



Foundation of Faith

God
Loves
YOU

GOD'S LOVE IS FOR YOU

DOES GOD CARE ABOUT US?

BOUGHT FOR A HIGH PRICE

ARE YOU READY FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST?

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

Princess Eleonore of Reuss, a member of Prussian nobility in the nineteenth century, made some poignant observations on human nature in a song she wrote:

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

People seek love and recognition. This is true of everyone, but a passionate longing for love and acceptance leads many into sin and corruption. However, that does not need to be the case. We can find real, true love—but only in God. God is love.

Our eternal God sought a way to save us from our sin and suffering. "In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him" (1 John 4:9).

Jesus Christ came to earth out of love, with the goal of freeing sinners from Satan's powerful grasp. Jesus suffered and died so we could become His friends. He loves us, and we can all become children of God and heirs of Heaven—as long as we believe in Him.

Knowing this, we can tell everyone, "God loves you! God is looking for you! God wants to draw you close!" God wants you to experience the love He offers, affirming, "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you" (Jeremiah 31:3).

God loves you, dear Reader! Do not seek love in the world but instead know,

*Oh yes, there is rest for the weary,
For everyone far and near;
I know there is rest for the dreary
At the old cross of Calvary.*

Dear Reader, Jesus opens His arms to you. Seek Him, His love, and His light—nothing else can help you.

H. D. Nimz

The Love of God is for You

Mr. John Wanamaker, superintendent of probably one of the largest Sunday schools in the world, had a theory that he would never put a boy out of his school for bad conduct. He argued that if a boy misbehaved himself it was through bad training at home, and that if he put him out of the school no one would take care of him. Well, this theory was put to the test one day. A teacher came to him and said, "I've got a boy in my class that must be taken out; he breaks the rules continually, he swears and uses obscene language, and I cannot do anything with him." Mr. Wanamaker did not care about putting the boy out, so he sent the teacher back to his class. But he came again and said that unless the boy was taken from his class, he must leave it. Well, he left, and a second teacher was appointed. The second teacher came with the same story, and met with the same reply from Mr. Wanamaker. And he resigned. A third teacher was appointed, and he came with the same story as the others. Mr. Wanamaker then thought he would be compelled to turn the boy out at last. One day a few teachers were standing about, and Mr. Wanamaker said: "I will bring this boy up and read his name out in the school, and publicly excommunicate him." Well, a young lady came up and said to him: "I am not doing what I might for Christ; let me have the boy; I will try and save him." But Mr. Wanamaker said: "If these young men cannot do it, you will not." But she bagged to have him, and Mr. Wanamaker consented.

She was a wealthy young lady, surrounded with all the luxuries of life. The boy went to her class, and for several Sundays he behaved himself and broke no rule. But one Sunday he broke one, and, in reply to something she said, spit in her face. She took out her pocket-handkerchief and wiped her face. She said nothing. Well, she thought upon a plan, and she said to him: "John,"—we will call him John,—"John, come home with me."

"No," says he, "I won't: I won't be seen on the streets with you."

She was fearful of losing him altogether if he went out of the school that day, and she said to him, "will you let me walk home with you?"

"No I won't" said he; "I won't be seen on the street with you."

Then she thought upon another plan. She thought on the "Old Curiosity Shop," and she said, "I won't be

at home tomorrow or Tuesday, but if you will come round to the front door on Wednesday morning there will be a little bundle for you."

"I don't want it; you may keep your own bundle."

She went home, but made the bundle up. She thought that curiosity might make him come.

Wednesday morning arrived and he had got over his mad fit, and thought he would just like to see what was in the bundle. The little fellow knocked at the door, which was opened, and he told his story.

She said: "Yes, here is the bundle."

The boy opened it and found a vest and a coat and other clothing, and a little note written by the young lady, which read something like this:

"Dear Johnnie: Ever since you have been in my class I have prayed for you every morning and evening, that you might be a good boy, and I want you to [stay] in my class. Do not leave me."

The next morning, before she was up, the servant came to her and said there was a little boy below who wished to see her. She dressed hastily, and went down stairs, and found Johnnie on the sofa weeping. She put her arms around his neck, and he said to her: "My dear teacher, I have not had any peace since I got this note from you. I want you to forgive me."

"Won't you let me pray for you to come to Jesus?" replied the teacher; and she went down on her knees and prayed.

And now Mr. Wanamaker says that boy is the best boy in his Sunday-school. And so it was love that won that boy's heart.

(D. L. Moody, edited by J. B. McClure, 1877.)

Just as the teacher in this story, the Son of God has compassion for you. In Luke 19:10, we read, "For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

Have you perhaps resisted God with a bitter mind, denying His love? Have you gone your own way with a hard heart, living in sin and worldly lust, rejecting His admonitions? He loves you nevertheless because He has provided the greatest gift for people just like you.

Just as the boy in our story, go and see what that gift is: "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). The

Son of God loved even His enemies, blessed those who cursed Him, did good deeds to those who hated Him, and pleaded for those who insulted and persecuted Him. He is the Son of His Father in heaven. And He “makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust” (Matthew 5: 45). Love is His strength. He died for you to free you from the guilt of your conscience and from the power of sin.

It is sin that afflicts you, and He wants to free you from it so you can be joyful and happy. The gift of deliverance is ready and waiting. Go, and you will experience it. Something you never suspected will occur: His wonderful love, which makes everything new, will fill you. As strange and foreign as such words may be to you, believe it, and you will find it, because it is offered to you. ■

Love

Many years ago, I hiked along the Baltic Sea coast. Deep loneliness enveloped me, and only the rushing of the waves could be heard. In the distance, I suddenly noticed a hill in the immediate vicinity of the sea. On the hill stood a towering, black cross. I picked up the pace and, after a short time, paused in front of it.

I knew the significance of this monument, and my thoughts wandered far back to times long ago. In 997, Archbishop Adalbert of Prague was murdered at this place by the Prussians, who still practiced paganism at that time. He had undertaken the arduous journey of preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Savior of sinners, to the pagans. He was driven by a passionate love for the lost. But fanatical hatred of everything divine provoked those he loved to raise a deadly weapon against him. Love was his life and his death.

For a long time, I stood here and contemplated a far greater love. I thought of the hill of Golgotha, where an elevated cross also stood. There Jesus bled and died, Who loved to the point of death the entire sinful humanity, immersed in misery and wretched sin. He died there for you and me that we might live. Can those living in sin even grasp this? No, the human mind is

insufficient and needs the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to understand. For those who have passed by the cross with inconceivable indifference, recognize that He died for you that you might live. Sinner, can you remain untouched by this? The Savior calls and beckons you to repent. If you persist in resisting Him, He must finally turn away from you in sadness and pain. Then the time of grace is over, and eternal torment and damnation await you. Think seriously and consider what it means to be eternally cast out of the presence of God.

God is love, and He also loves you with a wonderful, incomprehensible love. Through His sacrificial death, He established eternal life full of joy and delight for all. From time to time, the Holy Spirit’s power is working on your conscience. He creates a restlessness in you and wants to lead you to Jesus, the Savior of sinners.

Dear Reader, let your thoughts linger on the greatest act of love that ever happened. God’s Son suffered scorn, beatings, and mockery for sinners, including you. Is there any greater love? Never, ever! Already in this life, you can have joy in following Jesus. But do not delay any longer. Seize the opportunity today because tomorrow may be too late for you to become saved. ■





GOD LOVES You Too!

God's love is so great that it continues through all time and into eternity. His love is an eternal love, so all-encompassing that it includes the whole world. God has given us proof that He loves the whole world so deeply in that He gave His only begotten Son for the redemption of the world lost in sin (see John 3:16).

While it is relatively easy for us to realize that God loves the whole world, including us as His people, as His church, it is not easy for some to recognize that God has a special love and care for each and every one of us. Yet it is a glorious truth that should be a great encouragement to us all.

Even in the time of Abraham, God was willing to spare entire cities even if only ten righteous people could be found in them. When even this small number could not be found, God nevertheless remembered Lot, the only righteous one, and brought him out of the city before He let destruction fall. Yes, the Lord knows His own and remembers them; He does not forget them.

We also read in the Word of God how He stood by Moses, Elijah, Daniel, and many other Old-Testament saints when it seemed the whole world had forgotten them and everything was against them. God did not forget nor abandon them. He does not abandon anyone who trusts and obeys Him.

“The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: ‘Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you’” (Jeremiah 31: 3).

When our Savior was on earth, He declared that there is great joy in heaven over one sinner who repents. Once, God took Philip away from a city where he was ministering among many people to send him to a lonely place to bring the truth of the gospel to a single seeking soul. God loved that soul so much that He caused His messenger to interpret and make clear the way of salvation. Here was someone seeking light and knowledge, and God promised, “Seek, and you will find” (Matthew 7:7). He always keeps His promises if we comply with the conditions attached to them.

When Peter was thrown into the dungeon, the eye of God watched over him. Since God had more work for Peter to do, He sent an angel from heaven to set Peter free. Praise and glory be to the Lord! Nothing escapes His attention concerning His own!

We have not heard in the Word of God, nor have we ever heard of a single case, where God has abandoned those who trusted and obeyed Him. Nor will we ever hear of such a case, for God says that He has loved us again and again, or “with an everlasting love,” as another translation says. It would be easier for heaven and earth to pass away than for the promises of God to fail. They have passed the test of time and will continue to do so.

Since God loves us so deeply and sincerely, He also desires us to love Him and to love one another. For the one who has experienced the love of God and is washed from sins in the blood of Jesus, it is not difficult. No, on the contrary, it is a joy for us to love the One who first loved us. Nor is it difficult for us to love all others who have experienced salvation. For the truly redeemed, it is natural to love God.

To the world, it may seem that we are under bondage. But this is not true; rather, through redemption,

we have been made free from the bondage of sin, and we enjoy freedom in the Lord. We consider it a glorious privilege to be able to serve God. When Christ dwells in our hearts, serving God gives us joy. Serving Him is not hard. When we were born again, He took desire for the sinful things of the world out of our hearts and implanted a love for the things that please Him.

He gives us more glorious joys than we have ever known before and a peace that surpasses all understanding. The love of God is poured into our hearts, and therefore it is easy for us to seek the things that are above and not the things that are on earth (see Colossians 3:2). Jesus says, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

For the children of the world, all this is a mystery. They cannot understand how we can love those who do not seem lovable to them at all. They cannot understand how we can have joy in divine and heavenly things instead of delighting in the transitory pleasures of the world. In order to understand this, man must first be renewed or born again himself. He must become partaker of the divine nature.

We are urged to love one another fervently with a pure heart (see 1 Peter 1:22). If we have the Spirit of Christ, this is not difficult, but rather natural because it is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Jesus Himself presents it as one of the main marks of true discipleship. This love is also evidence to the world that we are God’s children.

Praise and thanks be to the Lord for the bonds of divine love that unite us to Him and to one another, and for the fact that He has ever loved us and drawn us to Himself out of pure love and goodness. ■

Does God Care about Us?

“God looks down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there are any who understand, who seek God” (Psalm 53: 2).

Is it not a great privilege that the great God, Who created heaven and earth and everything in them, cares for us? People often scoff at the fact that we serve God and do His will. They regard it as foolishness, but the Psalmist says that God looks to see if there is anyone who is wise and seeks Him. God values that man is concerned about Him, and as Christians, it is important that God is mindful of us. Therefore, it does not matter if we are misjudged by people. The most important thing for us is God.

God loves us very much and wants to be our friend. Naturally, when we have a friend, we want to please them. Should something not please them, then we refrain from whatever it is, so as not to grieve them. A friend takes the other person into consideration and often puts their own wishes aside.

But for those of us who have a much greater friend, the Son of God, do we relate to Him in this manner as well? Do you always ask Him if it pleases Him to do this or that? Or have you perhaps not yet realized what a great privilege it is to have Him, the greatest of all friends, as your personal friend?

Jesus takes part in all that we encounter and all that affects us. He takes the greatest interest in our well-being and is always ready to help and advise us. But He does not want to impose His advice on us. No, that is not how our Friend acts. Rather, He wants us to have a great desire in ourselves to have Him as a friend. If someone no longer wants to have Him as a friend, then He sadly steps back. He would rather walk on disappointed than impose Himself on someone. But if you communicate with Him, He is always there for you. He hears even your softest call, and He helps you.

Some say Christians do not have their own will. However, this is not the case. In the same way that every other person has their own free will, so does the Christian. However, he has placed his will in the hand

of his Friend, because He knows that this Friend will guide him along the best path. He does not want anything to upset Him, and therefore, in all his wishes, he always asks his Friend if they are right and good. Sometimes the Friend leads him in ways he would not like to go. But the Christian does not grumble or complain because he knows that his Friend has the best in mind for him. Even if he cannot understand the way now, someday in eternity, when he is united with his Friend, he will see His ways were the best.

Do you also call this Friend your own, or do you know Him only from hearsay? Would you also like to have a personal acquaintance with Him? Then come and meet Him. You need not wait long. Jesus always has time for you. He will be happy if you accept Him as your personal Friend. The way is very easy. You need not bring a letter of recommendation for Him to connect with you. No, come as you are and bring Him everything that is troubling and pressing you. Jesus will take all that from you. He will remove your garment that you have soiled and torn with sin and give you a new, white garment, a new, pure heart that can love and serve Him.

God cares for every one, even when they do not want to know about Him. He will not rest until you have come into union with Him. When you are one with Him, you will realize it is all divine grace. Divine grace will then sustain you and transfigure you more and more into His image. Rejoicing, your heart will then also be able to join in the song:

*As I lay at the throne of grace,
Jesus Christ came to me.
My weak tongue cannot describe it;
Experience Him today.*

H. Sprenger

God's Invitation to Everyone

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord said, “Ho! Everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isaiah 55:1).

You would think people would hear this invitation and rush to accept it, but the fact is many are reluctant and even resistant towards God. The human heart is by nature corrupt; people living in sin tend to avoid God and His Word so as not to face their sins and the conviction of their conscience. However, this is precisely the wrong approach because God's Word reveals the only possible way to escape their misery. It is their only hope. If you, my dear friend, read this invitation, take a moment to consider who issued it.

This invitation was sent out by the eternal God Himself. Imagine how honored and respected you would feel if a modern celebrity or major political figure invited you to their home. Now, with that feeling in mind, consider that this invitation was issued by the King of Heaven and Earth Himself—the God Who holds our breath in His hand, Who created us, and to Whom we owe everything. Is this amazing invitation from God something we earned? Or would it be more accurate to say the opposite—that we instead earned His judgment for our sins and a summons to His throne to account for ourselves?

The truth is that we deserved His judgment and condemnation. The fact that we received this invitation is due to His love, grace, mercy, patience, and forbearance. God approached us in grace and love, inviting us to come to Him. If He had not made the first approach, it would be impossible for us to come to Him. He appeared in the person of Jesus Christ, becoming as human as any of us in order to lead a life of service on Earth before sacrificing Himself on the cross to bring us salvation. He did everything necessary for us to be able to come to Him. God's wrath was upon us, but Jesus, the Son of God, suffered God's wrath in our stead in order to fulfill God's requirement of righteousness.

Who is invited? Everyone. Because God wants all to find help, He “commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). The Lord addresses this invitation to “everyone who thirsts,” meaning all who desire God and His righteousness, i.e. all those who wish to be saved. This invitation goes out in special measure to those who labor and are heavy laden and to those “who have no money.” All of us are born in poverty, but many are too focused on material wealth to recognize their spiritual poverty.

We will be reluctant to accept God's invitation unless we truly understand how impoverished and in need of help we are. People tend to pursue achievements. They want to do something and offer God something to earn salvation—anything to avoid looking poor and helpless. However, accepting our poverty and helplessness is absolutely necessary. We must come to God in spiritual poverty, relying only on His mercy and not on our own achievements.

We should also keep in mind where we are invited to. “Come to the waters,” the invitation reads. Those who thirst are offered what they need most; we are invited to come to the Lord Himself. Thirsty people need water, and sinners need the Savior. Jesus is the Savior and Redeemer, saving us from suffering and destruction.

We are invited to live. Water is a symbol of life because it is crucial for survival. We have earned death, as “the wages of sin is death” (Romans 6:23), but the Lord offers us life. How wonderful! We are invited to enjoy all privileges due to children of God. Come to the throne of grace and join the community of the children of God.

The Lord goes even further, offering us wine and milk. The wine symbolizes the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. As grapes need to be crushed, macerated, and pressed before wine can be made, Jesus' body was broken and His blood had to flow before God could extend salvation to us. Take a moment to think about His intense struggle in the garden of Gethsemane. Thanks to His sacrifice, God now offers us free, full salvation from all guilt and the consequences of sin. ▶

A mother's milk is the most nutritious drink, containing everything we need to live. Analogously, the Gospel contains everything we need, and Jesus gives us everything we need; we only need to come to Him. He offers comfort and help when we are in need, strength when we are tempted, counsel when we are confused, hope when we face death, and salvation when we cross into eternity.

To extend the metaphor of wine and milk, we also need to eat. Through His Word, God offers us a nutritious spiritual diet that meets all our needs. This is a blessing we did not earn; He extends it to us out of grace and mercy. We are issued three invitations in this verse, so come, come one and all, and come as you are! Do not put it off any longer; tomorrow might be too late. ■

The Will—Your Inheritance

A wealthy Christian man in America had an adult son who was very irresponsible and wasteful. He had a falling out with his father for his refusal to fulfill his financial obligations at home. So the young man left his father's house in anger. For a long time, he lived as a homeless vagrant. He encountered great need and was close to the brink of despair.

He decided to break into his father's house while the family was away. He knew exactly where the valuables were kept and wanted to grab them to get out of his financial trouble.

"My father owes me a living," he thought defiantly. He managed to get into the house and break open the safe. Quietly, he began to search for money. Under a pile of securities, he discovered his father's will.

Curious, he began to read it. To his utter astonishment, his name was listed among the heirs and with it a large sum of money. At first, he could hardly believe his eyes. Was it possible that his father, with whom he had a falling out, and against whom he had harbored such bitter thoughts, still intended to give him his inheritance with the others?

"Can it be," he said to himself, "that my father still loves me even though I hated him and was so bitter? In spite of the disgrace I have brought upon him, could it be that he still thinks of me as a son?"

This thought moved him deeply, and wouldn't let him go. Finally, he came to regret his careless lifestyle

and soon reconciled with his father. Never had this young man still dreamed that his father loved him so!

Isn't this exactly how you perceive God? You tried to banish Him from your thoughts as much as possible, and, since that didn't work, you thought of Him only as Someone Who was angry with you.

But those were false misconceptions. If you only knew how much He loves you! He longs to draw you to His Father's heart. He wants to assure you that He has completely forgiven you. He wants to tell you about the glorious inheritance that awaits you, if only you are willing to claim it.

But you may object that peace with God is impossible to attain so easily. "Do you really think I should believe right now that God loves me and forgives all my sins because Jesus died in my place? And by doing that, I should immediately find rest and peace?"

"Yes, that's exactly what I mean, since God's Word tells us, 'For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life'" (John 3:16).

Or do you think you can find peace through your rote prayers, through continuous repentance, or by trying to become better and having feel-good emotions? Then you are in great error. First, you must hear God's message, offer heart-felt repentance, and believe by simply accepting what Jesus has already done for you. ■

The Debt is Paid

An Evangelist Related the Following Story:

One evening after a revival service, I attempted to speak with someone about the salvation of his soul. He answered and said, “Don’t bother speaking to me. You can’t help me anyway.”

“No, I can’t,” I said, “but Jesus can.”

“No, He can’t. I happen to be a very ungodly person. No one can help me.”

I pointed to Romans 5:6 in my Bible and said, “Read this.”

He read, “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.” It seemed to me that he couldn’t believe his own eyes because he read it again and repeated, “Christ died for the ungodly.” He didn’t know that that was in the Bible! His hands started shaking, and this man, who was addicted to alcohol, cried out with tears, “I did not know Jesus loved me so much.” Then he prayed, “O Jesus, save me. I believe Your Word. You died for me, the ungodly one, and you paid my debt.”

God heard his prayer, and through faith, this man found peace with God. He knew that when Jesus died on the cross, He paid the debt of the ungodly, no matter how great that debt was. Before leaving the meeting, he once more came and shook my hand, saying, “I didn’t know Jesus loved me so much. My debt is fully paid; my guilt is gone!”

When a debt weighs you down, it can lead to sleepless nights. It’s bad enough when someone takes you to court and you’re in danger of losing your possessions. But much worse than that is the debt of sin. When the debt of sin weighs you down and the sinful conscience is awakened, you see your sin rising up sky high, separating you from the holy God. Sin is so heartbreaking that this heartache cannot be compared to any other tragedy on earth. The pain elicited by a stained conscience is a foretaste of eternal damnation, where the “worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48).

Since Christ died for our sins, let us praise the Lord and give Him glory. “He has made [you] alive together

with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross” (Colossians 2:13–14).

Dear Friend, if you are burdened by a load of sin and regret the wrong you have done, then come to the Savior and believe that He has paid your debt on the cross. Through His sacrificial death, your sins are forgiven. You are free. Rejoice and praise the Lord.

Your former debt is cancelled, but what about future failures? Fear not. Salvation through Christ’s death on the cross is not just for the forgiveness of sins, but it also brings salvation from our inability to live a godly life. Paul writes, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13). The good news is that through the power of Christ, we can live a holy life. Many who do not believe this think we cannot gain the victory over evil thoughts, words, and deeds. But those who believe will overcome the world. 1 John 5:4 says that “whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world—our faith.” Praise God for this truth. Like Zacharias proclaimed even before the time of the gospel, “That we should be saved from our enemies . . . [that we] might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:71–75).

Do you believe this? If not, consider the following scriptures. “We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him” (1 John 5:18). God “is able to keep you from stumbling, and . . . present *you* faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). “Now thanks *be* to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ” (2 Corinthians 2:14).

Scripture cannot change.

W. W.

Bought for a High Price

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1: 18–19).

At the time the apostle Peter wrote these words, slavery was a reality all over the Roman Empire. Men and women were bought and sold. Although slavery is a terrible thing, there is an even more terrible form of slavery, the bondage of sin. Natural man “is caught in the cords of his sin” (Proverbs 5: 22). He has enslaved himself by being dominated by sin. In Romans 7: 14, Paul writes, “I am carnal, sold under sin,” and in John 8: 34, Jesus says, “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin.”

During the Middle Ages, there was a famous blacksmith who was arrested and put into prison. Being a strong man, he figured he would be able to break the chains that bound him. However, when he examined the chains, he realized it would be impossible because he, himself, had welded them. He used to brag that nobody would ever be able to break the chains he had made. Now he was in prison, bound by his own chains, just like every one still shackled by sin.

The only possibility to be freed from the slavery of sin is to change masters, but that involves a high cost. Yet, this cost was paid by Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, Who took our place to die on the cross of Calvary. Jesus came to break the chains of sins that keep the soul in bondage.

A New Master Demands New Service

A slave of sin can become a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. God can deliver him or her “from the power of darkness” and convey them “into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1: 13). Through the precious blood of Jesus, we can become free.

In the days of slavery, a British trader got to know a certain slave well, felt sorry for him, and decided to

set him free by buying him. The slave did not know the intent of the merchant, and when he was bought, he retorted, “You claim to be a free citizen of Britain who detests slavery, and yet you buy me! Don’t I have the same right to be free as you?”

The merchant replied, “I bought you to set you free.” With tears in his eyes, the slave fell at his feet and said, “You have won my heart. I want to be your slave forever!” (Romans 6).

Jesus Christ has bought us in order to free us. All who have been freed by Him and realize what a high price He paid for us will give Him their whole heart and will desire to be His servant forever. When slaves were freed in the United States years ago, there were a few who did not want to be free. Unfortunately, most people today who are slaves to sin want to remain enslaved, although Jesus Christ has paid the price for all and lets freedom be proclaimed everywhere.

What Did It Cost?

The price was not paid with silver and gold or by other precious material means, but by the precious blood of Jesus Christ. The term “the precious blood of Christ” has such a deep meaning that the world cannot comprehend it. Only those who have experienced the power of the blood can begin to fathom its worth.

Jesus gave His life for us. He was the sacrifice for our sins. He was the Lamb without blemish. He is “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (John 1: 29). Christ did this out of love. It cost Him everything. By shedding His blood for our salvation, He showed the world what the love of God means. In response, He now asks us to live our life for Him and give our all in His service. ■

God's Love For Humanity

“And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved” (John 3:14–17).

I would like to draw special attention to this verse: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Someone once made the remark, “This Bible verse contains the whole gospel in a nutshell.”

In truth, this word reveals God's love for humanity and shows that God is concerned with rescuing humanity and saving it. Never can a human being in this life measure the magnitude of being lost. Yet God knows the terrible lot of the lost, and His heart burns with desire to help and give salvation to these poor. Separated from God by sin, man has a longing within for true life, for peace and rest.

Basically, the soul longs to return to God, the origin of life. Man can no longer find his way back to Him, so God comes to meet him with His love and mercy. Sending His only begotten Son had no other purpose than to bring salvation from perdition. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Love without sacrifice is unthinkable. It is the nature of love to give. It finds its fulfillment in giving. It cannot withhold; it must offer and sacrifice. Therefore, God sent His only begotten Son. He gave Him for salvation to a guilt-ridden, godless, and lost world so through Him sin might be atoned for, and reconciliation might come into effect, as it is written, “being

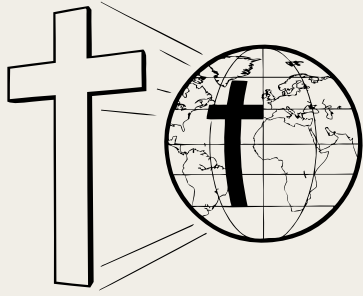
justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed” (Romans 3:24–25).

By sending “His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish,” God has demonstrated the only path on which sinners can escape being lost. Through faith in Him, we attain salvation. Actually, there should be no difficulty in following this path required by God. It is so simple, even a child can understand it. Unfortunately, many have landed on a wrong path through false teaching, and doubt God and His love. Others think they have to be good before God can love them, and they try to do good works. But our word speaks nothing of this. Instead, faith in Jesus Christ and His work accomplished on Golgotha, brings us salvation.

To help us understand God's ways, consider the beginning of our Bible passage: “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus is referring here to an experience of Israel in the desert. Serpents had come into the camp and also invaded the huts. Many people were bitten and died from the poison, but a faith-filled gaze at the raised serpent brought salvation.

In the same way, a faith-filled gaze on Christ raised on the cross will save us from being lost. Christ alone is the means by which the poison of sin in us is killed. Whoever believes in Him, gives Him his heart; he who does not doubt, receives eternal life. God loves you and wants you to embrace His gift!

Gustav Sonnenberg



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

The Goodness and Severity of God

“Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness” (Romans 11: 22).

We should take note that two particular attributes of God are shown in this Bible verse: the goodness and the severity of God. How good is our God, and how seriously is He to be taken?

Many think God only shows us His goodness and not His severity. They overlook or ignore the severity of God and exclusively count on His benevolence. The mercy, goodness, and love of God are predominantly presented in all variations by some preachers, that those listening feel pleurably uplifted, but they only see one side of the picture.

That God is full of love and goodness remains an undisputed truth; however, the following Bible quotes are meant to clearly present the whole picture of God. According to Proverbs 8:17a, the Lord says, “I love those who love me.” In Exodus 20:6, we read, “but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” The same thought is expressed in Romans 11:22: “Therefore consider the goodness and severity of God: on those who fell, se-

verity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in His goodness.” So who is to enjoy His goodness and benevolence? Those who love Him, keep His commandments, and abide in His goodness.

Now what about those who rebel against God and reject Him? We learn about this when we look at the other side of the picture, where the severity or even the wrath of God comes into question. Romans 1:18 tells us, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.” Further, Paul writes: “But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Romans 2:5). In Hebrews 12:29, we read, “For our God is a consuming fire,” and in chapter 10:31, “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

So how should we react to this knowledge of God? We act wisely if we accept God as He is presented to us in the infallible Word of God. God’s Word cannot



be broken; therefore, “see the goodness and severity of God.”

Unquestionably, the goodness of God always precedes His severity. Every concerned father and mother will raise their children this way. Wise parents try to treat their children with kindness and love first, and only then, if necessary, with punishment. Therefore, properly raised children know kindness from their parents, but if needed, also severity. Both must also be included in our knowledge of God.

We most clearly see the goodness of God in the mission of His Son and His sacrifice on the cross. Who can measure the depths of God’s love and goodness from which this precious gift came from the Father? This supreme gift met the greatest need of fallen humanity, lost, and in need of a Savior. God does not exercise legal judgment, but He gave us His saving grace. He has demonstrated this since the beginning of the world. He gave a period of grace to Noah’s generation, and when they refused to be warned, only then did God’s judgment occur. Here we see the goodness and severity of God. Jesus

warned in Matthew 24:37, “But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.”

The Israelites often experienced the goodness of God in the desert but also His severity. God’s wrath was visible in the plagues in Egypt, in the downfall of the sons of Korah, and in the severe punishments on thousands of their own people who had provoked God’s wrath through disobedience.

We think of Jesus’ tears and pain over Jerusalem. After all warnings had failed, God allowed the city to be reduced to rubble. Have we not also experienced the goodness and severity of God in ourselves and in the lives of our fellow human beings?

The goodness of God reaches as far as the heavens, but His severity is equally great and deep. Someone said, “The day will come when the wrath of God will eclipse everything the world has seen until now.” Those who don’t wish to experience God’s goodness must experience His wrath. Dear Reader, seriously consider this and seek to obtain the offered salvation so God’s goodness may be seen in you. ■

YOUTH BIBLE DAYS REPORT

This summer, the Youth Bible Days took place in Tuningen, Germany, for the first time since Covid. The theme was “The Race of Your Life.” The training camp for young Christians from all over Germany could begin. The verses from 1 Corinthians 9: 25–27 guided us:

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I

myself should become disqualified” (I Corinthians 9: 24–27).

I was really looking forward to the Youth Bible Days 2022. I was quite discouraged in my faith and desperately needed the fellowship and encouragement of the sermons. I knew I absolutely had to go to the living spring of Jesus Christ to be refreshed. God is simply awesome. The time of prayer and sharing together was so valuable. The theme of the Youth Bible Days could not have been more appropriate in my situation. Through each teaching session, we were encouraged to keep going and not give up.

Above all, the testimony sessions were a great blessing. I’m thankful for each individual who went forward stood before the others with complete hon-





esty and shared what God had done in their lives. The oppressive silence that one knows from many a testimony hour was not present at all. Some were already standing at the side ready to go forward. And even at the second testimony hour, people were just streaming forward to glorify God. This really made me realize I am not alone and that every single person in this room is struggling with their difficulties. We are in this race together.

In 2017, the race began for some of the youth when they became saved. And now we were in the middle of it. By comparing ourselves to an athlete and his goal-oriented lifestyle, the themes were presented to us in very tangible, vivid ways. As in sports, discipline, endurance, and regular training play an important role

in the life of a Christian, and therefore, the units were structured accordingly. Spiritual training, your personal trainer, and dealing with defeats were all topics not just relevant in the sports world. Many well-known and also unknown athletes were used as examples to learn from their lives and their victories and defeats.

Like every year, these Youth Bible Days went by too fast. I think I can speak for all the participants that the days were blessed, and we were strengthened and edified in our faith. Through the days together, one thing became especially clear:

We have the best personal trainer possible at our side, and He will do everything He can to get us across the finish line. Jesus is the victor! Amen.

T. I.

Take the Wormy Ones

“**T**omorrow we’ll pick the apples from the tree that is furthest back in the garden,” the farmer announced at lunchtime. “I’ll bring out the baskets in the morning, and we’ll start in the early afternoon. Everyone needs to help.”

When this farmer gave a command, it needed to be followed! The next afternoon, his wife and the children punctually appeared in the garden. They carefully picked the beautiful apples and placed them in separate baskets: the biggest ones first, the small ones too, and finally those that were a bit worm-eaten. There was only one basket full of those.

“We’ll take them into town to sell,” the father called down from the ladder.

“Do we need to take all of them?” someone asked.

“Yes, of course. There’s money to be made.”

“But Father,” asked the boy, “won’t we give some of them to the good Lord, too?”

“How are we going to do that?” asked the farmer. He thought he must have misinterpreted the question.

The mother interjected, “Your son means that we should give some apples to the poor people, too. That’s what you meant, isn’t it, Paul?”

The answer from the young lad on the ladder came after a long pause. The farmer understood very well what his son meant. He knew he had probably learned that in Sunday School. After all, as a boy he had also had similar thoughts and had seriously considered what was said about giving and sharing. Later in life, however, these thoughts had been smothered by the desire for money and possessions. So he said out loud, “If we give these to the poor, we won’t get any profit from them.”

“But, Father,” the boy contradicted with conviction, “the good Lord will bless us for it. May I take a basketful of apples and bring them to a poor family in the village?”

“Well then, if you absolutely must,” the farmer finally agreed, although reluctantly. “But make sure you take the worm-eaten ones.”

Paul was instructed to take from the infested apples. He was ashamed before the good Lord because of

it. No, he did not want to bring such apples to anyone. Better to bring none than those. So he quietly put them back into the basket and did not speak of it again.

Another year had gone by, and the apple harvest was about to begin again. The big apple tree at the back of the garden was the last to be picked. The farmer frowned and complained, “This time it has fewer apples. I don’t know why. It can’t be the tree; it looks healthy.”

But this year, it filled fewer baskets. Paul remembered how last year he had asked for a few apples for the good Lord, and the answer he had received from his father. This year, he didn’t dare ask at all; his father would get angry. As it was, he was annoyed that there were far fewer apples than last year. But what would the good Lord say about it?

Paul thought about it and finally asked again, “Shouldn’t we give some of the apples to the good Lord?”

“How dare you!” the farmer replied gruffly. “Can’t you see, we don’t have many to begin with. Get back to work and quit thinking about things like that!”

When the apples started to ripen again the following year, the farmer stopped more often in front of the large tree at the back of the garden. He looked at the foliage and examined the bark. He called a neighbor over because he didn’t want to believe what he thought may be happening.

The neighbor came, looked at the tree, and declared without mincing words, “Your tree is sick. It won’t bear any more apples; at the most, a few worm-infested ones.”

With a frown, the farmer returned to the house, and told his wife, who was standing by the stove, what the neighbor had said. His son, who had just come over, listened with wide, sad eyes and then slipped out. He ran to the big apple tree, looked up at the branches for a long time, and then said sorrowfully, “Yes, you have become ill because the good Lord has not blessed us anymore. He couldn’t bless us because we wouldn’t share any of our apples. Just those few wormy ones!” ■

Pray about Small Decisions



Linda wanted to do two fun things Saturday afternoon and was having a hard time deciding between them. When Mother came into her bedroom, Linda asked, “If you were me, Mom, what would you do? Would you go shopping with your friend and her mother or would you play baseball with the neighbors?”

Mother laid down some clean clothes for Linda to put away before she answered her. “Have you prayed about it, Linda?”

“Well, no,” replied Linda. “I didn’t think it was that important to pray about. Do you think the Lord cares whether I go shopping or play baseball?”

“Does it matter to you?” asked Mom.

“Sort of. I’m having a hard time deciding,” replied Linda.

“Then if it matters to you, the Lord cares about it too. He is concerned with the way we spend our time. When you ask Him to direct you in the little decisions of life, it will be easier to hear and obey when He talks to you about the big choices of life.”

“Okay,” said Linda thoughtfully. “I will pray about it, but how will I know what He wants me to do?”

“Ask the Lord to impress on your mind what He

wants you to do. He will make the right way seem the best choice to you.”

After Mother left her room, Linda did pray a simple prayer. In a little while she came into the kitchen where Mother was ironing. “I prayed about it,” Linda said to Mother, “and I think I will go with Carla and her mother. The Lord reminded me that Carla is very lonesome because she doesn’t have any brothers or sisters, so I think she needs me more than my baseball team.”

Mother hugged Linda as she said, “Sounds good to me! I knew the Lord would help you make a good choice.”

Linda called her friend who said they were ready to come and get her. Soon Linda called, “Good-bye, Mom!” as she left with her friend.

A few minutes later Jerry came inside for a drink. “Well, Mom, I guess we won’t be playing baseball this afternoon,” he said. “Some of the neighbors have gone on vacation and some had to go to a wedding, so we don’t have enough people to make teams. Tell Linda we will have to play another day.”

“She will be glad to hear that,” said Mom with a smile.

Connie Sorrell – The Beautiful Way

“I AM WITH YOU ALWAYS, EVEN TO THE END OF THE AGE.”

Camp Meeting 2022, Blaubeuren, Germany

Once again, we can testify that God keeps His promises, for He Himself was also in our midst during this year’s camp meeting, as He promised in Matthew 18: 20: “For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.”

We were blessed by the messages, the singing, and the testimonies. The messages were especially relevant to everyday life with many practical topics and examples. The theme was woven throughout the sermons so not one message needs to be singled out. What was special was precisely the coherence of the individual messages.

Through God’s Word, we were made aware of the dangers of the various enticements in our time. We were shown how to confront them, and we were encouraged by God’s promise that He is with His children every day until the end of the age.

The theme alone was a comfort to us. All the worrisome developments of our time are countered by the promise of our great God that He will stand by us. For this great and unchanging God, the Creator of heaven and earth, nothing is impossible for Him, and He is also fully trustworthy today because He keeps His promises. This strengthens our faith and gives us new courage for everyday life.

We signed up to attend from Sunday to Thursday. It was clear to us that it would be a special challenge to attend three services a day with our children. But we were sure that if we would seek the Kingdom of God first, God would help and provide the blessing. This decision was already tested on the first day. Patience





was less than expected, and the children proved to be more restless than we had hoped. For this reason, disappointment threatened to steal our joy right from the start.

But thank God, He answers prayers! Confident it wasn't God's will for us to give up and go home, we brought our concerns to God in earnest prayer. He strengthened our patience and gave us new courage. With His help, we were able to attend and learn a lot during that time.

The children enjoyed the two children's lessons, singing together, and playing with the other children during the breaks. New friendships were built, and existing friendships were strengthened.

We received special encouragement by participating in various conversations this year. We saw that our Savior Jesus Christ unites us. This brotherly intimacy is what leads to openness in conversations. It is

sincere mutual interest in the life of our brothers and sisters. We walk together toward the same goal, we bear burdens together, and we encourage each other in faith.

The love of God produces love for our neighbors as well as brotherly love. Together, we carry the burden for the unsaved souls in our families, in our country, and in our entire world.

We are grateful to God that we attended the camp meeting this year and came home with a great blessing in our luggage. Our prayer is that God would grant us all the success to implement the truths that we heard into our daily lives.

With God's help, we want to be there again next year. We hope you can come join us!

Stefan and Irene Schmelzle
Pforzheim, Germany



Are You Ready for Christ's Return?

"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).

God is omniscient, and He knows all things. He is perfectly acquainted with His own law as well as with the life and character of every human being. He knows exactly how much enlightenment and knowledge you have received and how much mercy you have been shown. He knows all the privileges granted to you in detail. He knows the number and magnitude of your sins and the punishment you deserve. Therefore, you cannot deceive Him, neither by a false testimony nor by pointing out your "good side." All your defenses will not help you. Everything is open and bare before His eyes. He knows your heart and your thoughts, and He will display everything in the clearest light that has happened in your life.

He is righteous through and through. He knows right and will stand up for it. All injustice, in whatever form it may take and by whatever name it may be called—He will expose it and bring it to justice. With convincing clarity, the complete truth will come forth. Everything will be handled according to the principle of the most exact justice. The eternal Judge will make a decision that will silence every mouth.

He is absolutely impartial. He will not recognize any distinctions people have made. High and low standing, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, different nations—all will be on the same level. The only dividing line before the eternal Judge will be between the righteous and the wicked. On one side or the other of this great dividing line, you and I will also be found on the great day of final reckoning.

The Judge accepts no gift; He cannot be bribed. No excuse you make, no reasons you try to give, no remorseful confession will then have any value before Him. Tears, prayers, and persistent supplications will not move Him then. The time of grace and mercy will be over forever. The kind and gentle Jesus who invites you now will then appear as a righteous Judge. If you

have forfeited His grace, He will know you only as an impudent sinner who is without forgiveness. He will examine your case seriously and inexorably, weigh you on His scales, and pronounce judgment upon you.

He will bring your case to judgment with His law and justice. According to His own high standard, He will judge it and give you the punishment afterwards. And the Book will be opened, which contains the complete history of your life, a record of every thought, word, and deed.

The Book of Divine Providence will shed light on all of God's kind and gracious leading in your life. The Book of Grace will show what God did and what Jesus suffered so you would be saved. The Book of Conscience will show you the countless times you have been called to reflection and rebuked for your sins on your wicked path. The Book of Memory will vividly unroll the past before your eye, and the great Book of God's remembrance will clearly portray your character. What an overwhelming testimony these books will bring to light! There is no denying the truth there. Like the sun in the sky, it will be there. In strict accordance with the divine law, the sentence that seals the sinner's eternal destiny will stand firm and immovable, and no appeal will be possible against it.

Dear Friend, are you ready for this terrible hour? As you continue to live, do you have that day constantly before your eyes? Are you really prepared for that terrible hour? Are you ready to answer before the judgment seat of God for your conduct of life in thoughts, words, and deeds? If not, escape the wrath to come while judgment is still delayed, while you still have time and opportunity. It is a fearful thing to have to stand before the judgment seat of an angry God, to meet His penetrating gaze and be condemned by Him to eternal destruction. Therefore, meet your God today! ■

The Missing Signature

This was no small scare! My wife and I wanted to travel abroad. We got to customs and showed our passports. The officer said to me, “You can go through; the lady has to stay behind.”

“Why?”

“Her passport is not in order.”

“What’s wrong with it?”

Suddenly, the man laughed. He didn’t want to torment us any longer but had deliberately wanted to “scare” us for a moment. “The signature is missing! As soon as your wife signs underneath her name, she can also go through.”

This was quickly taken care of. My wife signed, and we passed through customs unhindered. But we have not forgotten this little experience. It often goes through my mind when I travel abroad alone or when the two of us travel together.

Doesn’t it have a deeper parable-like meaning? We all would like to go to the “foreign land of eternity” one day. That is, after all, the great message of the Bible. There is an afterlife; even better, there is the “Father’s house of God;” there is an eternity that is glorious and beautiful.

However, the Lord Jesus always immediately added that this eternity also has another side: an eternity without God, separated from God, a damnation, a hell.

Years ago, a dispute broke out about this. A well-known professor of theology had spoken in a radio broadcast about the whole seriousness of hell, just as the Bible does. This caused a great stir among many educated people. “One should not say it like that; those

are medieval ideas,” etc. For a long time, the newspapers were full of pros and cons.

Unfortunately, most people have forgotten or do not want to hear about this serious side of the eternity message of the Bible. They hardly think about it. They think, “If you only live reasonably right and decent, you will get in, and everything will be fine.”

Unfortunately, not all of them enter heaven. They could all get in! It is open to all. Jesus has everything

ready for all of us. God does not reject anyone. He loves us all. But our “passports” must be in order.

Now in our case, our passport is all right. God issued it to us Himself. He certifies, as it were, that we are “entitled” to go abroad to eternity. But we must personally put our signature under it; we must sign our name.

What is meant by this? Redemption has come. From God’s side, everything has happened that had to happen for our temporal and eternal salvation. But what matters is that we personally accept this redemption in faith and that we say “yes” to it.

Back then at customs, it was easy to sign. It will seldom happen that quickly when it comes to spiritual things. But basically, it is also quite simple: As soon as we come to Jesus in true, inner submission, because we are not worthy and our sin stands between us and God, confess our sins to Him and submit our lives to Him and give Him our “yes,” then our “passport” is in order. Then we need not fear “customs” at the gate of eternity. Then we will enter and experience with great amazement the glorious “abroad” of heaven. ■

God does not reject anyone. He loves us all. But our “passports” must be in order.



Is Your Past in Order?

He was a wealthy man, respected, honored, and successful. He accomplished everything well, often beyond his expectations. He had a lovely wife and good children who brought him joy. Thousands would have wished to trade places with him, and yet, deep inside, he was an unhappy man. His struggle with the past gnawed at him, and crushed his seemingly happy life. Why? What was the cause?

Years ago, as a young journeyman blacksmith working at a faraway place, he had a secret affair with his employer's young wife. One dark night, he lay in wait for his employer on his way home and killed him.

Right after he accomplished this terrible deed, he hurried away as if chased by a storm. He took the train to the next town. There he stole someone's passport and documents and left for northern Germany. He changed his name and found work in a larger fishing village.

After some time, the daughter of the wealthy employer fell in love with him, against his will. She did not give up until he married her. So things were looking up for him; he became rich and respected. If only his past wouldn't haunt him. But he couldn't escape it.

One morning at breakfast, his young wife told him with a smile that he had called out a strange name several times in a dream at night. He jumped up, scared to death, and rushed out. He had called his own previous name! His conscience and his terrible past held him captive.

From then on, he tried to escape his past in several ways. He worked almost day and night. His possessions doubled, even tripled. But he could not escape his past. He tried to banish the dark shadows by doing good. He thought his good deeds must eradicate evil, but even this did not bring him release. His past persisted and accused him.

He occupied himself with science and art. He read books and more books and was pleased to find authors who claimed there is no God and no eternity. He traveled and tried especially in the hustle and bustle of the big city of Hamburg to flee from his past.

I cannot list everything this rich man attempted in order to ease his conscience. Yet neither entertainment nor pleasures are the remedy to erase guilt and sin.



How many people try to portray happiness to others through parties and celebrations while feigning cheerfulness? But for some, their inner trouble becomes so overwhelming that in the midst of pleasure and enjoyment, they are driven to commit suicide.

Can time also heal these wounds? Can it heal a murky past and the misery of sin? Those with experience at deathbeds know of the secret accusations, mostly hidden from the world, and the often shocking confessions and anguish. They know that in this hour, the nightmare of the past can become unbearable. No, time does not heal the troubles of the past.

The only way to eradicate your past is through a remedy obtained by Someone other than you, on the cross of Calvary: your Lord and Savior. You can never win this victory yourself, even if you have done more good deeds than there are grains of sand at the sea. Your Lord and Savior did what you could not, and defeated the past.

The blacksmith in the fishing village found release from the past and peace when he found God. King David confessed in Psalm 32: 3-5, "When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long.

For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, 'I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,' and You forgave the iniquity of my sin." Where there is forgiveness of sin, there is life and salvation.

Take note of this wonderful fact: You can be freed from your past, whether it is utterly shattered and is a total failure, or if there is only a single transgression. Your Savior can set you free from it all.

Jesus also bore your guilt on the cross, so come to Him and accept His salvation in faith. Where you have sinned against someone, make it right, so your past can be laid to rest, and your long, heavy battle will be finished. Your past will no longer reign in your life to enslave and dominate you. Jesus has conquered your past, and if you believe in Him, you will be victorious.

*Bring your burdens to the cross,
Weary pilgrim on life's path.
At the cross you will find refuge,
There is rest for you, at last!* ■

Praying the Beatitudes

In our lives, we will often face challenges and difficulties we're called to overcome as Christians by faith in the living God. How wonderful to know that Jesus has words of life for us throughout the new year! Our faith rests upon all the promises of the Word of God and of our Savior, Jesus Christ. He asks us to trust and obey His leading in all our personal matters and to look to Him, the Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1-2). Jesus promised that His Spirit would dwell in us to strengthen, bless, and guide us through this life to life everlasting.

Let us begin this year by claiming in prayer the blessings of these Beatitudes.

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1. Blessings rest upon those who mourn.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5: 4).

In a fallen world, we are faced with much grief. Already in youth, all experienced the fall into sin, and the spiritual death that follows. Paul describes this reality of our souls in Romans 7: 7-24 and concludes with the heartfelt plea, “O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?” Jesus promises if we mourn and repent of our sins and place our faith in His saving grace, we will be forgiven and healed. The blessing of His comfort will rest upon us and we will be set free (see Romans 8).

All of us will experience suffering in this life. Some will experience abuse and abandonment; others will face natural disasters or accidents, while still others will face sickness and the heartbreak of losing loved ones.

Yet in all of this let us pray that:

- Jesus’ blessing of forgiveness would rest upon each repentant heart.
- in our sufferings, God’s people would turn in faith to Jesus and His comfort (2 Corinthians 1: 3-7).
- all of our griefs and trials would serve to strengthen our faith (2 Corinthians 7: 5-7).

2. Blessings flow to those who hunger and thirst.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled” (Matthew 5: 6).

I distinctly remember a time in my life when my soul hungered for truth. I studied many philosophies and traveled the world in a quest for finding peace and fulfillment for my soul. I could not quench this thirst for living waters in any well of this world. But when I met Jesus, living waters flowed into my soul! May we share the Good News and pray that God awakens a thirst for these living waters in precious souls around us, that they may be filled with righteousness and will

thirst no more (John 4: 13-14).

May the good Lord also awaken a hunger and thirst for His Word and His Spirit in the church. If His people focus on the Lord to learn from Him and long to be Spirit filled, His church will grow and be blessed, as in Acts 2: 38-47.

Let us pray that:

- God would awaken many around us to seek the Lord’s forgiveness and peace (John 6: 35).
- God sends us revival and all the blessings of a Spirit-filled church (Acts 4: 31-35).

3. Blessed and holy are the pure in heart.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5: 8).

What an amazing promise for all of God’s children! Who does not wish to see God in all His glory and holiness one day? But this requires that we live a holy life as His disciples, learning daily to carry our cross and to follow in His footsteps (1 Peter 2: 21–22). The blood of Jesus has cleansed us from all sin to live a victorious life over sin, before a holy God Who empowers us with His Spirit (1 Peter 1: 13–19). We are set free from a

life of sin and empowered to exhibit the fruit of righteousness and holiness, whose end is everlasting life (Romans 6: 20–23).

Let us pray that:

- our daily lives would be pleasing and holy unto God and glorify His name.
- others could see the fruit of the Spirit in our lives and be blessed (Galatians 5: 22–25).
- one day by grace, Jesus would bring us into heaven to see the living God (Revelation 21: 22–27).

4. Blessings of peace rest upon the peacemakers.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5: 9).

We live in a broken world of strife, envy, and hate led by the spirit of this world (James 3: 13–16). Yet those who turn to God are led by the Holy Spirit of peace, mercy, and compassion (v. 17–18). We know that Jesus is the Prince of Peace and His people are filled with His Spirit of peace. They are called to always strive for the way of peace in the church family by the grace of God (2 Thessalonians 3: 16–18). As sons

of God, we are to extend this hand of peace, love, and forgiveness to all those around us; even our enemies (Matthew 5: 44–45).

Let us pray for:

- peace to flow into our hearts to bless others by our Spirit-led walk (Luke 6: 35–36).
- peace to reign in the life of the church (1 Thessalonians 1: 1–5).
- grace in our lives to extend love and patience to everyone we meet (Hebrews 12: 14).

5. Blessings rest upon the persecuted.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5: 10).

Who would wish to be persecuted when having done no wrong, except for having decided to follow Jesus? Often such are openly disparaged and the new believer is ridiculed and cast out. As Christians, how do we react when we are persecuted because of our faith and loyalty to Christ and His Word? The apostle Peter affirms the promise of Jesus that if we are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, we are truly blessed (1 Peter 3: 14). From the time of the apostles to the church of today, Christians have always faced persecution. Peter

says we are always to be ready to give a defense of our faith, but in the spirit of meekness and fear (v. 15–16).

Let us pray in the powerful name of Jesus for:

- God’s Word to be preached and distributed locally and throughout the world (Matthew 28: 18–20).
- the Spirit of Christ to empower us and the persecuted church to model Christ-likeness (Romans 12: 9–18).
- the double blessing of this Beatitude, as Jesus adds, “Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5: 11–12).

O Love Divine, Unfathomed

*O love divine, unfathomed! O shoreless sea of bliss!
Thy throne the highest heaven, yet flowing down to this
Dark world of guilt and sorrow, redeems the fettered soul;
Thy paths of peace I follow, O love, our hearts extol!*

*Enshrined within the bosom of Father's tender love,
We seem in deep mid-ocean of heaven's bliss above;
Oh, wonders of redemption! We gaze in silent awe
Upon the new creation, where love is freedom's law.*

*Worlds of ecstatic glory love opens to our view,
Where saints and angels truly find joys forever new;
Sweet element of heaven! He is supremely blest
Who, in thy sea o'erwhelmed, has found eternal rest.*

*Love holds a royal scepter, and Mercy looketh down,
Both calling to the sinner, "Come wear a starry crown;"
Oh, sweet divine compassion! Poor sinner, taste and see,
If grace thy heart may fashion, then love shall reign in thee.*

*O love! supreme affection! We bow low at thy shrine,
Love is our great salvation; O love divine!*

D. S. Warner