became entangled in his net. I sought diversions in bars, card playing, and dancing. This was the beginning of my downfall.

It became worse and worse. I sank very low and became an angry drunkard. I got to the point where

I couldn’t eat anything until I had consumed alcohol. It went on like this for several years. When I had to go to work, I needed to summon the last of my strength.

To escape my disgrace, I moved to another place. But, of course, the devil followed me. When I came to a new place, it seemed Satan had already sent messengers to meet me in the same old way, and immediately I became obedient to the messengers. Why did I have to serve him? Because I was relying on my own strength, not looking to the One who already loved me, Jesus. In fact, our own strength is vain, and we are soon lost.

That’s exactly what would have happened to me, but thank God, He intended it differently. The Lord heard the prayers sent up to Him on my behalf to make me a different person. They were not in vain. The Lord spoke to me day and night. I felt a desire for something I couldn’t even grasp.

At last, there came a day when the Lord made me willing to attend an evangelistic service. On the first evening, I immediately realized it was God’s will to save me from my downfall. His Spirit was working in me. The following evening, I felt a yearning and was drawn to attend the service again. The longing matured in me to start a different life. On the fifth evening, which remains unforgettable

to me, I surrendered to the Lord, just as I was. My heart was suddenly filled with the desire: “Make me a new creature.” I repented before the Lord and promised to follow Him. That was the first step to my prosperity. Thanks be to the Lord from the bottom of my heart. He has delivered me from my sins and obsessions!

From the day of my conversion, I completely renounced all alcohol and tobacco. But in the following days, I still experienced difficult hours. Often it seemed as if the devil wanted to gain the upper hand again. I prayed repeatedly. I asked God to deliver me from the strong temptations that I needed to overcome. The Lord heard my prayers and delivered me from these evil temptations as well.

My heart is filled with joy that I too belong to His church. He has blessed me richly in following Him. He has heard my prayers and made my burden light. Nothing else on earth can satisfy me like being a child of God. This far exceeds any earthly wealth.

Do you wish to have this joy as well? If so, come as you are. Jesus kindly invites you. He says in Matthew 11:28, 30 “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. . . . For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.”

A. Zacharias

Children of the King

While attending revival services in Wuppertal, Germany, I was asked to visit the J. siblings, who had been paralyzed by a disease several decades ago. Twenty years ago I had already heard about them, so I asked in surprise, “Are they still alive?”

“Yes,” answered my friend, “they have been ill for 46 years. The two sisters are now 67 and 68 years old.”

I agreed to the visit, and one Saturday afternoon, the same friend drove me to a remote part of town. We climbed the stairs and came to the sick room. At the door, the healthy older sister welcomed us. She had taken care of her ill siblings without any assistance from others. She was 78 years old.

Lying in clean beds, the two bedridden sisters greeted us with

great joy. Suffering had not molded them into discontented, cheerless sick people. Rather, living with faith and joy in the Lord had grown them into radiant children of the King. I could only regard them as miracles of God.

Forty-six years ago, the disease took effect in both of them. Internal organs failed, and gradual paralysis set in. They have been bedridden for over forty years and are still living. Though their pain seemed bearable, these women had obviously been “called to their suffering.” (This must be the most difficult profession on earth.) But they knew their suffering in this life was not worthy of the glory to be revealed in them.

Some friends come to visit and want to comfort them, but they go

home comforted themselves. With their small pensions and the help of friends, these women get by modestly. Above their beds, a plaque is fastened with the inscription, “He can help!” With God’s help from above, they survive.

We cannot imagine what this long school of suffering means. It is difficult to imagine being bedridden for 46 years, to exercise patience, to hold on to hope, to wait decade after decade, year after year, to bear, to suffer, to be still and at the same time to remain confident and strong. One cannot help but feel insignificant and humbled in the sight of such suffering. It causes us to feel ashamed of our own impatience and to learn to give thanks for our own health! ■



Insurance for Life and Death

The doorbell rings. An insurance agent is at the door and wants to sell me life insurance. He wants to know if I have a good life insurance. I tell him I am insured against death. He cautions me not to think of life insurance as death insurance, that for my circumstances, his company has the right insurance for me. After he leaves, I keep on thinking about the comment he made: “Don’t think of life insurance as death insurance.” And yet that is exactly how many people see it.

The same spiritual analogy can be useful here, as it is a true reflection of Christianity. Many people know they should repent and accept Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, that it’s impossible to please God and to get to heaven without a pure heart and a reconciled conscience. Although they agree, it often stops there. Accordingly, their reason for salvation is embraced merely as death insurance, of hope and comfort in old age, when life is nearing its end, or when death is imminent. Christianity is good enough for that. But for life? They want to master it on their own and live according to their own desires. They have no use for “religion,” as long as they are strong and able.

Those who have this attitude are terribly mistaken. Salvation

through Jesus Christ is for both life and death. Salvation through Christ needs to become relevant in life if it is to be relevant in death. Whoever is not reconciled to God and whose life is not lived relying on the power of God will be devoid of God’s hope in dying. We need the plan of salvation not for death but for life. Often, people who are not foolish in neglecting other matters are still unwise when it comes to spiritual health. How often does somebody say, “I don’t need that anymore,” when they see no immediate urgency or realize no immediate gratification? This is not wise. So let us be done with the false notion that salvation is for dying. Being right with God brings immediate and lasting privileges that remain forever.

Dear Reader, the insurance salesperson told me that for my circumstances, his company had the right insurance for me. Yet, I wish to make you aware that God Himself is offering you much more than just insurance; He has the right plan for your circumstances. He wants to make a contract with you that is for time and eternity, the cost having already been covered and paid by Jesus when He took your debt upon Himself and died on the cross. The link to the Father’s heart has been reestablished. What you need to do is to humbly accept the offer with a heart that is repentant of past

wrongs and sins and turn away from your sinful path. Commit your whole life to God, and He will give you the right to become a child of God (John 1:12). You do not merely become a beneficiary of some company, but you actually become part of God’s family, a child of God. The advantages are staggering. Your heart will thrill to know that if “children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

In your circumstances, you need to be connected with God: you feel unsatisfied, restless, and empty; your life is not going the way you would like; you feel the need for change and for help. Why not turn to God and start a new life? He will accept you and help you today. Today, you have the opportunity to connect with God and ask for a clean heart (1 John 1:9). “Behold, I make all things new” is God’s answer. Your heart will become new. You can come to Him just as you are, for He has said, “The one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out” (John 6:37), and “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink” (John 7:37). That means you, and when you come to Him, giving yourself completely to Him, He will accept you. You will find your life worth living. You will have a precious treasure, a security, an insurance for life *and* death.

Erich Seer

Precious Possessions

Our earthly possessions are surrounded by uncertainty. In many cases, riches, health, and honor are only with us for a short time on life's journey. Even if they accompany us every step of the way, they cannot cross the threshold of death. Each human soul enters eternity without a single earthly thing.

The human heart is so attached to earthly goods, but can they ever satisfy our hearts? Deep within our hearts resounds a yearning for eternal riches.

This desire is echoed in the eternal soul of every person. Is there such a thing as lasting wealth? Jesus, Who is eternal Himself, said, "I am with you always" (Matthew 28:20). He is eternal and unchangeable. Even if our riches on earth are lost, He remains a precious possession and fills our hearts with heavenly wealth. If our health is lost, Jesus is the best comfort, the only hope, and the strength for every difficult day. If the world attempts to rob us of our honor, we can take our honor and reputation from Jesus, Whose greatest shame on the cross is still better than the highest honor the world can offer.

When the shadow of death draws near, when everything earthly begins to fade, He, the Prince of Life, leads the ones who loved Him through death's dark door to their eternal, lasting, precious possessions. ■



Spiritual Riches

We may be rich in the perishable things of this world and rich in knowledge and skill, and yet in spiritual things be like a beggar who possesses nothing. Spiritual riches do not consist of the abundance of earthly things that we call our own because they cannot raise our spiritual value. The value of our spiritual wealth is determined solely by the state of our soul. Let us pause and therefore examine our spiritual state. Let us start from the beginning, where we were born again through the blood of Jesus Christ and where we are enriched with spiritual treasures.

Through the spiritual new birth, we gain access to the richest family any human being has ever known, and obtain the richest father. God becomes our Father, and we become His rightful heirs and joint heirs with Christ. We are resurrected from our spiritual grave and receive spiritual life through Jesus Christ. Only now does our life begin. At this time, our life acquires a purpose, because we have something to live for. We possess a new goal toward which we are consciously striving. Our selfish, worldly, ambitious inclinations have been overcome, since we no longer live for ourselves. We are now living for others and enriching them.

Physical life cannot compare at all with the value of spiritual life, and yet people give their last cent to preserve what little life they have, even if it is not worth half a cent to them or to anyone else. Life is a blessing only when it is purified and free from all selfish desire and carnal wishes. No one can live a spiritual life without being a blessing to others.

Among our spiritual possessions is divine love, which warms the soul, eases our Christian duties, and helps us turn our inclinations to eternal things. No hill is too steep in the path of duty that love does not overcome. The night never becomes so dark that love cannot pass through it. Love accomplishes everything, overcomes everything, and never fails. If you want to turn an enemy into a friend, if you want to lead a soul to God, then stay at the foot of the cross of Golgotha until your soul is filled with this divine love, and you

will be able to work in the spirit of Christ. Nothing can fill our mouths, and nothing can give us strength like the love of God alone. Love helps us to either say what is right, or restrains us from unwise speech. Love promotes compassion and drives us forward to serve others. Compassion that does not urge action does not embody enough love.

The soul filled with divine love is therefore driven to action. Love feels a burden it does not wish to cast off. One does not possess spiritual treasures until he is filled with this divine love. All Christian virtues glorify and magnify this love. Joy is a serving love, peace the harmonious love, long-suffering the love in temptation, and meekness the inner essence of love. Kindness is constructive love, patience is enduring love, and faith is love in action.

The more we embrace this wonderful divine love, the more other spiritual virtues and riches we acquire with it. When we possess all these Christian gifts in our hearts, we need Someone to teach us how to use them beneficially so we can grow in our spiritual gifts. The Holy Spirit becomes our teacher when we consecrate ourselves completely to our God, allowing Him to move into our hearts and give us power over ourselves, over the world, over our own ego, and over the devil.

On the day of Pentecost when the disciples were baptized with the Holy Spirit, they rejoiced in their newly-acquired spiritual riches. Oh, that all believers would not rest until they have had this wonderful and exceedingly delightful experience! Souls enriched by this wonderful experience are too busy to seek faults, criticize, or look upon others. They only focus on poor, needy souls with whom they can share their spiritual riches.

Jesus said to His disciples, "Give them something to eat." When our hearts are brimming with the fullness of godly love, we are also prepared to share this love with other souls searching and longing to be filled. The more we share with others, the richer we become. The secret to success in spiritual goods and gifts lies in the single little word "give." Many have not learned this

wisdom and therefore remain poor in spiritual riches. Jesus says, “Give, and it will be given to you.”

Do not keep your treasures and goods for yourself, but share them with others, including your positive and valuable thoughts, so other souls may hear them. Be sure the favorable things always remain in circulation, and the bad and evil ones are forgotten. Inspiring sermons have been preached that were inspired by the exchange of valuable spiritual ideas.

Spiritual riches are different from earthly ones, which are gained only by gathering and accumulating.

But the spiritual are gained by sharing and giving. We receive everything we have only by giving away everything we possess, and we keep everything we have by giving it to others. We have the promise that if we do our part and sacrifice ourselves wholly to the service of God, we will never suffer want. When our life ends here on earth, we have a dwelling place in glory, a place where there is neither sorrow nor pain, and where we may enjoy the fullness of our inheritance throughout eternity.

M. M.

Perishable and Eternal Values

In Psalm 39, King David proclaims, “Surely every man walks about like a shadow; surely they busy themselves in vain; he heaps up *riches* and does not know who will gather them” (v.6). He thought about the brevity and vanity of life. He realized how impermanent everything was here on earth and the folly that lay in the accumulation of earthly riches, which would nevertheless soon need to be left to others.

We are admonished by the apostles and by Christ to seek true treasures. “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him” (John 6:27). True riches are found in Christ. Paul writes, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). “Blessed *be* the God, and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly *places* in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). O, the matchless love of God that enables us to take in the riches of His grace and glory!

We are born into the family of God. “Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ . . .

to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace . . . having made known to us the mystery of His will . . . In Him also we have obtained an inheritance” (Ephesians 1:5–11).

Dear Reader, remember that there is eternal life and eternal death; eternal joy, and eternal anguish; eternal peace and eternal torment.

Why do people created for the glory of God care so much about perishable things? They care for the outer man and neglect the inner. Hear the admonition of God: “I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, *that* the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see” (Revelation 3:18). God has prepared the glorious garment of salvation and the holy anointing so we may walk in the light as He is in the light.

E. Talbert

Rich Through Grace

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9).

In reality, there is no such thing as a poor child of God. Sure, a child of God may be financially impoverished, or perhaps they may lack certain education, talents, or skills. The Christians in Jerusalem were not wealthy in worldly possessions (Romans 15:26). Although the Spirit said to the church in Smyrna, “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty,” nevertheless, they were also told, “but you are rich” (Revelation 2:9).

What do God’s children have that makes them rich, even if they are economically poor? God’s children possess genuine, true riches. The apostle Paul tells the Corinthians that “things present or things to come—all are yours” (1 Corinthians 3:22). Romans 8:32 proclaims that since God “did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Paul refers to himself and other gospel workers “as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:10). How could Paul claim to be rich and possess all things and yet be poor? When he speaks of having nothing, he refers to worldly possessions. Paul’s treasures were spiritual. His lack of worldly goods did not prevent him from claiming his eternal riches.

But how did Paul know these treasures were his? Perhaps he thought of the words of the father in the parable of the prodigal son: “All that is mine is yours” (Luke 15:31). The Bible calls us His children, heirs of God, and “He who overcomes shall inherit all things” (Revelation 21:7). How can we then call ourselves poor? We are children of the King, the Lord of the whole

world. God loves us dearly and, therefore, we have a share in all He possesses. Because we are children of God, we have been made His heirs and have ownership of spiritual treasures.

The treasures and riches we have are eternal and do not pass away. Earthly treasures can be lost, but the heavenly remain.

What are some of these treasures? God’s children have “abundance of grace” (Romans 5:17). They are “rich in faith” (James 2:5). They are “rich in good works” (2 Timothy 6:18). They have an abundance of great joy (2 Corinthians 8:2). They have an “abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:11). More spiritual treasures can be added to these.

These spiritual blessings are just one aspect of the riches of God’s children. The wonders of nature belong to us, with all of God’s created beauty. We enjoy the blue sky, sunshine, flowers, green grass, gentle breezes, bird songs, and bright stars above. We can all find pleasure in these things.

Then we have the treasure of friendship. True friends are a great blessing. The spiritual fellowship and the love we share with other believers is a treasure that cannot be forgotten. These are indeed spiritual riches. Additionally, we have God’s blessing and communion with Him.

We should meditate more often on our spiritual treasures. When we start to list them and meditate on them, we will find they are more abundant than we often realize. Thinking about them will let us both feel and recognize how rich we are. We will feel peace and satisfaction that those of the world cannot know, no matter how wealthy they are. God’s children are rich indeed! ■

Everything in Christ

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3).

Everything that God, the heavenly Father, has promised us is found in Christ Jesus. Whatever you need, dear Reader, your needs can be met in Christ. God gave His only begotten Son, and because He did, Paul asks in Romans 8:32, “How shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?”

Would you like to have lasting peace? In Christ we can have it because He *is* our peace. Our peace is purchased through His blood shed on the cross for us. Jesus Himself said that in Him we have peace, a peace the world does not know.

Do we desire righteousness? In Him, in Christ, it is found. John tells us in 1 John 3:5 that Christ came to take away our sins. He Himself is our righteousness.

Do you have a desire for real life? A life apart from Christ is not worth living. He is “the way, the truth, and the life.” God has given us eternal life, and that life is found in His Son. “He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12). Christ is our life.

Do you long to be well? We find this in Christ. “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up” (James 5:14–15). The new life we gain through Christ is not just for the soul. Many thousands who accepted Christ have been restored to health. This testifies to the fact that He also heals the diseased body. The same Jesus Who can say, “Your sins are forgiven” can also say, “Arise and walk.” He has the power to do both, to save from sins and to heal.

Peace, life, righteousness, holiness, health, joy, rest, and true happiness are all found in Christ. As such, receiving Him into our hearts and lives is the only way to receive all of these. “For all the promises of God in Him are ‘Yes,’ and in Him ‘Amen,’ to the glory of God through us” (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Our adoption as God’s children depends on our relationship with Christ. It is written that Christ gave the right to all who receive Him to become children of God (see John 1:12). As long as we abide in Christ, we also enjoy the wonderful privilege of being a child of God. We stand in God’s favor and are made acceptable in His sight (see Ephesians 1:6). On the Last Day, our relationship with Christ will determine where we will spend eternity.

If we are in Christ and remain in Him, we will also be able to bear spiritual fruit. The Lord Jesus says in John 15:4–5, “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you *are* the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.”

Christ fully satisfies. Therefore, make your heart a dwelling place for the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will attain true happiness. Victory over sin, over the world, and over self can be found only in Christ. Separated and far from Him, we fail and are nothing. But with Jesus we can be heirs of God. Can we think of a more glorious privilege? Then Satan has no claim on us. Even death cannot harm us if we belong to Christ. Can anyone imagine anything more wonderful?

We can proclaim with Paul: “What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:31–32). The riches in Christ and in His Gospel cannot be depleted. Do you share in these, my dear Reader? Through Christ, they can be yours as well.

Jesus is our refuge, and in Him is peace. If we do not abide in Jesus, we forfeit tranquility and peace. In Jesus, we find everlasting rest for our soul. ■

Inherit the Promises

The newspaper published the obituary of an old man. People had judged him as someone who had to rely on the mercy of others. His few relatives were wealthy people who had not cared about the old man at all. They didn't even show up for the funeral.

When his room was being cleared, they found a bag of bills worth millions. An accompanying will identified the beneficiary of the money. As requital for his relatives' cold-heartedness toward him, he had left his fortune not to them, but to the government. All of the relatives' arguments were futile. They had lost out on the inheritance.

Dear Reader, God has promised a far more glorious inheritance to those who love Him, who do not carelessly ignore Him, and who are not ashamed of Him. Thousands who have departed this world have already lost out. Wringing one's hands in eternity is useless. It is the heavenly inheritance of which Scripture says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9).

This inheritance, made legally binding by the will, already brings a rich advance in this life. The establishment of the will happens when we are born again, thereby becoming children of God. Not strangers, but children inherit the Father's fortune of eternal life, and the assurance that even on the Day of Judgment no destruction will befall them. This is the promise God gave His children.

In the sign of the rainbow, God gave Noah and all inhabitants of the earth the promise: "I set My rainbow in the cloud, and it shall be for the sign of the covenant between Me and the earth. It shall be, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the rainbow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember My covenant which is between Me and you and every living creature of all flesh; the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh" (Genesis 9:13-15).

The story of Noah and the ark is a wonderful picture of being born again, for the promise or testament of eternal inheritance belongs to those who are born

again. When Noah and his family stepped out of the ark, they felt as if they had been transported to a new world. The old, sinful culture had passed away. The ark had saved them.

Entering the ark is a picture of faith in the Savior, Jesus Christ, Who saves us. If Noah and his family had not entered the ark trusting in God's truthfulness, they would have perished in the flood like all the others. Whoever is not sheltered in the Savior today and does not trust the truth of the gospel message remains a slave with all sinners. He is destined for the eternal death of all the wicked on the Last Day.

Noah survived through faithful obedience and experienced the exit from the ark like a new birth. In the same manner, the person who faithfully obeys the word of the Bible experiences the spiritual rebirth of which Jesus spoke to Nicodemus: "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God'" (John 3:3). The kingdom of God is a holy kingdom. Children of God have the promise that they are citizens of this kingdom, and "over such the second death has no power" (see Revelation 20:6).

Dear Reader, if you are a child of God, this will has already been validated for you. Does this future inheritance belong to you too? Have you claimed God's rainbow in the clouds for you, that no flood of destruction shall descend on you? If you have this eternal, spiritual, divine life in your soul, then you are entitled to your heavenly inheritance, as you remain true to the faith.

Many are not aware that through sin they have forfeited their right of kinship as Esau once forfeited his birthright. Remember, no sinner is a child of God. Our holy God has no unholy children. Whoever sins is not born of Him. He may have had his sins forgiven at one time, but sin has separated him from God.

If you are dead in your sins, return to life so God can say of you what the father of the prodigal son said in Luke 15:24, "For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found." May you become certain and remain certain of the glorious inheritance, living without blame, by grace, until the day of Christ. ■



The Happy Farmer

Stories handed down over time can still inspire and encourage today. Because of our affluence as a nation, the following story, attributed to Augustus II, might even put us to shame.

The elector, Prince Augustus II the Strong (1670–1733), named “the Strong” because of his physical strength, went on a walk one day to a nearby village. On the way, he saw a farmer plowing a field, alone but happily singing.

“You have it good,” said the Prince, who watched him, smiling. “Is the field yours, that you’re working in so diligently?”

“O no, sir!” replied the man, who did not know the Prince. “I’m not that rich! I just work here for a day’s wages.”

“How much do you earn a day?” asked the Prince.

“When the crop comes up, eight pennies a day.”

“Admittedly, that’s not much. How is it possible to get by on that?”

“Get by? I can do much with the eight pennies!”

“How is that possible?”

Smiling, the farmer replied, “Since you really want to know, I’ll gladly tell you: I use two pennies for my wife and myself. With two, I pay old debts. Two I lend, and two I donate for God’s sake.”

“I cannot understand your words; they are a riddle.”

“Well,” said the farmer, “I’ll tell you. At home, I have two old parents who once fed me. Now it is up to me to feed them because they are weak. That is the debt I have to pay off, and for that I need two pennies a day. The third two pennies, which are to bear interest, I use for my children so they can learn something proper. Finally, with the last two pennies, I feed my older sister who is sickly and can no longer earn anything. So this money I give away for God’s sake.”

The Prince liked his clear and simple answer so much, that he said, “Good, good, my dear man! Now I want to give you a riddle too. Do you know me?”

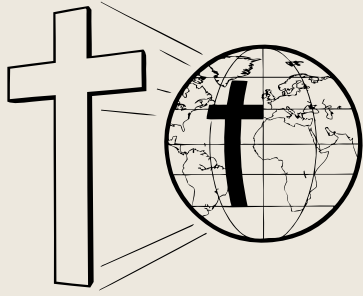
“Not that I know of.”

“Well, well, before five minutes have passed, you shall see me thirty times and carry me about in your pocket.”

Shaking his head, the man looked at him and said, “This is really a great riddle; I can’t solve it.”

“Then watch this,” replied the Prince, while counting out thirty brand-new gold pieces on which his image was stamped.

When the last gold piece slipped into the hand of the speechless peasant, the Prince spoke with a smile, “The coins are authentic. They come from our Lord God, and I am His paymaster. God be with you!” ■



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Rich or Poor?

What is the proper definition of rich and poor? And which riches are worthwhile to pursue, the inner or the outward ones?

Although we may err in our judgment, it is not difficult for any of us to distinguish between the rich and the poor. First Samuel 16:7 says, “For man looks at the outward appearance.” We may see the big farm or the successful businesses in our city or our boss’s thriving business and say to ourselves, “Those are rich people!” Outwardly, that may be true, but are all these people truly wealthy?

John D. Rockefeller was one of the richest men of his time. It is said that he considered it a duty to acquire all the money one can acquire in an honest way and also to give away what one can for good causes. For who is the poorest person in the world? “The poorest man I know is the man who has nothing but money,” according to Rockefeller. Did he imply that there is more to real wealth than just money?

In the church of Laodicea (Revelation 3), there were obviously rich people. They had not kept their wealth for themselves but had brought the church into an outward prosperity. They could therefore say, “I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing” (verse 17). But the Lord’s judgment was com-

pletely contrary to this self-assessment: “[You] do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked.”

This judgment, after all, applied to the individuals who belonged to this church. There was a clear lack of recognition and distinction between true wealth and poverty. How unfortunate that there is confusion among us about this as well! The Word of God teaches us that, in reality, the rich can be poor and the poor can be rich.

For example, sitting in a streetcar, a lady noticed very close to her a woman who radiated friendliness on her face. “I would like to have it as good as she does,” she thought. But a few stops later, this friendly woman got off, and the lady noticed that she only had one leg.

Continuing her journey, she became aware of a young mother with her child. “That mother has it so good!” the lady thought, and wished her child would be so quiet and obedient. When both women got off and met again at a vegetable stand, the lady noticed that the quiet child was mute. Now she became



thoughtful and realized that some people had a greater burden to carry than she did.

I have often been amazed to see how people cope with their burdens, sufferings, and hardships. They do not possess much wealth, but they are happy and content. They are sometimes challenged and scorned but take on a gracious attitude. They go through darkness and tribulations but radiate light. They face many difficulties, sickness, and pain but endure them graciously, remaining confident and reassured.

In this sense, Paul once wrote to the believers at Corinth, “*We are* hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed: *we are* perplexed, but not in despair: persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed” (2 Corinthians 4: 8–9). In Romans 8: 35–37, we read, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.” These are evidence of a mysterious power, of an inner wealth that many people do not know. True wealth is

in the soul and in a life hidden with Christ in God. These people are connected to a source from the eternal world. They possess a wealth that exceeds the riches of this world, and despite struggle and suffering, they can be a blessing.

In Laodicea, many called themselves rich and were proud of it. But in reality, they were woefully poor.

So how about us? Having wealth is not enough to be blessed and cannot be a substitute for wealth in God. Jesus once spoke of a wealthy man who had many material possessions, and didn’t know where to put them. Sadly, he didn’t care enough to seek God’s saving grace, the inner peace of his soul, or reconciliation with God. Then came the night of his death, as Jesus ended this parable with the words, “Then whose will those things be which you have provided? So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God” (Luke 12: 20–21). In this way, Jesus presents us with the truth that though we have great wealth, we can in fact be very poor.

Rich or poor? Shouldn’t we seek true wealth in God? You need it in life and in death and can only find it in Jesus Christ. ■

View Yourself Through God's Eyes

God sees you as something precious, unique, and very valuable. How do you see yourself? Do you know your value in God's eye?

Your Creation Has a Purpose

You were created by God and are wonderfully made. Every day of your life was created in detail, like the pages of a book.

“Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, the days fashioned for me, when *as yet there were none of them*” (Psalm 139:16).

Your condition, characteristics, and talents are not an accident. God does not make mistakes. He created you and caringly placed you in a body, family, and place on this earth.

God wants everyone to live in a secure and caring environment where love for God is nurtured (encouraged and sustained).

Yet many are hurt or harmed by some situations because others are unwise or simply because they sin. Sin has brought the whole world into decay.

In this dark and corrupt world, evil is prevailing more and more. But this is not what God wants. His will is for all to choose what is right and do what is good, for all to seek God and to be saved.

God wants to heal all those who have a broken heart, who are shattered, and who are in poor circumstances. He plans to put an end to all this pain, suffering, and misery one day and take all the true children of God from it to a new heaven.

If you are a child of God, then you belong to His people and are created to live a pure and faithful life, pleasing to God.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

You Are Loved

God's love is stronger and deeper than human love and feelings. In God, you have a true friend who

knows and understands you better than anyone else.

He sees and understands your heart and your desires. He sees your temptations and struggles and how you are attracted to things that are not good. He is always there for you. He hears you and helps you when you pray to Him with a sincere and humble heart.

“The face of the LORD *is* against those who do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth” (Psalm 34:16).

Have others treated you badly or unfairly? Do you feel alone, insignificant, or unwanted? God's love will heal you if you put your life and your ideas into His hands.

Have your plans failed? God does not love you any less because of that. His love is unconditional.

God is just. God wants to teach you something through the tribulations and guide you to Himself. Let the love of God guide and lead you.

“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose” (Romans 8:28).

God's love eagerly desires your precious spirit and wants to deliver you from your burden of sin that makes you miserable.

You Are Unique and Precious

“How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them!” (Psalm 139:17).

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully *and* wonderfully made; marvelous are Your works, and *that* my soul knows very well” (Psalm 139:14).

No one is like you—in a very good way! You fill a special place in this world and in the work for God. Maybe there is something in your appearance or in your personality traits that you do not like.

Perhaps you do not have extraordinary gifts. Do not compare yourself with others. You can be an example in service to God. Maybe you know someone to whom you can say a few words of encouragement. Maybe there is something that only you and God can see.

Use your energy, your ideas, your love, your qualities, and your personality to serve God with all your heart—wherever you are in your life, whether at home, at school or at work, in your family, in the community, or with your friends.

Your Life Has Immeasurable Value in God's Eyes

There is nothing rarer or more important than one who has faith in God and is obedient to His commandments! These are the true stars on earth.

They will be revealed as sons and daughters of God when Jesus returns.

“You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden” (Matthew 5:14).

Ask God to open your eyes so you can see how valuable it is to live for Him. Then you will realize your

true personal value on the one hand, and how valuable you are to your neighbor on the other.

Live consciously with the goal that God has a plan for your whole life. Follow His plan with all your heart.

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23–24).

Look at yourself and others through God's eyes, and then life will be hopeful and bright, and you'll be able to stand as a fragrance before God.

“For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Hans Klassen, Via Gracia (BO)

Heaven—The Final Destination

Summertime has arrived and with it, the hope for rest and relaxation. Perhaps a trip to the mountains or an opportunity to walk along a beach. In our daily struggle against stress, deadlines, and personal challenges, we long for a chance to put up our feet and rest.

In the grief recovery group that I lead, we recently discussed heaven. Jesus says, “In My Father's house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). This place Christ has prepared for us will be superior to anything we have ever experienced before. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 2:9, “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him.” The beauty of an untouched beach and the view of a breathtaking mountaintop pale in comparison to the

eternal destination God has in store for those who love Him.

When we plan a vacation, we consider how to get there; we book airline tickets or plan a route with our GPS. Although there are many ways to arrive at a particular destination here on earth, heaven has only one entrance and only one way to get there. Jesus mapped the route for His followers and the means of getting there by saying, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me” (John 14:6). Heaven is accessed through salvation in Christ alone.

Let us make every effort to live in such a way, whether at home, at work or on vacation, so we can make it to our final destination of eternal rest.

Karina Knelsen, Seminole, TX

Even for Me!

My father used to be a well-known man in Gdansk. He was the General Director of the Gdansk Shipyard, the Consul General of Finland, a professor, and a senator. Working in all these positions, he had attained significant wealth. Together with his brother, he employed 23,000 people. Because of this, we children had everything our hearts could desire. Despite our wealth, the most important thing was missing: Jesus Christ.

We lost everything during the war, and I was taken to live with my grandparents. I had studied music for a few years, so I was able to be a singer. It was the Lord's clear leading that I got seated next to Mr. Schreppel. He soon gave me a New Testament and other spiritual books. I took the opportunity to read all he had given me. Through reading, the Lord was able to speak to me by illuminating my heart with His liberating, penetrating light.

I was shocked when I realized I was not as good as I had thought myself to be and that there was all kinds of evil in my heart. I learned that not only were the really bad things a sin before God, but also the small and seemingly insignificant ones, which I had never paid attention to before. But seen in the light of God's

truth, they could not continue to exist: envy, stinginess, anger, bossiness, sensitivity, hatred, unkindness, arrogance, etc.

The Lord was able to break me so I could truly see myself as a sinner. Now I also understood why the Son of God had to come from His glory to this poor earth to die on the cross, even for me!

I was able to find forgiveness for my sins through Jesus Christ's wounds that shed precious, holy blood, allowing me to experience its cleansing, sanctifying, redeeming, and preserving power and strength. I would like to be able to praise the blood of the Lamb more and more.

The Lord allowed me to look into His heart. It was full of love and mercy. He gave me such joy, such peace, as I had never known or imagined before in my life. I received a wealth that the world with all its treasures could not give, but that could only be felt by someone who had personally experienced it. I was able to recognize that the wealth of my childhood was nothing compared to the wealth and happiness in Jesus Christ.

Brigitte Noé

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Camp Meeting 2022, Germany

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, 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



A Child of the King

Many years ago, a gentleman was riding along the road when he heard someone singing. He was attracted by the melody, enticing him to stop and listen. Then he heard the words, “I’m a child of the King.”

As he rode on, he came alongside the singer, a poor man working in the field with a hoe, and an old canvas tent nearby on a hill. The poor, humble surroundings seemed quite contrary to the song this man was singing, “I’m a child of the King.”

The gentleman sitting on the stately horse was an unbeliever, who denied God’s existence, and often scorned and mocked anything religious. True to his character, he said to the poorly dressed man, “So, you are the child of a king? It’s too bad religion makes people so foolish. If you’re a child of a king, why would a prince run around like a poor beggar?”

The man continued to work and sing undisturbed:

My Father’s own Son, the Savior indeed,
 Once wandered on earth as the poorest in need;
 But now He is reigning forever on high,
 And will give me a home in heav’n by and by.

The proud man was astonished to receive such an answer to his ironic remark. This was just the rebuke he needed. He was not to be deterred, and with cutting words he asked, “Is this the palace of the king in which you dwell?” pointing to the tent.

Not at all swayed in his faith, the man continued to sing:

A tent or a cottage, why should I care?
 They’re building a palace for me over there;
 Though exiled from home, yet still I may sing:
 All glory to God, I’m a child of the King.

I’m a child of the King, A child of the King;
 With Jesus my Savior, I’m a child of the King.

Boys and girls, you too may become children of the greatest King, to Whom the whole world belongs. He is far richer than any king or millionaire here on earth. He is the Lord Jesus!

Give Him your heart and serve Him faithfully. Then you’ll be rich, and one day you be allowed to live with Him in your heavenly mansion. ■



Screen time

How Screen Time Affects Our Lives and What We Can Do About It

Yes. Our phones can distract us from the things that are most important to us—our families, our relationships, our salvation. While this world has always been full of things designed to distract us—as children, my generation had to deal with television, the telephone, comic books, the radio—our distractions today feel very different, and there is a reason behind it. If you own a device, you have probably found yourself attached to your phone. They are specially designed to get us hooked. My desire and prayer is that reading this information will empower you and help you understand which forces are impacting you.

Ten years ago, right before my oldest child was born, I acquired my first smartphone. I remember taking pictures of my newborn and sending them to my mom across the ocean, and within seconds she was able to view the pictures. What a miracle to be able to share the joy of a new life in an instant even though there were thousands of miles separating us. Today, I use my phone for nearly everything. Starting with my phone alarm waking me up in the morning, it accom-

panies me throughout my entire day. My to-do list is on my phone, my calendar, and my daily routine. Scheduling appointments, ordering groceries, paying bills, listening to audiobooks and music, tracking my spending, ordering school supplies—literally, almost every aspect of my life involves my phone, and I would be lost without it. These phones are nothing short of a minor miracle. But I have to say, I was pretty oblivious to the impact and influence it would have on me when I first started using my phone. As it turns out, these phones are also one of the most dangerous things we own. Wait, what?

Tech companies know that in order to make money, they need consumers who keep coming back, over and over. That's the business model that their success depends on. So they use the latest research on human behavior and psychology—the way you and I function—and design their products based on these findings. Our devices and apps are user-friendly, easy to navigate, and, most importantly, habit-forming. While this in itself could be called progress, we have to un-

SOMETHING FOR THE FAMILY

derstand that there is also a negative side to this development. The very thing that makes our phones so easy to use also makes them irresistible and distracting. The bottom line is if you are not aware and equipped to handle these distractions, and you're the owner of a smartphone, your brain will be manipulated and taken advantage of by time-wasting diversions. According to

N. Eyal (author of "Indistractable: How to Control Your Attention and Choose Your Life"), our tech devices can gain unauthorized access to our brains by prompting us

to distraction. Facebook's first president Sean Parker described how their social network was specifically designed to manipulate our behavior. He says that in order to "consume as much of your time and conscious attention as possible . . ." they need to "give you a little dopamine hit every once in a while . . . because someone 'liked' or 'commented' on a photo or a post . . . and that's gonna get you to contribute more content . . . It's a social validation feedback loop . . ."¹

Tech giants have been extremely successful with their strategies. Is it very surprising to hear that today the typical smartphone owner spends an average of 4.8 hours daily on his device "with seven out of every ten minutes [being] spent on social or photo/video apps"?² If you do the math, you will realize that we are dedicating a large part of our day to our phones. Each month, many hours are lost to checking social media, texting, playing games, reading articles, checking bank balanc-

es, and so on. But the question to be asked is whether the time we are spending on our phones lines up with the values we have as Christians. What are we sacrificing and giving up for this time spent on electronics? Our days only have twenty-four hours, and something has to give. Is it a deep conversation with your spouse? Your family night? Pondering God's Word? Your prayer

time? Time spent reading to our children or playing with them?

The consequences can be very harmful. As adults, we are less productive at our workplace, we become bad listeners and

don't stay focused during a conversation, we make more mistakes when we are distracted, and we are more likely to respond to our children in a short and impatient manner. Children report feeling lonely, ignored, and unheard by parents who are physically in the same room as them but mentally far away. "It is becoming clear that heavy digital technology use puts a strain on family relationships. When parents and children are interrupted by technology—when, say, a call or text comes in and the adult's attention gets diverted—children resent it" (Meghan Cox Gurdon in "The Enchanted Hour"). Children are more likely to act out after tech-based interruptions that happen during conversations, meal time, or play. We all perceive an intrusion when the person in front of us interacts with digital technology during time spent together.

As a Christian, I can't help but wonder what this does to my relationship with God. To be able to ►





hear God's voice, I have to get quiet first and find stillness. Yet, have you ever tried having your devotions with your phone by your side? I remember sitting down to read my Bible one morning only to—BING—get interrupted by a text message. I tried to ignore it first, but then my phone buzzed again, and I began to wonder if it was an emergency of some sort. So I checked it, only to find an unimportant advertisement text. I tried to focus on my Scripture reading again, but somewhat lost my train of thought. Just like it is hard to fully engage in a conversation with a person when I am constantly pulled away by notifications on my phone, it is hard to reach depth, to feel God's presence, to really listen to what His quiet voice is trying to tell me when I am only half present in my mind.

So what are we to do then? We know it is not in our best interest to do the things that can harm our children, hurt our relationships, and keep us disconnected from God. But yet, it has become such a habit that we don't even realize how often we reach for our phone without really needing to do anything on it. I have caught myself unlocking my device just because I could feel it buzz in my pocket or because it was sitting there on the nightstand within my reach. I have seen

people glance at their phones mid-sentence just because it was there and their hands mindlessly unlocking the home-screen without even knowing *why* they were doing it. It was nothing but a reflex! That is where we need to start waking up and becoming aware of our habits as people, as parents, and especially as Christians. Please realize you don't have to be a powerless user of your electronic device. As thinking human beings, by the grace of God, we can be much more powerful than any tech giant. I am not trying to suggest ditching all devices from now on, since tech-shaming and blaming is not the goal of this article, but let's take responsibility and understand that our human nature is vulnerable: Our curiosity; the desire for entertainment; the need for distraction when we are bored, in pain, or experience some type of discomfort; along with the way our devices are set up are the reasons why we have become such a "distracted" society, and God's people are not exempt.

My challenge for myself and all of us is this: let's set an example. Let's master the internal and external triggers that cause us to constantly reach for our devices. What are your internal triggers that make you reach for your phone? Observe yourself and become aware.

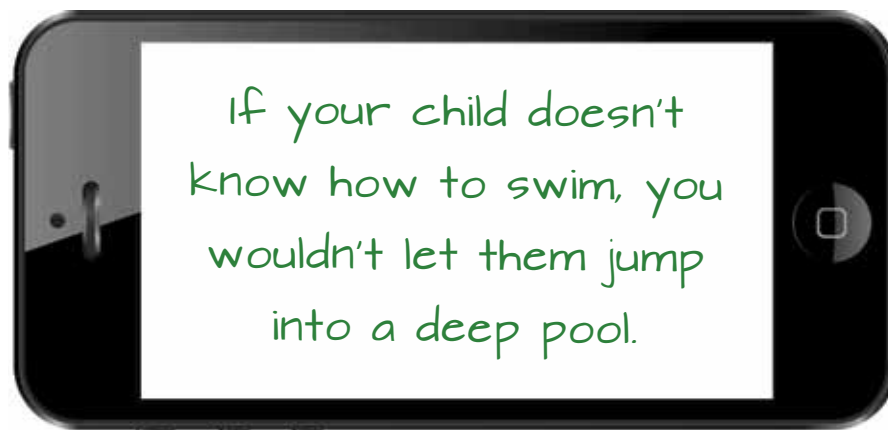
Is it when you are bored in the waiting room? When you are sitting at the stop light? When you are having a bad day and need some distraction? Maybe you reflexively reach for your phone first thing when you wake up? Don't be mindless about it. Here are some tools that have worked well for me: Keep track of your screen time (you can easily look it up under "Settings" on your phone). Decide how much time you want to spend on a screen. Create a block schedule that makes room for the activities that line up with your values, including your screen time, and then stick to it. If you use social media, it may require special attention. Before you open the app, decide when and how much time you will allow yourself to scroll—or you will easily spend much more time on it than ever intended. You can pre-set your phone to allow a limited time to use the platform,

and then the app will shut off by itself. You may also want to try turning off notifications for certain apps on your phone to control the external triggers. Set rules for yourself where and when you don't want to use any devices

in order to be fully present with the people in front of you. For example, during meal time or meetings, at church, when gathered as a family in the living room, in your bedroom, etc. Then turn your phone off or put it away so you won't be lured into checking it every little bit. Have a designated time to answer emails and messages. Do not answer messages automatically as they come in, especially if your phone is also a business phone, but control when you reply to them. Overall, I want you to feel empowered. Control your phone so *it* won't control you. You can absolutely resist

these distractions, the little pings, dings, and buzzes. We can take measures right now to retrain and regain our brains—because we really don't have a choice. We are either going to suffer by allowing our lives to be controlled and manipulated by others, or we can take control of our attention and choose how to live.

Note for parents: If we constantly use our phones in the presence of our children, they will do the same and follow in our footsteps. Set a positive example and model responsible screen usage. Before ever getting your child a device, check if your child is ready to be using electronics on their own. If they are not able to set limits, *you* control their screen time, and stick to it, as they may not be ready for it. Think of this analogy that N. Eyal suggests in his book "Indistractable:" if your child does not know how to swim, you wouldn't let them



jump into a deep pool, no matter how many kids are swimming in it and making it look like fun. This case is similar. Technological devices can be very

dangerous if your child is not equipped and trained to handle them correctly. Be careful and very sure before you ever hand a device over to a child.

*Juliane Zacharias
Adair, OK*

¹YouTube. Online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R7jar4KgKxs> (Accessed June 22, 2022).

²ZDNet. Online: <https://www.zdnet.com/article/mobile-usage-hit-record-highs-in-2021-and-continues-to-grow/> (Accessed June 22, 2022).

The Danger of Forsaking Worship Services

“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching” (Hebrews 10: 23–25).

The author of Hebrews offers a serious warning against forsaking worship services because there is grave danger in avoiding assembly with other children of God. Let us take a closer look at the reasons some dear brothers and sisters stay away from church.

Forsaking Due to Boredom

Quite a few people who tend to skip services may say they do not offer them enough. The preacher is always the same, he’s not always very eloquent, and anyway, he’s too old—or too young and inexperienced. His sermons are not as well put together or as interesting as those of the evangelist whose sermons meet with great acclaim whenever he visits. When the evangelist is there, they want to be, too.

However, this line of reasoning is contrary to God’s will and therefore unjustified. God grants different talents to different people in His church, but always for everyone’s benefit. Every child of God knows there is a big difference between a teacher, a shepherd, and an evangelist. Worship services are not primarily meant to be exciting; they are part of our service to God.

If we do what we can to foster love for and in our brothers and sisters, then we are serving God. It will always foster love for all children of God if we do not miss any services and if we support God’s work with all our hearts, kindly encouraging our fellow sisters and brothers to do their best for the Lord and His kingdom.

Forsaking Because of Guests

Having guests is usually a big deal, and some people think they should skip services because of this. They see it as their duty to make things as agreeable as possible for the visitors. We do not believe a preacher ordained by God has anything against brothers and sisters in the congregation skipping the occasional service because of house guests, if necessary. However, this depends on what is truly in their hearts, on their intentions and especially on their faith in God. It will always be a big encouragement for the congregation, and often a pleasant surprise, if the guests can come along. In addition, such a visit has brought many a guest to find the greatest joy of their lives. From our experience, it usually makes a good impression on visitors if we obey God more than people, causing them to respect our faith.

Forsaking Due to Difficulties

Difficulties of various kinds can often tempt children of God to skip services. They can take a variety of guises, such as differences of opinion, defamatory gossip, and criticism. There can be difficulties in the family or at work; there can also be conflicts of time, for example wanting to read interesting books, or simply relax for a while.

Pastors are not exempt from these temptations, and yet they are expected never to miss a single service. Indeed, and rightly so, they are expected to overcome all difficulties and to have a love so great that it can bear



anything. Since this is the case, can pastors then not expect all sisters and brothers who have a pure heart and full faith in God to have victory over these same struggles?

God allows some trials in the lives of His children so they can prove themselves. Would it not make sense to attend services with even greater fervor when problems arise? It is during the services that love can be fostered and difficulties overcome.

Forsaking for Love

Some skip for the love of a man or a woman, others out of love for sports or other things. A wide variety of things in life can tempt children of God to stay away.

In the gospel of Luke, the Lord Jesus tells a parable in which guests invited to a feast had a variety of excuses for not attending. One had to work in the fields, the other attend to his cattle, and the third wanted to spend time with his wife. However, staying away brought them no benefit but rather great harm. Yet to-

day, avoiding worship services is a big danger for all brothers and sisters.

The writer of Hebrews draws attention to this danger and then continues, “For if we sin willfully” (Hebrews 10:26). This verse builds on the warning against skipping services, indicating that forsaking assemblies can lead to willful sin. In quite a few cases, that has indeed happened. It is very questionable whether the people he mentions as forsaking the assemblies remained children of God after repeated absences. For that reason, he adds at the end of Hebrews 10, “But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul” (verse 39). In Romans 10:17, we read, “So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.”

We are encouraged not to leave our congregations because we have a High Priest over the house of God, because services are a place of exhortation, and because the return of Christ is near.

Albert Drews

Rush or Rest

Isn't it strange that many today are not satisfied, despite their elevated standard of living, money and pleasures? People like to talk about the good old days. Yes, people used to be much poorer, but they were also much happier. They sat together after work and had time and interest for each other. The father didn't need sports but found time to go hiking with his children in God's beautiful nature. The mother, with so many children, still found time to spend the evening hours with the little ones and tell them beautiful stories. She taught them early to fold their hands and planted the fear of God in the young souls. Everything went on so calmly and without hurry.

Today, you might sometimes hear, "I have no time! Hurry up!" What have we come to? With this hectic pace, a person actually forgets to live! The days and years rush by, and every now and then the rushed person asks himself: Where has life gone? Does it have any meaning at all?

Oh, I've seen the people working
And searching night and day;
They're coming and going and yearning
And toiling upon their way.

They won't find for what they're searching
In pleasure and fortune and fame;
And burdened with sin and hurting,
The masses return again.

One would think that in the face of the transience of everything visible, man would reach out for eternal values. But, unfortunately, despite all the disappointments and the unfulfilled emptiness of their inner being, many try to find rest in the pleasures of the world. Thus, life flies by, and considering the length of eternity, the deceived person stands poor and empty before God. Who thinks about the seriousness of God giving us life as a time to be used to call upon the Lord?

Therefore, dear Reader, become wise and leave the camp of indifference! Time is very precious, so use it wisely. There is only one resting place in the roaring sea of the world: Jesus Christ. His call still resounds from one end of the earth to the other: "Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). These are not empty promises, not the words of a man. No, behind these words stands the Lord Jesus Himself. Yes, everyone who thirsts, come to the water of life that flows from the cross for all sinners. Yes, buy without money! (See Isaiah 55:1.)



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

This call of the Savior is for all people, because the work of Golgotha is sufficient for all. Our Savior wants all to be saved. He gave Himself as a ransom. He calls all who labor, all who struggle to earn heaven by good works or sacraments. He calls all who want to stand before the holy God with their own righteousness. Those who realize the futility of their own efforts are called to receive salvation in Christ by grace.

The Savior also wants to lift the load of the burdened. What an offer! The greatest load is the burden of sin. How many drag themselves around with it all their lives! Follow the advice of your Savior.

His offer is also for the restless. To all the weary, as well as to all those hounded by the devil, He offers the glorious gift: “I will give you rest.” How the heart longs for this rest!

He gives rest of conscience to the one who confesses and forsakes his sin and finds forgiveness and grace. He gives rest in the heart through blessed discipleship and fellowship with the Lord Jesus. In Matthew 11:29, Jesus says, “Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”

In the song “In the Cross of Christ I Glory,” J. A. Poseck wrote:

Conscience now no more condemns us,
For His own most precious blood
Once for all has washed and cleansed us,
Cleansed us in the eyes of God.

Filled with this sweet peace forever,
On we go, through strife and care,
Till we find that peace around us
In the Lamb’s high glory there.

“Come to Me, . . . and I will give you . . .” is what the Lord calls to us. We are not dependent on people. On the cross, the Lord Jesus died for us. There, He bridged the gap between us and holy God—access to the Father. Therefore, He and He alone is able to give us rest, home, peace, joy, and salvation.

Do as I did, dear Reader. I, too, recognized this hurry and restlessness, the futility of life without the Savior. I experienced that He keeps His word. I found rest, peace, joy, and eternal life in faith in the Crucified and Risen One.

Bow your knees before the Savior, confess your sins to Him, and bring Him all your needs. He will give you rest and peace! ■



How Rich I Am

How wealthy am I, oh my Father above,
Through Jesus my Savior and Lord!
For I am at home in His Kingdom of love,
Since I was made whole through His Word.

My sins are forgiven, I now am God's child,
And Jesus, He calls me His friend.
He leads me and guides me with mercy so mild,
He works all for my best in the end.

If lonely or desolate, I am still rich,
Since Jesus is with me always.
If happy or mourning, yes, no matter which,
His Word is my strength ev'ry day.

In Him there are hidden those treasures of grace,
Of wisdom and true righteousness.
More precious than silver and gold, I embrace
These riches and God's holiness.

He leads me and feeds me as I follow Him,
The bridegroom, for I am His bride.
He clothed me with white when He pardoned my sin,
And I am so blessed by His side.

And when I am weary, He takes my right hand
And guides me so I will not stray,
For He leads me safely to heaven's fair land
And helps me each step of the way.

How wealthy am I, oh my Father above,
A heavenly heir through the Son.
I'll sing with the angels, declaring God's love,
Awaiting the heavenly crown.

Edeltraut Nimz