



# Foundation of Faith

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## *Thankful— in Difficult Times*

Why Did God Do This to Me?

Thankful-Through the Tears

Experiences with God

Nevertheless-Be Thankful

Giving an Offering to the Lord

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

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Questions and suggestions can be sent to:  
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Tel.: (810) 732-1831  
or email us at  
cupress@thechurchofgod.cc  
www.christianunitypress.com

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH (USPS 9008) is published monthly by Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Flint, MI, and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Christian Unity Press, 5195 Exchange Dr., Flint, MI 48507, USA Volume 20 Issue 10

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Printed in USA.

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

## Editorial

Dear Reader,

*Don't we all owe God a debt of gratitude? God not only created the world, both visible and invisible, but also gave us all the gift of life. In addition, He has blessed us with many gifts, a free will, and beyond that, an immortal soul.*

*In Psalm 50: 23, we read, "Whoever offers praise glorifies Me; and to him who orders his conduct aright I will show the salvation of God." He shows the salvation of God and His glory to whoever gives thanks to Him from the heart.*

*In this fallen world, living in ignorance and sin, we often hear grumbling, complaining, scolding, blaming, cursing, and even blaspheming.*

*But, dear Reader, what are we commanded to do? "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you" (1 Thessalonians 5: 18).*

*"Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5: 20).*

*"Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God" (Hebrews 13: 15); let us keep offering praise to God continually, yes, always, through prayers of praise and thanksgiving.*

*But who can do this? Who can be grateful in all things, in every situation, and praise and thank God at all times? This is only possible through God's goodness and grace. Through His redemption, and according to the riches of His glory, we receive power to become strong in our inner being (see Ephesians 3: 14-17).*

*We are told of Job's patience when he lost everything. Yet in faith, in his fear of God, he was able to say, "The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD" (Job 1: 21). Consequently, Job could still trust God despite his suffering, and declared, "Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?" (Job 2: 10).*

*Therefore, dear Reader, when there are unwelcome and difficult hours in our lives, let us look up to the Lord and thank Him even in such situations.*

H. D. Nimz

# Prayer and Thanksgiving

For three long months, scorching heat hung over the Chinese province of Shan Tung. Not a cloud covered the azure sky. All life threatened to die; the earth was cracking from the drought. Like a giant monster, the apparition of hunger stretched out its arms for prey. A few more days and the harvest would have burned before it had ripened. That would have meant the death of many millions of people.

Every day, the population, with the exception of the Christians, called upon their rain god for help. Money, rice, meat, wine, everything was brought to him, just to please him. Processions were held, supplications were made, in honor of the idol. Every day for six weeks, the idol was led through the fields by the highest dignitaries, followed by an immense crowd. However, the sun still burned with undiminished strength. The misery and hunger grew from day to day. Finally, the desperate people grabbed the constantly-grinning stone idol and threw him from the height of the city wall down onto the sun-scorched ground so he would first learn compassion there.

The Christians had also pleaded with God, but until now in vain. Astonished and dismayed, some of them went to the missionary and said, "We understand quite well

why the others did not receive an answer. We know that clay images made by human hands have no power. But we also prayed for six weeks without ceasing. We did not get an answer either. We now ask you in all earnestness, is there really anything true about this Jesus of Nazareth to Whom you have taught us to pray? Or is that also just a fool's game? We have not yet seen any proof of His existence."

"Very well," replied the missionary, "will you ask God to show you the obstacles that keep Him from answering your prayer? If He shows them to you, will you confess and ask God to forgive you?"

"Yes, most certainly!"

"Then let's pray together."

No sooner were they on their knees than some were sobbing and stammering confessions, earnestly asking God for forgiveness. In the end, with a pure heart and confident faith, they were able to ask the Lord for rain. Agreeing among themselves, they decided to pray until God would send the much-desired rain.

Those who had been with the missionary spread the news of their plan. Soon, there was a large crowd united together in prayer. It grew every day. At the request of the students, they even closed the university so the students could also unite with the others in prayer.

Every morning, two prayer services were held. In the afternoon, the students went to the surrounding villages and told them that the Christians in the city were praying to their great God to make it rain. They asked the people to pray with them to the mighty Christian God.

A week passed. One day, the people woke up and saw the sky covered with clouds. A light rain trickled down. But then a strong wind arose and carried away the long-awaited rain into the far distance. The sun continued to glow.

The churches continued in prayer. The next morning, the clouds appeared again. A light rain began; it became heavier and heavier; then it began to pour. The harvest was saved, and millions of people rescued from starvation.

Again, the Christians came to the missionary. This time, they no longer doubted the reality and power of the true God. "We now know what it means to believe in Jesus Christ," they said. "For ten long days, we asked God for rain. He has heard our supplications. Shall we not give Him thanks now for answered prayer?"

The students again asked for a break from classes so they could give thanks to God. For ten days, two thanksgiving services were held every day, filled with joyful songs of thanksgiving, psalms, and

testimonies of His wonderful power and grace.

In the afternoon, they went out again to tell all those who had not yet come to know and love Jesus how wonderfully God had answered the prayers of His children. They invited everyone to give thanks to the only powerful and true God for His great help, and to serve Him. The auditoriums of the mission houses were filled with people from all walks of life; they were packed to bursting.

On the tenth day, the chiefs and dignitaries of the capital came to thank God on their knees. “I believe,” said the chief bureaucrat, “that you teach the true God, the true faith, and the true gospel. I would be ready to publicly confess your God, but I know I would then lose my position, if not my head.”

Many who came to the thanksgiving service sought and found the Savior Who took upon Himself the guilt of all the world. Therefore, through thanksgiving, God’s blessing was magnified even more.

Let’s follow the example of these people, because we have realized that thanksgiving not only preserves the blessing but also increases it. Only when there is no barrier or obstacle between God and us, can we receive blessings and offer thanksgiving with all our hearts. ■

## Blessings of a Broken Leg

The following account is ascribed to the faithful theologian and clergyman Bernard Gilpin who lived in England during the reign of “Bloody” Queen Mary.

While actual details might vary, his life truly was spared through God’s providence.

As a Catholic, the queen hated her Protestant subjects, and had many of them burned at the stake. Among those condemned was Gilpin. When the executioners came for him, they mocked him for his faithfulness to Jesus, asking derisively, “Will you thank Him now for letting you burn?”

“Yes, I will,” Gilpin replied from the bottom of his heart.

They laughed boisterously, paying no attention to the cart they were driving with Gilpin. It flipped, and the bound man, unable to help himself, broke his leg. “Can you still give thanks?” jeered the executioners as they packed Gilpin, in agonizing pain, back into the cart.

“I thank my Lord with all my heart,” said Gilpin, smiling in spite of the pain. The order came from the queen that Gilpin should be taken to prison until his leg healed, because he needed to stand while being burned at the stake.

Gilpin had only lain in the dark dungeon for a few days when “Bloody” Mary died. Her Protestant half-sister, Elizabeth, ascended the throne of England, and the new queen’s first order was to free all Protestant prisoners. Gilpin was one of the first to leave the dark dungeon. Burning at the stake had ended, and he was saved. Gilpin had thanked his Lord even with a broken leg, and what a blessing that broken leg had become! ■

# Thankful—Through the Tears

Everyone experiences hard or bitter times in life. Even when things are going relatively well, you never know how soon trouble may come again.

## Reasons for Difficulties

Everyone has their own threshold or tolerance for difficulties. What some people may consider to be a catastrophe, others may just think of as a challenge or an uncomfortable circumstance. But when there is bodily harm, or a life is in danger, everyone takes it seriously. Paul gives us insight into the storms he himself faced (2 Corinthians 11: 23–27). Yet, despite these, he spoke with confidence that we should be thankful in all things (1 Thessalonians 5: 18).

Some problems are the result of bad decisions. When things we have done wrong lead to problems, then our complaints are actually directed against ourselves. If we come to realize that we ourselves are the root of the problem, we have reason to be thankful, because now it is possible for us to humbly seek help, and to change. Times of difficulty through which the hand of God leads us are especially precious. In these times of need, we come to experience God's grace and love in a special way, and can then be thankful to better understand God's way and His leading in our lives.

I still remember a testimony a brother in Christ gave years ago. He said, "I am thankful God helped us through the war and carried us through the difficult years

that followed. I hope He will also carry us through the good times." Since he had experienced God's help in difficult times, he knew he could trust in God and His power for the future.

## The Knowledge of God Leads to Thankfulness

A person can easily comfort himself and say, "It could have been worse," or "There are others who are even worse off." Mentally, we may be able to reduce our stress or anxiety, but that is not true thankfulness.

A thankful person realizes that in their particular case, God's leading is wise and good. I knew a family whose father was put into prison in the late 1930's because of his faith, and the mother had to fend for herself and their six children. The neighbors asked her how she could believe in a God Who treated them so badly. But she answered, "I thank God for His leading, and I am convinced He has His best for us in mind." Then the Second World War came. Most husbands and sons had to join the war effort, and only a few came back alive. But after eight years, this brother was released from jail, shortly before the war ended. He was healthy and reunited with his family, while many others had been killed. Even those who previously criticized and doubted had to admit that God's ways are good.

It is a great blessing to know God and to comprehend His will for us, no matter what the situation. It is only from God's per-

spective that we can see matters correctly.

## The Blessing of Being Thankful

Being unthankful and dissatisfied deteriorates our outlook, but a thankful heart makes us strong. Thankfulness may not change a situation but it changes our attitude. It keeps us from becoming bitter, disappointed, or even displeased with God. Joseph knew for a fact, "But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50: 20).

A thankful person knows there is much to learn in adversity. Russian literature details the attitude of Czar Peter the Great who, after continually being defeated by the Swedish army, finally gained the victory after nine years of fighting. After the victory, the Russian generals returned to the tent of Czar Peter to find an unexpected banquet laid out for them. With tears in his eyes, Peter the Great thanked the generals. He told them it was they who had made him a hero. Every previous defeat he was forced to suffer led to greater strength, until he was able to gain the final victory.

A thankful heart makes certain our relationship with others is not jeopardized by our own sorrow. It does not blame others for our difficult situation. A thankful person either takes personal responsibility for the situation, or else is confident that God in His wisdom knows why things must be as they are. Therefore, it is possible to help

others who are also suffering, to weep with those who weep and to comfort them.

With an attitude of thankfulness, you can be a blessing and an example. Everyone goes through times of trials and difficult situations. The problems may or may not be related to health or even to tangible circumstances. Nonetheless, many people can sense how much pain and suffering you may be enduring. Yet by the grace of God, when they actually get to know someone who is thankful in spite of their circumstances, they are often encouraged to persevere in their own situation.

When we read of the trials of the apostle Paul, we realize that God had great confidence in this man. He even allowed Paul to be swept about on a stormy sea for two weeks in a primitive ship (Acts 27). We do not see Paul depressed or discouraged. He persevered in this severe crisis, and God was able to use him for further assignments.

Thankfulness gives us inner grace and strengthens our soul. It helps us to persevere in tribulation and be victorious. The thankful heart sees, even through teary eyes, the dawning of the next morning. Dear Friend, in your present situation, or in a crisis yet to come, God will be close to you. “Offer to God thanksgiving” (Psalm 50:14), and He will show you how precious your thanks are to Him, especially when that thanksgiving comes in the middle of a valley.

*Waldemar Adler  
Nur-Sultan (Kazakhstan)*



## EXPERIENCES WITH GOD

**T**o God's glory, I'd like to share the following experience with you. I thank God for salvation, that I can walk with Him on a daily basis, and that I can have a very real and active relationship with Jesus. Daily I am blessed with His provisions, sustenance, strength, comfort, and peace.

I suffer from osteoarthritis and consequently from much joint stiffness. Every morning and each new day I am thankful for mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Though my physical health leaves a few things to be desired, I am grateful for every day that I can walk, move about, and still have the strength to do my daily activities. Some days are better than others. But, what I want to share is that many of my struggles are conquered with much praise and worship of my wonderful Redeemer, Savior, Helper, and Great Physician. Often, I spend time simply praising God for His goodness and claiming the healing power in His wonderful name! Frequently this praise time is spent sitting many hours at my piano, playing, singing, and praising God in worship. It gives me much comfort and helps combat feelings of discouragement and despair. There is power and victory in thankfulness! If you are also

someone who suffers pain, I encourage you to offer heartfelt praise and to continuously claim God's promises and healing power. He honors our gratitude and hears our prayers. God is *so* good!

"He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses" (Matthew 8:17).

I am so grateful for the privilege and power of prayer! His power is only one call away. It also gives me great joy to intercede for fellow believers and lift them up in prayer, knowing there are so many needs all around us. By the grace of God, I have been blessed with a wonderful husband and children who are serving the Lord. As I help carry their heavy burdens in prayer, my heart goes out to those who suffer the pain and heartache of unsaved loved ones. As children of our loving heavenly Father, we *all* can be certain that we won't fall through the cracks and be forgotten. He hears our pleas, and in His time, He will make all things well. It continues to be my desire to trust God and serve Him faithfully. May I encourage you in the same desire?

Joanne Friesen  
Steinbach, Manitoba





| *“Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103: 2).*

**T**o God’s glory, I would like to write a testimony of how the Lord helped me in a special way during the time I was caring for my mother, Helene Traeger.

My mother lived with us from 2000 to 2006, and for the first two years she was still able to come to worship services with us. Then things changed; she became bedridden and needed 24-hour care.

In 2003, my own health totally and quite suddenly changed. I couldn’t sit and I couldn’t bend over, nor could I dress or undress myself. I had to go to bed wearing my everyday clothes. I prayed earnestly to God every day for help, for I had my mother to care for.

After one week without any change in my condition, I decided to ask my sister and niece for help. Lying down on my bed, I picked up the phone and requested that someone help me every day for the next week. After that, I prayed for a long time and then fell asleep.

When I awoke and wanted to get up, I grabbed the chair next to my bed that I used to support myself when I got up. That’s when I realized I could sit. I stood up and could even bend over. I was so amazed and delighted that I stretched my arms up and bent over so I could touch my toes with my fingers.

Picking up the phone, I informed my sister and niece that I didn’t need any more help because the Lord had suddenly made me well. From that day on, with God’s help, I could do all my duties and chores again until the Lord called my mother home. We have a God Who helps and answers prayers. Praise and glory be to the Lord! I am very grateful to Him for His daily help, care, and protection.

My wish and prayer is to remain faithful to the Lord until the end of my life and to be a blessing wherever I am. After all, it is not the beginning that is crowned, but the end.

Waltraud Weiss  
Waterloo, Ontario



### Thankful in God's Hands

**W**e are sincerely grateful to God for His blessings, help, and direction. God leads and guides His children in magnificent ways. Often the ways of God are hidden from us, “‘For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways,’ says the LORD” (Isaiah 55:8).

Giving thanks on good days is not difficult, although people often forget to give thanks when things are going well. But giving thanks in difficult times truly requires grace.

God's intentions for us are always for the good of our souls and our lives.

The Bible verse my wife and I chose for our marriage is, “Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass” (Psalm 37:5). For many years, we have experienced over and over again that God leads all things well.

In 2012, we were expecting our second son. In the beginning, the pregnancy was uncomplicated and seemingly without risk. However, due to an infection, the baby had to be induced prematurely, and our child was born more than three months early. In addition to an underdeveloped, premature baby not able to breathe, maintain its body temperature, or consume milk on its own, more complications occurred shortly after birth: two brain hemorrhages, blood poisoning, and other difficulties. As a result, it was impossible to foresee the outcome. The doctors could not say whether our child would survive the first few weeks, whether he would have disabilities, or whether he would grow up to be a healthy child. This was the beginning of a long period of uncertainty for us.

But in His wisdom, God gave us a word of comfort from Psalm 46:10 in the first few hours after our child was born: “Be still, and know that I *am* God” (Psalm 46:10).

From that time on, this Bible passage gave us such peace, strength, and confidence knowing that we could just let go and give everything to God. Right from the first days, we consciously thanked God for allowing this to happen, because we were aware that God does not make mistakes. We were able to completely surrender our child and the outcome of this situation to God. We firmly trusted that if God allowed something like this to happen, He must have a plan for us.

Through this verse, the Lord gave us a quiet and grateful heart through the years of our child's development. We were allowed to see God leading us step by step, and He has done all things well.

We also experienced special encouragement through the many prayers of brothers and sisters who supported us from the very beginning. We felt God's hand carrying us through this valley. It was definitely a difficult time in our lives, but we would not have wanted to miss it and all that we experienced during this time.

Today we can say that God has given us a perfectly healthy and bright child. We can only proclaim again and again, “God has done all things well!”

After that, the good Lord allowed us to sail through calm waters for several years, where we could simply be thankful for the grace God had shown us.

However, in September 2021, a new trial awaited us. I was rushed to the hospital with severe abdominal pain. After some initial examinations, it became clear this was a serious situation. An emergency operation had to be performed immediately. The subsequent diagnosis was made with a fair degree of certainty: advanced stage colorectal cancer. This diagnosis was completely unexpected and shook us deeply to the core.

How good it is to have a God we can look up to! He alone gives us new courage in the deepest valleys.

Especially in the first days after my diagnosis, I received new courage, joy, and gratitude in my heart by singing songs of praise and thanksgiving.

Apparently, I gave my doctors the impression that I was not fully aware of the implications of my diagnosis. The doctor who first treated me never tired of mentioning what a serious situation I was in, how terrible the initial situation was, and based on his observations, other doctors entered my room with their heads down in defeat.

Truthfully, I was well aware of the seriousness of my situation, but God helped me remain confident and hopeful.

Initially, a treatment plan was set up in a hospital that, in retrospect, could not have even been carried through at all. Therefore, God in His wisdom led in such a way that the treatments and necessary therapies were continued in another hospital. In this we also see God's guidance and are sincerely grateful.

In the following months, there were also moments and situations that depleted our courage and hope. One doctor's medical prognosis went so far as to claim I would never be cancer-free. That seemed to pull the

rug out from under my feet. But even in that moment, the Lord was near and strengthened me with the fifth verse from Psalm 139: "You have hedged me behind and before, and laid Your hand upon me."

I have been undergoing chemotherapy since last October and, according to the oncologist's plans, it will continue until the fall. So far I have tolerated the therapies very well and feel fine. I have no pain and can spend a lot of time with my family. Thanks be to God!

Through this illness, God has given me many opportunities to testify to others in the hospital of God's help. I share with them how He blesses me and that I find my support and strength in Him.

Also during this time, it is encouraging to know how brothers and sisters from many congregations have prayed for us and continue to do so. We greatly appreciate this support and ask God to richly reward this service.

We do not know what developments the future will bring. But we do know that God holds everything in His hands. He makes no mistakes. He will do all things well.

Paul Kremer  
Etzbach, Germany



# Thankful in Difficult Days

*“Blessed be the Lord, Who daily loads us with benefits”  
(Psalm 68: 19).*

**A**s a family, especially in the last three years, we too have experienced how God helps bear our burdens. In February 2019, our son Markus was diagnosed with chondrosarcoma (bone cancer). At the time, he was approaching his eighteenth birthday.

Until that day, we believed we were grateful for everything, but we also took a lot for granted. On this day, our view of many things changed abruptly. Many things became secondary, as we realized how quickly life can change.

Since this type of cancer is very rare, even the experienced team of doctors in Cologne did not know how to treat it. A professor contacted a clinic in Stuttgart and asked for advice on treatment, as this clinic had already treated some patients with the same diagnosis. However, the doctor in charge was on vacation. Since the tumor was already very large and had pressed on the organs, they had to act quickly, so they independently decided to start a nine-month chemotherapy regimen and after half of the therapy to surgically remove the tumor.

At the time of diagnosis, the tumor was already too large to be removed. With chemotherapy, they hoped to shrink it and then

remove it. However, since we had already learned in advance that the tumor would not respond to chemo, we had a hard time deciding to agree to this therapy. In our despair, we brought the situation before God and found comfort in the verse, “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me” (Psalm 50:15).

We asked God for wisdom for the doctors’ decision. Markus had already had an IV inserted in a surgical procedure for the upcoming chemotherapy. The doctors had decided to start the chemo on Thursday. On Wednesday evening, we received a call from the clinic. We were told that the doctor from Stuttgart had returned from vacation and urgently advised against chemotherapy, since chemotherapy does not work for this type of tumor.

We could see how God worked and changed the doctors’ decision. Throughout the entire illness, we were able to experience again and again how God stood by us and cared for us. He took decisions away from us and helped us to trust Him in the process.

The doctors decided to remove the tumor in a ten-hour surgery. This was very challenging because the tumor was rock hard and mea-

sured 18 x 15 x 8 cm. Then 39 radiation treatments were ordered with the strongest dose. Again, God did great miracles.

After a 1.5-hour explanation of the many risks, the doctor asked us to meet for a discussion. Here, she shared her concerns that Markus would not follow through with the radiation due to lack of motivation. She knew from experience that many young patients who were initially motivated abandoned radiation prematurely because of the pain. However, if radiation is not followed through to the end, there is no chance of success.

We also brought these fears before God and asked Him to stand by Markus and give him strength for the upcoming radiation. It was a hard and painful time, but God stood by him even then. so he was able to persevere until the last radiation treatment. Even when he had open burn wounds and we thought he was going to end treatment prematurely, he persevered. To God be the glory for that! In the final conversation with the doctor, she admitted, visibly astonished, that she had not believed Markus would make it to the end. In that moment, we were able to testify of our belief in God, that many people had prayed for Markus, and

that we were convinced this was the source of his strength.

We are so thankful for the Body of Christ that carried us on hands of prayer, especially during that time. In the moments when I sat helplessly next to my suffering child and seemed to lack the strength to persevere, I called my cousin Niko. He comforted me with the words, “God has said yes to this path you must walk. He will stand by you; He will not leave you alone.” This view has remained with us until today and accompanies us on our journey.

Dear Brothers and Sisters, we are grateful to each one of you for every prayer, every card, every thought, and every phone call. Thank you for thinking of Markus and our family. It is good to know we do not need to travel this journey alone. May God reward you! We do not know what road lies ahead of us. Markus has been in and out of remission since 2020. At the moment, he is taking strong medications with many side effects. We hope and trust in God’s provision of continued support and prayer through the Body of Christ.

Alla Elgert  
Etzbach, Germany



## EXPERIENCES WITH GOD

“Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits” (Psalm 103: 2).

On November 6, 2002, I went to the hospital for an inpatient examination. I was following the advice of my doctor but did not expect them to actually find something serious.

The very next day, however, things already looked worse. The doctor informed me that the laparoscopy had raised concerns about my abdomen and that I would probably need surgery. Tissue samples and fluids were extracted for further tests, he said, and the results were expected by Monday, November 11.

Having said his piece, the doctor left me alone in my hospital room. I felt a sense of impending doom, and my first thought was, “Father in Heaven, stay at my side.”

Monday came, and with it the test results. The head physician gravely explained the pathology report to me. With a diagnosis of stomach cancer, he told me it looked very serious, and urgently recommended surgery.

I thank our Father in Heaven that I was able to remain calm and organize my thoughts. During the course of the appointment, everything was explained in detail. Additional exams had to be conducted, and further treatment was discussed.

This was a lot for me to process. On that very day, my husband Willi told our pastor what was going on, and many people began praying for me, not only in Germany but also in Canada.

I felt very calm and safe in God’s hands during this week. I frequently thought about a German hymn in which we sing to God, “To us, You are like a father who does not forget His child.” As time went on, I had many discussions with other patients and doc-

tors about my faith and about prayer. However, I also enjoyed quiet periods of meditation and prayer in the hospital chapel.

During the week before surgery, my doctor told me, “If you need to cry, go ahead.” I replied that I would cry if necessary, but added that the peace I felt was not my own; it was given by God because so many people were praying for me.

The surgery took place on November 15, 2002. Everything went better than expected. Tissue samples were sent to pathology again. On November 21, the head physician surprised me by personally bringing me the pathology report. We were overjoyed that no cancer cells were found in the sampled tissue. After the first burst of joy had passed, I told the doctor how many people had prayed for me and that I believed God had helped me. To verify the results, a second round of tests was conducted, with equally good results.

Every day was special to me, and I was filled with joy and thankfulness. The Bible verse my devotional assigned to this date was Jeremiah 29:11, which reads, “‘For I know the thoughts that I think toward you,’ says the LORD, ‘thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope.’”

I thank our Father in Heaven for this assurance every day and for His support throughout this time. I am also grateful to everyone who prayed for me. The choir songs were a big encouragement, glorifying God as their sound filled my hospital room.

Irma Hornberger  
Herford, Germany

## Why Did God Do This to Me?

*How quickly these words fall from our lips when we do not understand God's ways.  
Don't you see that God's goodness leads us to repentance?*

**M**any years ago, when settlers first came to the American West, it so happened that a farmer saved the life of a Native American man. The man he saved pledged to return the favor if the opportunity arose, but it never had.

One evening, the farmer and his wife were sitting in front of their house, watching their only child play on the ground a few feet away. Suddenly, the Native American man sprang over their hedge, picked up the child, and ran into the forest. In utter shock, the parents jumped up and ran after him, screaming, "Our child, our child! Is that how you thank us for what we did for you, you heartless man!" But he kept running deeper into the forest, and so the parents kept chasing him until they collapsed in exhaustion.

With the village now several hours behind them and night quickly falling, the couple had no idea what to do. To their great relief, the Native man finally stopped and handed them back their crying child, saying, "Be at peace, I was not trying to steal your child. But my tribesmen were planning to attack your village tonight and kill all the settlers. Because they knew I am friends with you, they made me promise not to say anything to you before sundown. That left me with no other way to save your lives than to run off with your child. I knew you would follow me."

When the husband and wife returned to the village the next day, they encountered only its smoldering ruins, with all other residents murdered.

God sometimes takes a similar approach when He sees no other way to get the attention of someone who

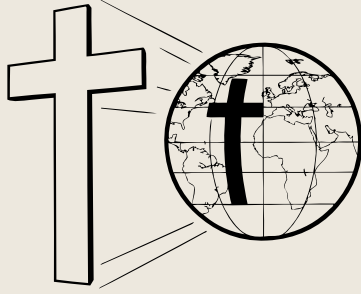
is enamored with the world or is simply stuck in apathy. Sometimes He takes away the thing we love most.

An analogy might be a shepherd who picks up a lamb and jumps over a ditch that his sheep are refusing to cross, so after the lamb's mother also jumps the ditch to join her lamb on the other side, the rest of the flock will finally follow.

When standing at their young daughter's bedside, seeing her cheeks flushed with fever and hearing her gasping breath or, worse yet, when standing beside a small, fresh grave, many parents have learned to fold their hands and pray again, as they did as children.

If we have been serving the world and its idols for a long time, God may use a death in the family to show us that "the world is passing away, and the lust of it" (1 John 2:17). God may also ask, "Whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:20). This is a God-sent, if excruciatingly difficult, truth meant to open our eyes to eternity. If the stakes are as high as they get—the life of our soul—should we not ask ourselves whether the risk of losing it is too high?

This is the key to many a question about an act of God that our human nature rebels against. Blows of fate, heartache, financial losses, or whatever else may happen—everything works together to lead to our salvation. God does not enjoy seeing you suffer; He wants to speak to you to say, "Give Me your heart, My child." If you do give Him your heart, you will come to understand, whether in this life or in eternity, why He let all the difficult things in your life happen. ■



# Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs  
Kitchener, ON

## Effective Reformation

*Many reformations in the history of the world were urgently needed at the time they occurred. According to the recurring pattern of the cycle of nations, spiritual apostasy occurred throughout history. Spiritual reform is also necessary in our time. Who can be used by God for this purpose?*

**T**o reform means to renew, to transform, to improve, to create a revival. Hezekiah, the king of Judah, was called to this difficult work. His name means “the Lord is my strength.” According to biblical accounts, he was an able and therefore suitable man. At the age of 25, he ascended the royal throne in Judah. The Bible characterizes him as a godly man who “did *what was* right in the sight of the LORD” (2 Kings 18:3). His testimony sounds very impressive: “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses. The LORD was with him; he prospered wherever he went” (verses 5–7). This was certainly the reason for and the secret of his successful reform.

His reign began with the cleansing of the temple, the restoration of the order of worship, and the reinstatement of the long-neglected Passover celebration. He ordered the service of the priests, tore down all the pagan altars, and Israel “broke the sacred pillars in pieces, cut down the wooden images, and threw down the high places and the altars.”

Even in times of distress and enemy raids, Hezekiah maintained a firm trust in God. When he was seriously ill, he prayed to his God with tears, “Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done *what was* good in Your sight” (2 Kings 20:3). His prayer was answered, as we read in the following verses (4–6): “The word of the LORD came to him [Isaiah], saying . . . ‘I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you. . . . I will add to your days fifteen years. I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria.’” In Isaiah 38:17 we read Hezekiah’s response: “Indeed *it was* for *my own* peace that I had great bitterness; but You have lovingly *delivered* my soul from the pit of corruption.” These and other experiences clearly show that the Lord was with him and granted him success in his reforms.

Reforms of this kind were repeatedly necessary in the history of God’s people. God used various leaders for this purpose, such as young Samuel. In 1 Samuel 3:19–20 we read, “So Samuel grew and the LORD was with him and let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan to Beersheba knew that Samuel **HAD BEEN** established as a prophet of the LORD.” He worked with God’s blessing and had rendered great





service to his people and the land of his fathers. He saw his responsibility and said, “Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the LORD in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way” (1 Samuel 12: 23). His responsibility and conviction did not allow for anything else.

Young Josiah was another man used by God. Second Chronicles 34 reports his destruction of all soothsayers, diviners, idols, and other abominations in the land, but also his restoration of the commandments and the words of the law. He had given himself to this work with all his heart and with all his strength. His effectiveness in national reform had a decisive impact against the inner confusion and desolation, against the spiritual apostasy and the ensuing chaos of internal ruin.

In this sense, when we consider the Reformation of the sixteenth century, we recognize how vital it was. It occurred because of God’s mercy and was the answer to people’s searching and questioning about God. Luther declared it to be a legacy to all Christendom on earth. It served the purpose of providing much-needed light in the darkness and restored to the people, initially in Germany, an inner direction and a Bible-based foundation of faith. The cost of this work was high, but

so were the profits! It was a work willed and directed by God, and a visible blessing rested upon it. Considering the high costs, we are indebted to all who gave their strength, their abilities and even their lives for this valuable work.

The Reformation around the time of the 1880’s also served the purpose of revealing to people the perfect truth of the gospel. Essentially, it provided the truth about leading a godly holy life, about the experience of sanctification and about the one biblical church. The Lord raised up servants whom He could bless with this deeper, biblical knowledge and who would decisively proclaim the full New-Testament truth. Many people joyfully and gratefully accepted this message and gained more biblical light.

We have seen that reformations were essential again and again and had blessed consequences. Now the question remains whether we also have the courage to participate in effective reformation for the sake of others in our sphere of influence. We see a disturbing apathy or disinterest spreading in our time. Do we want to simply accept this development, or do we want to consciously counteract it? May we recognize our responsibility and ask God for grace, courage, and wisdom to engage in effective reform! ■

## Giving an Offering to the Lord

“For God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

**Y**ou may have heard of “giving an offering,” or “tithing” before. It refers to giving money regularly to your local congregation and to God’s work. While these two terms are often used interchangeably today, they do have slightly different meanings. Nowadays, some Christians refer to giving money regularly to the church as “tithing,” and “offering” denotes a special giving above and beyond the usual amount. However, I will refer to the regular giving of money as “offering” to distinguish it from a literal “tithe” or “tenth,” as explained later.

While giving an offering is not a requirement of believers in the New Testament, and therefore of believers in our time, offering is an excellent thing to do.

Consider the Old Testament. God commanded the Israelites to tithe a portion of their possessions and money (Leviticus 27:30–32; Deuteronomy 14:22–29). A tithe is one-tenth or 10% (the origin comes from Abram in Genesis 14:20). The Israelites were also commanded by God to give other offerings in addition to tithes, such as festival offerings, the temple tax, and the various animal offerings as prescribed in Leviticus. Giving God a share of your possessions and money was a required part of life for the Israelites in the Old Testament and up to the point of Jesus’ death and resurrection.

However, we know a lot of changes were ushered in for God’s people, including no longer strictly observing the Mosaic covenant and Jewish ceremonial laws, including tithing (Romans 7:6). Neither Paul, nor any other New-Testament letter writer, ever mentioned that Christians should literally “tithe,” as giving a tenth was no longer commanded or required of God’s peo-

ple. However, Paul still urged the churches to give money or offerings for the Lord’s work.

Why is this? First, the fact is that money is needed to pay the costs of a church building and to provide income and support for pastors, missionaries, and Christian organizations—namely, the work in the kingdom of God. Second, offering money acknowledges that what we have belongs to God. “For all things *come* from You, and of Your own we have given You” (1 Chronicles 29:14). We are dependent on God for everything, including money. Third, the Lord has done so much for us; don’t you think we should give Him an offering of gratitude? He provides us daily with the physical gifts we need, as well as spiritual blessings, not to mention salvation and eternity with Him. He died on the cross for us so we could be free from sin—what a gift! The Lord blesses us abundantly, so it is only right that we should gratefully return a portion of His gifts to Him and to the church.

How much should we give? There is no set amount. While a tenth is no longer commanded, many Christians today choose to give approximately that amount of their pay check or income. A tenth is a good starting point. If you can give more, that is a wonderful blessing! However, if you’re not able to give a tenth, give what you can. The Lord knows how much you’re able to afford. Recall the story of the poor widow who gave only two little mites (Mark 12:41–44). While the value of her offering was less than a penny in today’s value, she sacrificially gave all that she had (100%!), and Jesus commended her for it.

The important thing is not how much you give, but how you give. How willingly are you giving your mon-



ey and offering it to the Lord? Second Corinthians 9:7 states, “*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity.*” If we feel reluctant to give an offering, we shouldn’t do it. If we feel forced to give our money, or we feel our parents or congregation want us to, then we won’t do it with the right heart attitude, and our offering will be looked at by Jesus as of little value. If we decide to give money, then we should do so cheerfully, as Paul exhorted us.

When should we give? Throughout the Bible, we are continually reminded in various ways to put God first. Our allegiance, our thoughts, our time, our efforts should be His first (Matthew 6:33). Likewise, we should strive to give an offering as soon as we receive a paycheck, if possible (see 1 Corinthians 16:2). It is too easy to buy the things you need or want first, and then discover you hardly have any money left to give as an offering. God does not want our “leftovers”; He wants our “firsts.” It is a great idea to first set a portion of money aside from your paycheck for the Lord and

then go buy what you need and want. Although it is a test of faith, don’t you think the Lord will provide for you, even though you might be giving a lot of money to Him (Malachi 3:10)? As the old saying goes, you cannot outgive God.

God will bless you for your offering—whether it’s big or small—as long as it’s done cheerfully. In verse 11, Paul mentions that “you are enriched in everything for all liberality, which causes thanksgiving through us to God” (2 Corinthians 9:11). In other words, offerings bring glory to God. God desires glory, and He is worthy of all glory and thanksgiving. I heartily encourage you to give offerings regularly to the Lord with cheerfulness, generosity, and gratitude. The Lord’s work on earth will be furthered, you will lay up treasure in heaven for yourself (1 Timothy 6:17–19), and God will bless you for your giving (Proverbs 3:9–10).

Stefanie Henkelmann  
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## *“Don’t Speak of Your Jesus!”*

**O**ur grandfather could no longer hear anything in the last years of his life. He had become completely deaf. If we wanted to tell him something, we wrote it down on a small notepad that he always carried with him. But Grandfather was never dissatisfied. He knew he was a child of God, saved by faith in the Lord Jesus. He rejoiced in this and occupied himself much with God’s Word, the Bible. If the weather was nice, he often went for short walks.

One day while walking through town, Grandfather was hit by a car and was seriously injured. He had to be taken to the hospital and operated on. He stayed there for a longer time, and in the first days he had severe pain and could not sleep at night. But he suffered especially because he felt very lonely, since he did not understand a single word when someone wanted to talk to him.

Grandfather thought a lot about his accident. Again and again he asked himself why God had allowed all this to happen. At first he found no answer.

Some time later, another patient was brought into Grandfather’s room. He was a young man, an architect, who had fallen from a high scaffold at a large construction site on the outskirts of the city. He had suffered several broken bones and had casts. His parents visited him the same day, and were very worried about their son. Since his youth they had pointed out to him that, like all people, he had to expect the judgment of God, and eternal ruin, because of his sins. They had also told him about the love of God that encompasses him, so he can be saved. But the young man had not taken all this very seriously. As he had grown older, his interest and energy had been focused on his career. He was hard-working and very conscientious, and therefore, even as a young architect, he had been put in charge of the entire project on that construction site.

Then the accident happened. Now he lay in the hospital for a long time.

When the two men, whose beds were close together, had become somewhat acquainted, the older one asked his young roommate, “Do you also know the Lord Jesus as your Redeemer, as your personal Savior?”

“Don’t speak of your Jesus!” the young man replied unkindly. He had not thought about his relationship with God and about eternity until then. But Grandfather did not hear these words. He continued to talk about his Jesus, about the love of God, and also about the Day of Judgment, always thinking that the young man was listening to him and was interested in this conversation.

But the young man was not just a little annoyed. Did he have to be bothered here with such things, burdened with such questions? The old man should keep his wisdom to himself. If only he would finally keep quiet!

But God Himself worked on the young man’s heart, and he began to think. Many serious words from earlier times from his parents’ home and from Sunday School, awakened in him. Was it not folly for him to place all his hope in his career advancement, and to devote all his time and energy only to work? Even if all this meant so much to him, could any of it reconcile him with God?

After some time, Grandfather was released. He could go home again. He was happy about that.

God blessed the old man’s faithful effort. The day came when the young architect fully recognized himself in the light of God’s truth for the first time. He saw he was eternally lost and needed a Savior. Then he turned to the Lord Jesus, confessed his sins to Him, submitted his whole lost life, and received forgiveness. Great joy flooded his heart.

The following day, he sent Grandfather a letter telling of his conversion. At the very beginning of the letter, it said, “. . . so you know why the car hit you.” ■

## Love the Truth

Louisa Meier was new to the class. She was a bit reserved and had not yet found a friend.

“Children,” said Miss Schmidt to her class one morning, “one of you climbed the apple tree that belongs to poor Widow Schulte and stole apples from her.”

Everyone looked at Bastian, who could be suspected for such a thing. Even the teacher looked at the boy. But Bastian just laughed and said, “It certainly wasn’t me. But I know who did it. I saw her.”

“Oh, a girl!” exclaimed the teacher. “Bastian, who was it?”

“Louisa Meier.” The boy said the name slowly and clearly and looked Miss Schmidt boldly in the eye.

When Dora heard what Bastian was claiming, she murmured softly, “It wasn’t her. But I saw Bastian in the tree on Saturday.” Just as she was about to raise her hand, Bastian’s gaze met hers. “Tattle on me if you dare,” his eyes seemed to say, “and you’ll see what happens to you!”

Dora lowered her eyes and remained silent. Then she heard the teacher say, “Louisa, unless you can say something in your defense, you will be excluded from our field trip on Saturday.”

Louisa had nothing to say in response to this accusation. But at home she confided in her mother, and then they both poured out their hearts to God in prayer. “Our dear Lord will help,” was Louisa’s firm conviction, and she resumed being cheerful.

When Saturday came, Dora looked so tired and pale that her mother thought she was sick. Before leaving for work, she called and had Dora excused from the school field trip. Dora was also supposed to take care of her little sister. While she played in the garden, Dora lay in her hammock alone, struggling with her thoughts, unable to forget what had happened to Louisa Meier at school.

As if by chance, Dora looked at her little sister, and saw her running toward the open well. Someone must have forgotten to put the heavy lid on it, and now the little girl ran unsuspectingly toward the deep hole. Dora was seized by a paralyzing horror. She tried to get out of the hammock, but she would hardly get to the little girl in time.

Suddenly, Louisa was there. Dora had not seen her coming. Louisa immediately recognized the danger the little girl was in, quickly rushed toward her and was barely able to pull her back from the open well before she would have fallen into its depths.

Oh, how grateful Dora was when she could take her little sister unharmed in her arms. She looked at Louisa and asked, “How could you do this for me when I lied so horribly?”

“You?” cried Louisa, astonished. “Bastian, but not you!”

“No, me too, Louisa. I knew Bastian was the culprit, but I was too much of a coward to speak up. I lied by my silence.”

“But you will admit it now?”

“O, yes!” Dora assured, and asked Louisa to be her friend from then on.

Some time later, Bastian was expelled from school because he had been caught stealing many other times.

“Aren’t you glad that boy is gone?” the children asked Louisa, to which she only replied, “Poor Bastian!”

The field trip from which Louisa had been excluded was later repeated. The teacher wanted to make up for her mistake. Louisa was held in high esteem by her classmates because she was honest, helpful, and humble.

Dear Children, you see there are many ways to lie. Sometimes you can also lie by remaining silent. Have the courage to stand up for the truth! ■



## *Nevertheless—Be Thankful*

**M**uch has been spoken and written about giving thanks. We know the Bible prompts us countless times to be thankful. But sometimes it's difficult to maintain a lifestyle of gratitude. Time and time again, negative thoughts get in our way, and hinder us from giving thanks.


Of course, when we are young and successful, it's easy to be thankful. And if we are healthy and free of ailments, giving thanks is no problem. Certainly, if we are well and have everything we need, that's reason enough to give thanks. But if limitations and impairments set in, if we are unable to do the things we once enjoyed, if dreams don't come true . . . is it even possible to still give thanks? Some people are simply too overwhelmed to do so. As a result, discontentment slowly creeps in, and thankfulness becomes increasingly rare. I think you know what I mean.

What is gratitude all about? Is it really only possible to give thanks when everything in life is going "according to plan"? Is it even possible to clasp your hands and give thanks in the valleys of life?

In Acts 16, we meet two men, Paul and Silas. They were not on vacation, and certainly were not in an enviable position. They were in jail. Because of their missionary outreach, they had been imprisoned but not without first receiving "many stripes." So there they lay, badly injured with their feet in the stocks. Yet what were these men doing in prison? We read that around midnight, "Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God." In the entire context of the text, neither in the preceding nor in the subsequent vers-

es, there isn't the slightest hint of discontent or even lament. The exact opposite happens. Despite great distress, they still found reason to thank God. How is this even possible? We know these men were saved and had peace with God. They trusted the Lord and were certain "that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8: 28). Although they were totally uncertain of the outcome of their imprisonment and whether they would even survive, they trusted their God. They were convinced that He would "bring it to pass" (Psalm 37: 5b), which is why they were able to thank God even in prison. This was the secret of their praise. Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, also reports the conclusion of the event in the same chapter: the conversion of the jailer. Miraculously, God was able to use the imprisonment of Paul and Silas to show this man the way to faith. As the saying goes, "All's well that ends well." "This also comes from the LORD of hosts, *Who* is wonderful in counsel *and* excellent in guidance" (Isaiah 28: 29).

Everything looks dismal and desolate if we lose sight of God. Insecurity, fear, and doubt take over, driving us into a state of anxiety or panic. If we are not careful, we will be overwhelmed, lose our foothold, our joy, and even our hope. Any thought of thankfulness vanishes. Dear Brothers and Sisters, our focus must be on the Lord, the LORD "Who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121). With respect to God, we know He has never made a mistake. He has promised us His support, strength, and grace for all that life brings. He works from a higher perspective that often seems



completely hidden and incomprehensible to us. When I recognize Who God is, I not only realize that He is worthy of my trust, but also feel a deep sense of gratitude toward Him. I am safe in His hands. He will work all things for good, even in my life.

I am privileged to give thanks. In a recent issue of a secular magazine, experts opined that giving thanks in fact increases our joy. In addition, the article indicated, "Gratitude is the antidote to negative emotions and the tendency to take things for granted." As believers anchored in God, we have even more reasons to be thankful.

"Nevertheless, give thanks," is genuinely great advice. When we are thankful despite our circumstances, we not only benefit ourselves but are a good example for our families. Later, those who survive us will remember us and can attest that we were grateful people.

Matthew Henry (1662-1714) became well known for his Bible commentary. On a journey, he was assaulted, and his money pouch was stolen. Reflecting on this, he said, "I thank Thee first because I was never robbed before; second, because although they took my purse they did not take my life; third, because although they took my all, it was not much; and fourth because it was I who was robbed, and not I who robbed." Don't we feel much the same way? Growing older "robs" us of many things. We have had to part with our possessions, and our abilities aren't what they once were. Let us learn from Matthew Henry and refuse to allow our circumstances to steal our positive attitude, joy, courage, sense of gratitude, and thankfulness.

Psalm 50:14 states, "Offer to God thanksgiving." Gratitude is not only a biblical summons. It also draws us into a closer relationship with our heavenly Father. In addition, it frees us from anxiety and worry. To the Philippians (4:6), Paul writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God." In this short verse, all of the salient points are addressed directly or indirectly. In any situation, when our prayer includes thanksgiving, it gives us a deep, inner peace.

A woman was seated in a physician's waiting room. She looked sad, despondent and discouraged. While she waited, she noticed a plaque on the wall with the words, "Try giving thanks." Thinking about it, she suddenly stood up and quietly left the waiting room. She had found the solution to her problem.

"Nevertheless, be thankful." We would do well to seriously consider and then accept this truth. We could then embrace the challenge that gratitude is a personal choice. No one can decide for us. Whatever situation we face, let's choose gratitude. Then we will realize through experience that even in the dark valley the Lord is with us. His grace is sufficient, and the peace of God will fill our hearts.

With David I will say, "I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify Him with thanksgiving" (Psalm 69:30).

*Nevertheless, be thankful.*

Harry Semenjuk

## For Reformation Day

Jesus said, “You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life” (John 5:39–40).

On this Sunday, we commemorate the great Reformation of the Middle Ages. It could only be triggered by searching the Holy Scriptures. Forerunners of the Reformation had recognized the apostasy from the correct doctrine and stood up resolutely against the fallacies of the ruling church predominant at the time, and often had to pay for their courageous confession with death. Thus John Huss, the reformer of Bohemia, also suffered martyrdom at the stake.

Huss’s ardent testimony of Christ had opened the eyes of thousands to the spiritual misconceptions of that time, leading many to salvation in Christ. After that, a great persecution began, and the blood of genuine Christians flowed in streams. Bibles were also sought and destroyed, because their clear testimony put the Truth on the lampstand and shook the power of the Papacy.

During that time, there lived a woman whose greatest treasure was the Word of God. While she was standing in front of the oven baking bread, she heard that men from the Inquisition were searching the village for Bibles. Making a quick decision, she took her Bible and wrapped it in a large ball of dough, which she then put into the oven. Then she also slid the remaining loaves in after it. After searching her house in vain, the enemies departed. Meanwhile, the bread was baked, and the Bible came out of its wrapping intact. It had not suffered any damage.

What is the point of this? No book in the world has been persecuted like the Bible. It has been hated and loved, destroyed, yet preserved and circulated at the risk of one’s life. God has watched over His book so it will never be destroyed.

Voltaire, a world-famous French author and philosopher during the Age of Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, was a great enemy of the Bible, and is famously known for writing his prediction in 1776 that “one hundred years from my day, there will not be a Bible on earth except one that is looked upon by an antiquarian curiosity-seeker.” [Today, historians have

confirmed the veracity surrounding this story, and have even uncovered that not only was his house used to print and store Bibles for the Evangelical Society of Geneva just 58 years after his death, but his very own printing press was also used to print many of these Bibles!]

Today, the Bible continues to be the best-selling book of the year, *every* year. The Bible is like an anvil on which many hammers have broken. No power in the world can eradicate it. Its eternity is expressed in the words of Jesus: “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35).

Another consideration: In earlier times, attempts were made to eradicate the Bible by brute force. It was like a thorn in the flesh that had to be removed. Over the course of time, the method has changed. In our day, modern critique of the Bible purposefully invalidates the Word of God and calls the book’s testimony “insufficient.” Secular scholars attempt to undermine the simple faith of the fathers in the Word of God until finally all that is left to them is a historically deficient book that should not be considered a worthy standard for any aspect of society. In reality, it is the fight against God, to Whom one does not wish to be accountable.

The Bible is God’s Word. Many claim it contains God’s words. Two students from two different Bible teaching schools were talking about the material each was studying at his school. The first said, “We believe the Bible is God’s Word.” The other replied, “We test whether it is God’s Word.” These two opinions oppose each other even today. But we must ask, which of the two will benefit a person’s spiritual life the most?

Faith in the authenticity of the Bible as God’s Word gave the martyrs strength to remain strong even under the greatest tortures and torments. God’s Word was their rod and staff in the dark valley of death. Through God’s Word, believers remained victorious and were able to be overcomers. It is not the criticism or critique of the Bible that gives the soul its support in life and death, but rather childlike trust in the Word of God.

The Spirit we encounter in the Bible is the Holy Spirit. He enlightens and leads to the knowledge of



divine truth. The Spirit and the Word work together; they are one. Both elements together create a new spiritual man, born of God. This is the great mystery that for all time could not be understood by the opponents of the Bible. They are wrong about this book, but the children of God praise Him with great confidence:

We have a rock that stands immovable.  
 We have a truth that never perishes.  
 We have defense and weapons in every battle.  
 We have a cloud of God's glory around us.

G. Sonnenberg

# A Mighty Fortress Is Our God 513

"The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge." - Ps. 46:7

Martin Luther

Tr. by Frederick H. Hedge

Martin Luther



## A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

1 A mighty fortress is our God, A bulwark never failing;  
 2 Did we in our own strength confide, Our striving would be losing,  
 3 And though this world, with evils filled, Should threaten to undo us,  
 4 That Word above all earthly powers, No thanks to them, abideth;

1 A mighty fortress is our God,  
 A bulwark never failing;  
 Our helper He, amid the flood  
 Of mortal ills prevailing.  
 For still our ancient foe  
 Doth seek to work us woe;  
 His craft and power are great,  
 And, armed with cruel hate,  
 On earth is not his equal.

3 And though this world, with devils filled,  
 Should threaten to undo us,  
 We will not fear, for God has willed  
 His truth to triumph through us.  
 The Prince of Darkness grim,  
 We tremble not for him,  
 His rage we can endure,  
 For lo, his doom is sure;  
 One little word shall fell him.

2 Did we in our own strength confide,  
 Our striving would be losing,  
 Were not the right Man on our side,  
 The Man of God's own choosing.  
 Dost ask Who that may be?  
 Christ Jesus, it is He;  
 Lord Sabaoth, His name,  
 From age to age the same,  
 And He must win the battle.

4 That Word above all earthly powers,  
 No thanks to them, abideth;  
 The Spirit and the gifts are ours  
 Through Him who with us sideth.  
 Let goods and kindred go,  
 This mortal life also;  
 The body they may kill;  
 God's truth abideth still;  
 His kingdom is forever.

Martin Luther



great, And, armed with cruel hate, On earth is not his equal.  
 Name, From age to age the same, And He must win the battle.  
 dure, For lo, his doom is sure; One little word shall fell him.  
 kill; God's truth abideth still; His kingdom is forever.





The Previous Church Building



## Church-Building Project Report Nur-Sultan, Kazakhstan

Many may know the city by its previous name, “Astana.” Before that, it had at least two other names.

After the last world war, the first services of the German-speaking church of God took place there. Throughout the years, more and more brothers and sisters moved from the villages to the city. In 1989, the church building was dedicated. Meanwhile, more than thirty years have passed. A lot has changed in that time, not only in the church but also in the country and the culture. Time has also left its mark on the church building.

Therefore, the decision was made to construct a new building on the foundation of the old church building, which will serve the church of God in Kazakhstan for many years. It will also provide a space

for the annual camp meeting in northern Kazakhstan.

In the first fifty years, the services were mainly attended by German-speaking people. In the last decades, it has developed into a congregation that offers a spiritual home to people in this city of many different nationalities. Precisely because of the new building, many people from the surrounding area have become aware of the church. For them and also for the young people in the congregation, a clear signal is being sent that the light of biblical truth will continue to shine in this place in the future.

Work began at the beginning of May 2022, starting with the demolition of the old building. In the first days of June, the exterior walls of the second floor were in place, and the ceiling for the upper floor was constructed. By the end of the month, work was al-

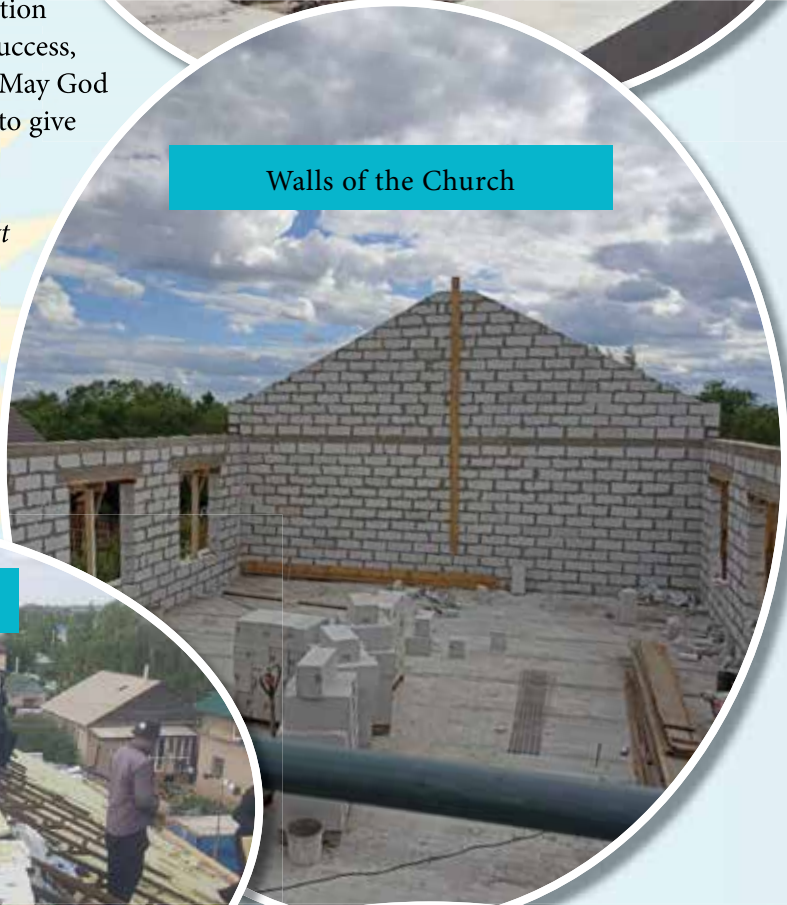
ready underway on the roof, which was tiled in mid-July. During my visit, the exterior insulation was installed and the eaves cladding was in place. If God gives grace, the windows should be installed in August. In the weeks that follow, the interior work should be completed to such an extent that the brothers and sisters can experience winter in the new building, although it will still be a construction site for the most part. If the Lord gives success, the dedication will be celebrated next year. May God richly bless the congregation and continue to give guidance and success to the work.

*Hermann Vogt*

The Foundation



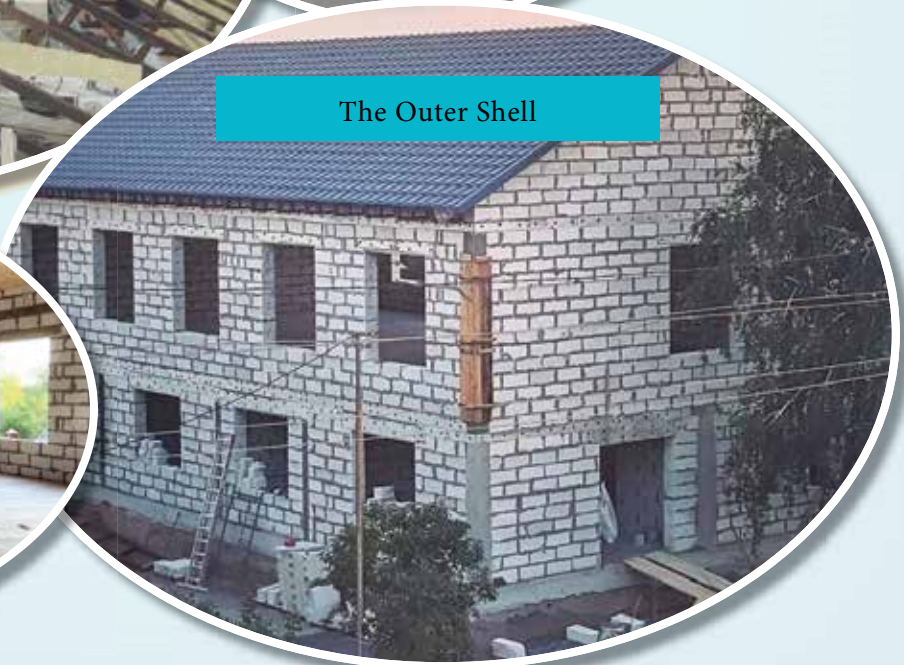
Walls of the Church



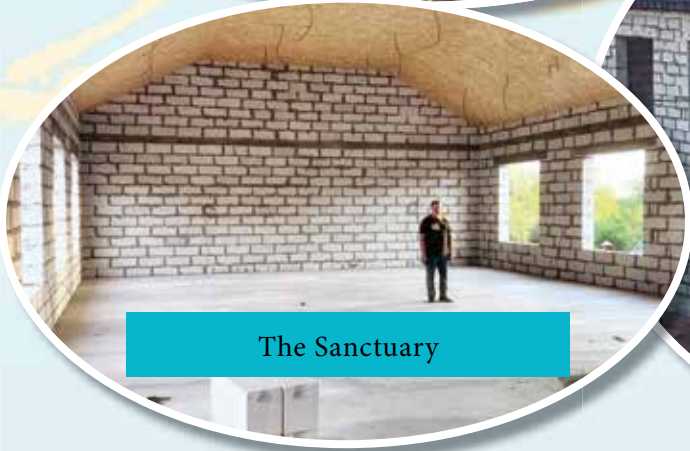
Work on the Roof



The Outer Shell



The Sanctuary



# What I Am Thankful For

I thank You, Lord, for problems I've encountered;  
I thank You for each obstacle I've met.  
They strengthened faith when confidence had floundered;  
My love for You today is stronger yet.

I got to know You in the storms and trials;  
I learned obedience and childlike trust.  
And my heart began to glow;  
I saw the light shine brightly after dusk.

I thank You, Lord, for many upward miles;  
Though strenuous the way, You helped me through.  
You carried me on eagle's wings through trials;  
My strength to persevere, it came from You.

I'd never trade those hours of tribulation  
For sunny days that carelessness impart.  
The hours of trial strengthened my relation  
To You and drew me closer to Your heart.

The greatest wonder of Your love, so gracious:  
It will not rest until I'm fully Yours!  
Nothing on earth is better or more precious!  
That You are mine forever will endure.

