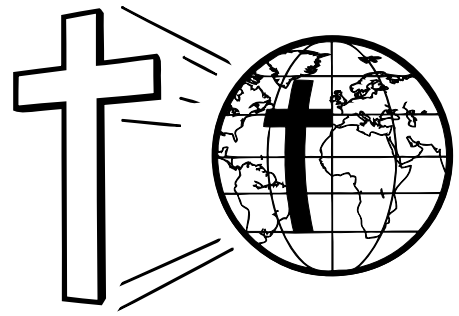


# Foundation of Faith



**THE CALL FROM THE CROSS**

**HE LIVES!**

**THE MIGHTY "IT IS I"**

*Peter:*

**AT THE FIRE, UNDER FIRE, AND ON FIRE**

*The Resurrection:*

**THE BACKBONE OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH**

**E A S T E R**

# Contents

## EASTER

### **The Call from the Cross**

- 4** *In the darkest hour the call of God reached the hardened heart of the Father.*

### **6 The Great Sacrifice for Sin**

### **8 The Resurrection: The Backbone of the Christian Faith**

*With the resurrection, Christianity stands.  
Without it, Christianity falls. Do we have  
solid proof for the resurrection?*

### **10 He lives!**

### **11 The Good News**

### **12 Cheap Grace?**

### **13 What is Easter?**

Radio Program

### **14 The Mighty "It Is I"**

*The words of Jesus strengthen our weary  
hands and comfort our discouraged hearts*

### **3 Editorial**

Youth Page

### **16 What Does Easter Mean to Me?**

### **18 Experiences with God**

Children's Corner

### **19 Jesus Went With Them**

Mission Report

### **20 Our Trip to the Philippines**

For Our Seniors

### **23 God has Taken the Brush from my Hand**

### **25 The Lord's Prayer (Part 1)**

Something To Think About

### **26 Peter: At the Fire, Under Fire, and On Fire**

### **27 Announcements**

### **28 It Is Finished! (Poem)**

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## Editorial

*Dear Reader!*

*The Gospel Trumpet, our sister publication, has been published since 1895. Its purpose is to spread the divine message that the Heavenly Father sent His beloved Son to save us. Yes, Jesus Christ has come to fulfill all the prophecies of the Old Testament.*

*Isaiah already told us that the Son of God was the most despised. He was sentenced by the religious leaders, condemned, and crucified on the cross of Golgotha to reconcile us with God. He died for us and took our sin and faults upon Himself that we might have peace, and that through His wounds we may be healed, redeemed, and made holy.*

*The apostle Peter writes, "Know 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).*

*O, blessed assurance, Christ is not just crucified and dead, no, He rose triumphantly on the third day! He is the Lord of life and death. He is not only the Savior for all mankind but also the eternal Judge of the living and the dead.*

*For more than 2000 years, the wonderful message of the crucifixion and resurrection has been ringing out so that all the world should know that God has appointed His Son as Lord and Savior. The time of grace is here, salvation is offered to all! Now it is up to you and to me to accept, believe, and faithfully follow the Son of God. Yes, the world is in turmoil; a battle against God and His beloved Son is raging everywhere. But every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Praise be to Him in eternity!*

H. D. Nimz

# The Call from the Cross

The parents had done all they could to give their son, the heir of the farm, a good education. And though he developed well, when he grew up, he became more and more involved in a corrupt and immoral environment. No advice from his father or mother could prevent him from going his own way. The more he got caught in the whirlwind of hell, the more rebellious he became. He did not want to know anything about God's Word. Nothing anyone said could change the heart of this son.

When the father finally tried to use strict measures of discipline to bring about a change in the son's life, the boy reported his father to authorities. No further words between parents and son were exchanged; embittered, everyone went their way.

Then came the time of the annual "Carnival," and a costume parade before Shrove Monday. As if chased by the furies of hell, the prodigal son and his drinking buddies found themselves behind his parents' bedroom after midnight, singing drunken songs. Hearing this, the father tossed and turned despairingly. His wife tried to calm him. But as the voice of the son in the chorus of the drunks became more and more vulgar, he gasped, "Better a dead than corrupt son!"

With one motion, the father jumped out of bed, got dressed, and walked across the hall into the storage room. He could no longer hear his wife crying. The bond between father and son was finally torn. In the darkness of the room, he looked around until he found a heavy iron bar. The decision was inevitable. He stood in the doorway of the hall. Outside, the son was belting out yet another song. No power in the world was going to stop the father. As soon as the son opened the door, he planned on striking him across his back with the iron rod.

Just at this same moment, a truck drove by on the village road. As a result of the vibrations, the opposite door

to the room opened up a little. As if drawn by an unseen force, the father's gaze fell toward the wall, where the cross of the Savior, illuminated by the moonlight, called to him like a sign from another world.

The gray-haired father later explained, "I had heard many Good Friday sermons in my life, but the cross caused me to truly repent that night. At that moment, I understood what the word of the cross signifies. We can only really understand it when we are at our end, just at the brink of the chasm. That night, the crucified Savior seemed to be looking at me and asking, "What do you have in your hand?"—"An iron rod."

"What do you want to do with the iron rod?"

"Kill my son."

"Why do you want to kill him?"

"Because he has been ruined without salvation, because he is without hope."

"Have I come to you from the gates of eternity with the iron rod? Why did I come in the flesh? Why did I endure homelessness? Why was I considered to be like the scum of hell? Why did I atone for your sins in this dark world? Have I, despised and rejected for your sake, not prayed for you: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do? I prayed so that grace, which is greater than anything, forgives you. So that the power of infinite love transforms your dead hearts. So that you should have peace."

The iron rod in my hands began to tremble. The call from the cross had reached me. I heard the word of the Lord: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). The hardness of my hateful, cold heart rose as a single sigh to the cross: "Lord, give me your love!" And, thanks to God, I received an answer. God's hour had arrived in my life. I no longer heard the voice of my son; I only heard the call from the cross, a question that demanded an answer.



Suddenly, my son came strolling through the front door. All hatred was overcome. A merciful love gave me the strength to lead him into the room. When he was sitting in the chair, I pulled him up, even though he was resisting. Then I set the table. “My boy, you have to eat first.” I could say it without agitation. How was it possible, how had that happened? My son looked at me shocked. I saw him begin to sober up, wiping the sweat from his forehead. Slowly, he stood up, and, trembling, tried to find the door. Without saying a word, he went up to his bedroom.

Early the next morning I stood in the hallway. The experience of this night seemed to me a dream, a miracle. In the corner lay the iron bar. Lost in thought, I had not heard my son come down the stairs. Then I felt his hand on my arm. I turned to him and looked into the chalky white, tear-streaked face of a boy. With an infinite joy, I knew: the resistance is broken. God had done a miracle. He looked for words and finally stammered: “Father, tell me—Father, is it possible to start over again?”

“My boy, yes, you can. God be praised, you can. Last night I experienced it myself. This cannot be found anywhere in the world, only under the cross of Jesus.”

“Father, where did you find the strength last night?”—I could hardly speak I was so moved. Was it possible that God raises children from stones (Matthew 3:9)?

“It is a miracle that God has also revealed His love to me on the cross, that His love gave me strength for a new life.”

“Father, help me to find forgiveness in this love.”

When the father later told this story, tears of joy shone in his eyes. He went to the corner cupboard in the living room and took out bundled letters from a drawer. He read me the last letter from his son, who rests under a cross in the west. Some of the lines I will never forget.

“Father, thank you for all your love. But most of all, I thank you that God’s grace called you that night, and grace gave you strength to call me into the love that is revealed in Jesus. Love was looking for me and found me. I cannot comprehend it; I will worship this love forever.”

Nothing is impossible with God. The grace of God can save all!

# The Great Sacrifice for Sin

**L**et us travel in our thoughts to the Garden of Gethsemane. Who is battling in prayer there? It is the one and only Son of the heavenly Father. He is lying there in bitter anguish. His heart is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. His sweat falls like drops of blood to the ground. It is the hour of darkness. The sins of the whole world are weighing down on Him. Never before has anyone borne such a load as the Son of God. He suffers for our transgressions. In this place the righteousness that is acceptable to God is achieved.

From here in Gethsemane, the Lord Jesus goes directly out to meet the high priests and Pharisees and asks them: “Whom are you seeking?” And in response to their reply: “Jesus of Nazareth”, He says: “I am He!” At this answer they draw back and fall to the ground. Again, we see the light of Jesus’ might, majesty, and grandeur shining through. But then we see Him standing before His accusers. The One who had driven the money changers out of the temple without anyone withstanding Him; the One whose words calmed the storms, who healed the sick and from whom the demons ran in fear; the One who commanded death to return its loot— He stands seemingly helpless before His judges!

The rude soldiers dared to slap Him in the face and spit on Him. See how He suffers all this without retaliating, and how He submits to God’s will for your sake and mine. Yes, look, this is indeed God’s Lamb who carries the sins of the world!

The hardened soldiers nailed Him to the horrible cross. In His agony on the cross we see His obedience

to His Father, His awe-inspiring patience, His meekness and willingness to forgive, and His full surrender to God’s will. Here on Golgotha the character of God’s Son is most gloriously revealed. The One who knew no sin took on sin for you and me! For us He let Himself be beaten and martyred. For us He stepped into the breach and took all sin upon Himself and carried it on the cross of shame. Yes, for us He endured a horrible death!

Because of sin, a separation between the Almighty God and man came into existence. Man’s own efforts did not help to bridge the gap. What number of people have tried to find salvation and healing on their own! They prayed to the sun, moon, stars, and to graven images, yet these religions brought them no help.

Then when the time was fulfilled, a Man stepped into the gap, the Son of God. He saw the longing as well as the helpless state of man. He was willing to give His life on the cross. Now access to heaven was once again attainable. Finally, the power of sin was broken. The broken heart of God’s Son revealed the heart of the Father. And in the heart of the Father were written these words, “God is love!” And in the heart of the Son we read: “I lay down my life for my sheep!”

Our eyes should, however, not remain fixed on what happened in front of the cross. We must allow the outcome of Jesus’ death on the cross to sink in: In front of the cross we see a bleeding, broken body; but behind the cross we see the exalted majesty of God’s Son. In front of the cross we see blood, which runs down the brow of One convicted to death, but behind the cross we see salvation that flows from the blood. In front of the cross

we see the sin of the world, but behind the cross we see the eternal redemptive love of God. In front of the cross we see the torture of death, but behind the cross we see the immeasurable blessings of this death.

Augustine said: "It cost God more to save a man than to create the whole world, heaven and earth. He created the world with one word from His mouth. To save humanity He had to sacrifice the life of His Son."

The cross of Christ is a power of God that saves all those who believe in it. It is also the only hope, dear readers. If you walk past it you are hopelessly lost. Bow down before the Lord Jesus if you haven't done so yet. Confess your sins to Him. Make Him your Lord and put your trust in Him. Ask Him for the power of the Holy Spirit and promise Him to walk in His commandments and to obey Him. Consider how much He has loved you and how He offered Himself for you. Out of love for you He endured the horrible death on the cross. He willingly died so that you might live. If you give yourself to Him then the crucified and risen One will take ownership of your heart through the Holy Spirit. Then your experience will testify that the word of the cross is a godly power for all who believe. Yes, this message from the cross will be a power that consumes and fills your thoughts, actions and words. The cross of Golgotha will become a wellspring for your life, your strength, your victory and your joy.



# The Resurrection: The Backbone of the Christian Faith

“If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. . . . But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.” (1 Corinthians 15:14, 20)

Let us focus our thoughts on the Resurrection of our Lord. The disciples were filled with sorrow when Jesus died on the cross, but after the resurrection their hearts were filled with joy. The Resurrection is a fact of utmost importance for all Christians.

Our first question is this: “What if Christ had not risen from the dead?” Paul addresses the Corinthians: “then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty” (1 Corinthians 15:14). Furthermore, our regular Sunday services would also be empty, and the defenders of the Resurrection would be liars. One could refer to all Christians as fanatics and dreamers.

The Resurrection is the backbone of the Christian faith. Let’s take a quick look at the human spine. The backbone or the spinal cord is an important part of the body. It supports the body, so that man can walk upright. The central nervous system flows through the center of the spine. If the spinal cord is injured, it can cause serious complications as well as paralysis.

Why is the Resurrection the backbone of Christian religion? Because of the Resurrection, Christianity stands, and without it Christianity falls—“And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Without the

Resurrection, the Christian religion would not be much different than other religions. Pagan religions worship dead heroes. They have all died and remained in their graves. Therefore, the Resurrection resembles an upright, firm backbone. Many atheists have tried to crush this backbone. They have tried to paralyze this spinal cord, however they have not succeeded. This is not and will never be possible. The truth of God will always prevail. The fact that the Resurrection occurred is certain.

The Resurrection is the backbone of the Christian faith because it is in connection with the forgiveness of sins (Acts 5:30-31). Christ suffered, died, and rose from the dead. The only way one can receive forgiveness of sins is through Jesus and because He lives!

The human spinal cord is surrounded by the ribcage. The ribcage forms protection for the organs, such as the heart and lungs.

The same goes for the Resurrection. Jesus protects against doubting, lying, and unbelief. Is Satan attacking you with doubt and trying to sow disbelief? Is your spiritual power depleting in battle, and is your courage failing? Christ arose! This resurrected Christ gives faith, courage, and victory!



Why can we maintain that the Resurrection is a credible event? Nothing is impossible with God—He is almighty. Resurrection of the dead already took place in the Old Testament. The widow’s son in Zarephath was revived by Elijah (1 Kings 17:22). Elisha prayed for the deceased son of the Shunammite woman. God, who created the laws of nature, physics, and biology, is the Master of all His legislation. Therefore He is able to restore life where it no longer is.

Humanity’s disbelief is unable to eliminate this fact. Even though people do not believe, God remains faithful and true. The disbelief of the people cannot change divine facts. “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:54). If the weaker object is swallowed by a stronger object (as a snake swallows a small animal), then the life of the weaker one has ended. Even the prophets prophesied of the Resurrection, e.g. David (Psalm 16:10).

The intention of Satan was to annul the fact of the Resurrection. Since Satan was the loser in the resurrection of Christ, he wanted to make the best of his defeat. He had already experienced defeat when Christ was tempted in the desert. So this liar again tried to cover up the Resurrection with bribery, lies, and deception (Matthew 28:11-15). The forces of evil wanted to suppress the fact of the Resurrection and keep it concealed. This work of Satan continues today. Paul was taken as prisoner for this exact reason (Acts 23:6). If the Resurrection could be annulled, then the enemies of God would also be able to annul everything that is connected to the Christian faith.

Many attacks have been made regarding the Resurrection and the Bible. Here is an example: Two atheists named Gilbert West and Lord Lyttelton agreed to prove the Bible was untrue. West chose to use the Resurrection of Christ as his object of criticism, and Lyttelton wanted to reveal his derision regarding Paul’s conversion. Both went to work with full zeal. They were overflowing with prejudice regarding Christ and His kingdom. The result of their studies was unusual and is very noteworthy. As they were in their quest to prove the Bible wrong, both men instead became convinced of the power of its authenticity and were led to conversion. After some time, the men came together again, however with a much dif-

ferent report than they had expected. They congratulated each other that they had arrived at the same result but at the same time bitterly admitted how foolish they had been. However, they did not ponder on this thought for long. Their thorough research gave them a good reason to write two pure and informative Christian works on the “History and Evidences of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ” and the “Conversion and Apostleship” of Paul.

Many question: “Is there evidence for the Resurrection of Christ?” The Holy Scripture reports in John 20:19-26 that Jesus, our Lord, appeared to the disciples. These were not the only witnesses. In fact, He was seen by more than 500 brethren at once (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). At that time there were not only 10 or 20 witnesses, but more than 500!

In conclusion, we would like to mention a historian, Eusebius (263-339 AD), who is known as the father of church history. In his book entitled “Church History” in chapter 11, he writes, referring to Josephus’ testimony (Jewish historian, 37-100 AD): “After relating these things concerning John, he makes mention of our Savior in the same work, in the following words: ‘And there lived at that time Jesus, a wise man, if indeed it be proper to call Him a man. For He was a doer of wonderful works, and a teacher of such men as receive the truth in gladness. And He attached to Himself many of the Jews, and many also of the Greeks. He was the Christ. When Pilate, on the accusation of our principal men, condemned Him to the cross, those who had loved Him in the beginning did not cease loving Him. For He appeared unto them again alive on the third day, the divine prophets having told these and countless other wonderful things concerning Him. Moreover, the race of Christians, named after Him, continues down to the present day.’”

We read in 1 Corinthians 15:20: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”

The Resurrection is the backbone of the Christian faith. This, we want to prove in our battle for the truth, and avoid any form of diverging from the truth.

Herbert Kowalski

# He Lives!

*“I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore.” (Revelation 1:18)*

**T**he darkest day that ever dawned for the followers of Christ was the day that Jesus was crucified. For thirty-three years He traveled the pathways of this world doing only good! He was severely tempted by Satan, but He had victory over every temptation. What a wonderful example he left for us. Wherever He went He had compassion on the poor, the sick, and the hungry. He opened the eyes of the blind, restored hearing to the deaf, gave new strength to the crippled, and even raised some from the dead. He was the embodiment of everything that is good and noble! He preached the world’s greatest sermons, but also often rebuked the selfish and prideful lives of many of the religious leaders of His day. He exposed their hypocrisy, and they resented it to the point that they had Him crucified. On the surface it looked as though they were the victors. His followers were crushed! They truly loved and trusted Him. They were convinced that He had come to set up His Kingdom, which He had, but they had expected an earthly kingdom rather than a spiritual one. Now their hopes and dreams were dead. Praise God the story doesn’t end there. As one minister said: “It’s Friday, Sunday’s a comin! Sunday’s a comin!” On the first day of the week Jesus had conquered death and the grave and came back to live forever!

The empty tomb is a compelling image, but what convinced the disciples that Jesus was resurrected was not the empty tomb, it was the fact that they experienced the real presence of Jesus! Jesus lives where His children are in need or in trouble. Didn’t He promise before He returned to heaven: “Surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20)? When a Christian goes down into the valley he is not alone, Jesus is there with him. A World War II veteran shared with me that he had a praying mother at home, and as men were dying all around him he was spared. His company was under a severe attack, and they sought refuge in an empty building. He suddenly had the strong impression to leave the

place where he was standing and go to the other side of the room. Just as he went, the exact spot where he had been standing was struck. Had he not heeded this inner urging he would have been killed. Jesus lives where His children are going through trials!

Jesus lives at the place of prayer! In the hymn “What a Friend We Have in Jesus,” Joseph M. Scriven penned the beautiful words: “O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear, all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer.” A sister who was on her way to major surgery and had been quite anxious about it, after praying and knowing that other believers were praying for her, shared that on the way to the operating room she sensed such peace and felt as though Jesus was walking beside her. The living Christ walks with us when we walk the path of Christian duty. On the first day of the week after the crucifixion, the women who went to the tomb where Christ had been buried saw an angel who said to them: “I know that you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. He is not here; He has risen, just as He said. . . . Then go quickly and tell His disciples [the good news]” (Matthew 28:5-7 NIV). As the women ran, afraid, yet filled with joy to tell the good news, Jesus met them; they fell down at His feet and worshiped Him. When we walk the pathway of duty, spreading the good news of our risen Savior, He will fill our hearts with real joy!

I serve a risen Savior, He’s in the world today;  
 I know that He is living, whatever foes may say;  
 I see His hand of mercy, I hear His voice of cheer,  
 And just the time I need Him, He’s always near.  
 He lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
 He walks with me and talks with me along the narrow way.  
 He lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
 You ask me how I know He lives? He lives within my heart!

Alfred H. Ackley

Arthur Lange, Vernon, BC

# The Good News

**H**ow sad the disciples were after Jesus died on the cross! It seemed as though the three years of Jesus' teachings had ended with a devastating blow. Now they could no longer converse with their beloved Lord, for He was dead and buried. We can't even imagine how His enemies must have cheered. And it was indeed a sad situation in which the disciples found themselves after Jesus' death and before His resurrection. They could not preach about a dead Christ that should have had redeeming power! No, never! People could not trust in a dead master. Their words would have remained empty and without influence. Their testimony that salvation comes only through Christ would have lost its power. What evidence would there have been that He could save from sin?

But through Jesus' resurrection from the dead, that all suddenly changed. The Resurrection gave the disciples a living Christ. And through Jesus' victorious resurrection the truth of all His words and teachings were confirmed. The resurrection of their Lord awoke a living hope within the disciples. It gave their beloved Lord back to them, not weakened by death and the grave, but clothed with undying strength and glory and exalted as King of all kings. Now they did not need to be ashamed to preach of Him. A living Christ worked with them, a Christ who had risen and gone to heaven. A Christ who sits at the right hand of God and has power to rescue from sin and protect His children from sin.

When a great teacher dies, his students only have his teachings in their memory. But with the disciples of the Lord Jesus it was completely different. He Himself, the great Teacher, was returned to them. They had not only His teachings and their memories of their time together, but, best of all, He was personally returned to them.

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?" the angel asked (Luke 24:5). At that time, the women could not grasp it. And we are told that the disciples did not know the Scriptures that He would rise from the dead. Even though Jesus had told them, they still did not understand the meaning of these words. Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets—all had died and been laid in the grave and remained there. They expected the same with Jesus. For this reason, the women went to the grave.

Is that also how we handle the old familiar story of Jesus' resurrection? Is the historical account outlined in the Bible all that we know of it? Or have we experienced the meaning and importance of the account in our own heart? Is Jesus alive for us and in us? Does He reveal Himself inside of us? Do we walk with Him? Or are we satisfied simply with His teachings? We may passionately defend the written word. Our understanding might even grasp it and be overjoyed by the wonder of this truth. But if the love of Christ is fading in us and only human energy is driving us—what a great loss we suffer! Only in communion with Jesus do we find the satisfying riches of a lasting peace. Only in Jesus is life, eternal life! He alone, Christ, is the source, the life of Christianity. And a living relationship with Him is true Christianity. Everything else is just the outer shell. Teachings and rules only serve their purpose if they lead to a deeper relationship with Him or prevent us from wandering away from Him.

When the two disciples were on their way to Emmaus on Easter day, they met the risen Lord. And with joy they returned to Jerusalem to bring the other disciples the good news. The distance between the two locations was approximately 12 km (7.5 mi). Even though the disciples were tired from the journey, we read: "They rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem" (Luke 24:33). They had a new vision from Jesus.

Have we recognized Jesus in all His fullness so that we forget about ourselves and are driven from within to share the good news with others?

The first day of that week, the day of Jesus' resurrection was the start of a new era. Before this they knew Jesus only from a carnal perspective. And when He died, their hope was gone. But now they were connected to a living Christ. Through His resurrection their mourning was transformed to joy, their weakness to strength, and their despair to victory. "The Lord is risen indeed" became their song of victory.

From that time forward Christianity was crowned with a victorious might that destroys Satan's kingdom and plants God's kingdom in the hearts of people. This can also happen in your life, dear reader. Sadness can be transformed to joy, death to life, and defeat to victory, when Jesus becomes alive and real in your life. We have a living Christ who wants to meet us on our journey of life!



# Cheap Grace?

Yes, it is true: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men” (Titus 2:11). But can we just simply push aside, disregard, or even trample God’s other requirements! Cheap grace? No, because we read that the saving grace of God: “teaches us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age” (Titus 2:12).

Cheap grace is the deadly enemy of the Church. The battle revolves around a priceless, costly grace. Mainstream Christianity treats saving grace as cheap goods, grace without price, without cost. They argue that because Jesus paid the price for all sin, for all people, on the cross, grace is now freely available and costs nothing. But the price Christ paid for grace was infinite, and the opportunities for its use and misuse are also infinite. Would it still be grace if it was cheap?

So, a doctrine of grace has been established, a system where the world can be absolved of sins which it does not regret and does not even wish to be freed from. Cheap grace is the denial of the living Word of God, justification of sin but not the sinner. If everything is just about grace, that is, grace covers everything, then nothing has

to change. The Christian does not even need to follow Jesus since he can always fall back on grace!

Many people rely thoughtlessly on the words of Zinzendorf:

Christ’s blood and righteousness,  
is my adornment and robe of honor,  
with it I will stand before God,  
when I enter heaven.

They believe that they can continue in their frivolous and worldly activities without repenting, receiving forgiveness, or being true disciples.

But grace is costly. It is the hidden treasure in a field for which a man sold everything he had and bought this treasure with joy. It is a costly pearl for which a merchant would trade in all his goods. It is the absolute rule of Christ in our lives that compels us to figuratively “pluck out our eye” for grace to be manifested in our life. It is the call of Christ that enabled the disciples to leave their nets and follow Him. It is costly because it requires a person’s life. It is grace because then it can give a person real life. It is costly because it condemns sin. It is grace because it justifies the repentant. It is costly because God paid for

it with the life of His Son—“You were bought with a price” (1 Corinthians 6:20)—and we cannot consider something cheap if it was costly for God. It is costly because it brings people under the yoke of Christ, and it is grace when Jesus says: “For my yoke is easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:30).

Under which grace can I die? Under the cheap or costly one? With the cheap one I can continue to sin. The world is justified on principle by it. Therefore, one falsely believes that one can remain in one’s worldly existence just as before. Outwardly and inwardly, everything can stay the same since grace covers all as long as one believes in it. Half the world has become “Christian” because of this cheap grace. Christi-

anity has in an unprecedented way become “worldly” under this cheap grace.

That is why this “cheap grace” is one of the most dangerous false doctrines of Protestantism, whose roots were in the grace-filled beginnings of the Spirit-driven Reformation.

That many could not follow this downward path with good conscience is understandable. It was not merely out of protest against a doctrine of cheap grace, but also out of the need for costly, precious grace that the Lord Jesus Christ gave His life, His all so that we could receive it. Is that a cheap grace? Definitely not! Let us follow our Savior and live righteous, sober lives in this world so that we can be worthy of this costly grace!

## What is Easter?

My friend was happy to share a great flood of words with me when I asked the question “What is Easter?”. “Easter—the awakening of nature. Go outside, see and listen to the new life springing forth, how it speaks to all of us! Life is victorious! This is Easter!”

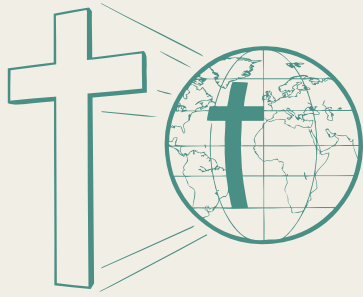
“Would you do me a favor?”—“It depends what it is.”—“I would like you to come visit my friend and share with him the Easter message you just told me. Just so you are aware, he lost his eyesight in the war. He might be happy to hear your thoughts on what Easter is . . . .”

“If your friend is blind, what should I tell him about the awakening of nature? Is he married and does he have children?”—“Yes, he has one son.”—“Good, I will come along and tell him that Easter is just a celebration of life as I understand it, and this life will continue through future generations, even to the point of him experiencing resurrection through his children.”

“Do not tell my blind friend that! It certainly would not comfort him”—“Why not?”—“His son is his greatest grief. He got into the wrong crowd. He did some

bad things and is now sitting in prison.”—“Well then, what should I say to him? Your friend seems to be a special exception.”

“Do not say that! There are more people than you can even imagine who would laugh at your Easter message. But have no fear; my friend would not laugh at you. He will celebrate Easter regardless. He knows the living Savior. Even though he is blind, he has experienced salvation through Jesus Christ. You will not need to comfort him. Certainly his son gives him grief, but with his grief he goes to his risen Savior in prayer. Jesus said to His own: “I am with you always” (Matthew 28:20). He is the mediator of His followers before His Father in heaven. My friend speaks with Jesus about his son. He knows and hopes that the living Savior will have an encounter with him and guide him on a new path. No, you do not have to comfort this man. If you ever need any comfort, I will take you to him. My friend knows what Easter really means. For that reason he has been helped and can help you in a desperate hour.”



# Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

## The Mighty “It is I!”

Luke 24:38-39: “And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? . . . Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself.’”

What many did not want to believe, now had to be believed. The crucified and resurrected Lord was alive and victorious! What most could not grasp with their finite understanding was real and visible for the grieving disciples.

The introductory words of the Gospel according to John state: “In the beginning was the Word.” This “Word” was Christ and through Him, God showed the world His great love and revealed His gift of salvation. John makes it abundantly clear when he states: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life . . . that which we have seen and heard we declare to you” (1 John 1:1-3). This was reiterated in a practical way on that wonderful Easter morning!

The resurrection of Jesus took place in complete secrecy. For this reason, this event eluded the doubting elite. However, the faith of the disciples and the witnesses of Jesus have been documented and can be historically proven. Paul wrote about Jesus’ death, His burial, and His resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. He continues, claiming that the resurrected Lord was seen by His twelve disciples, then by over five hundred brethren at once, and last of all He was seen by Paul himself (1 Corinthians 15: 5-8). This happened on the way to the city of Damascus when Jesus suddenly appeared before him saying: “I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting” (Acts 9:5). It is astounding

how this man, who so vehemently persecuted the Christians, experienced the resurrected Savior and became a resolute witness among the other believers.

There is a clear perceptible joy over the New Testament reports! This alone makes them credible. These reports became even more reliable through the testimony of the Holy Spirit. Through the power of the Holy Spirit working in them, they could victoriously overcome all doubts and reservations!

The trustworthiness of Jesus’ resurrection does not come from some mere human vision, but leads back to the powerful work of God. Peter testified in his mighty sermon on Pentecost: “Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst . . . you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it” (Acts 2: 22-24).

There were many reliable witnesses to this wonderful work of God:

1. Even before His death on the cross, Jesus testified, saying: “And deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again” (Matthew 20: 19).

2. The angels, as heavenly messengers, said to the



women at the tomb: “Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen” (Luke 24: 5-6).

3. The empty grave testifies as Luke reports: “Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus” (Luke 24: 1-3). The empty grave caused the soldiers great stress and embarrassment.

4. The many appearances of Jesus testified in themselves of His resurrection! In Luke 24, we read how Jesus appeared in the midst of His disciples and said: “Peace to you.” They were terrified and frightened and supposed they had seen a spirit. He showed them His pierced hands and feet and said: “It is I Myself.” The doubting Thomas was allowed to place his finger on the wounds, and Jesus even showed him the wound in His side and said to him: “Do not be unbelieving, but believing.” And it was only after all these appearances of Jesus that His disciples emerged as fully convinced and credible witnesses of the resurrection! All this evidence served the purpose of awakening faith in many. What Jesus said to Thomas applies to all of us as well: “Do not be unbelieving, but believing.”

On that Easter or Resurrection day, there was a great deal of excitement. Being very afraid and sad, the disciples had hidden behind closed doors in Jerusalem. Peter and John had already experienced a few things that early morning. Towards

evening, two men from nearby Emmaus came to the disciples and said: “We have seen the Lord.” How could the fearful and unsettled disciples absorb this message? Then suddenly, Jesus is standing in their midst. And in the midst of their most profound anxiety, they hear the comforting words: “It is I.” John writes: “Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’ And when He had said this, He showed them His hands and His side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord” (John 20: 19-20). Only three powerful words had cast out all doubt and anxiety and set their dejected hearts at ease!

Jesus often used this powerful statement: “It is I.” He encountered a Samaritan woman at a well. He spoke to her about the condition of her heart. She said to Him: “I know that Messiah is coming. When He comes, He will tell us all things.” Jesus said to her: “I who speak to you am He” (John 4: 25-26). A detachment of troops came looking for Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane. Jesus asked them: “Whom are you seeking?” They said: ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am He.’ Now when He said to them, ‘I am He,’ they drew back and fell to the ground” (John 18:3-6). As a prisoner before the court, the high priest asked Him: “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus said: “I am” (Mark 14:61-62). Now we want to pray that our Lord would greet us with His comforting “It is I” and grant each faithful heart a blessed Easter!

Friedrich Krebs

# What Does Easter Mean to Me?

Since Easter and Good Friday belong together, I would like to reflect on good Friday before moving to Resurrection Sunday.

## **Salvation**

A Man—no, not just any man, but the Son of God—suffered and died for me. If I think about this fact I am moved with great amazement and deep gratitude and reverence toward my Savior.

If Jesus would not have died for me, what would my life have looked like today? It would be a miserable, sinful life with a guilt-laden conscience. I would have nowhere to get rid of my load of sin and would be relinquished to indescribable, eternal misery, and destruction.

But because Jesus did take my punishment upon Himself and died on the cross for me, I have hope for my life. I was able to bring all of my sin and guilt to the cross of Jesus and He forgave me.

“But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5).

That is why Easter means Salvation to me.

## **Grace**

After receiving salvation we continue to need God’s grace in our daily life. Young people who are more at the start of their spiritual walk and lack experience sometimes stumble and fall. The Bible clearly promises a life of victory in Jesus, and stumbling is not the norm for a child of God, but through lack of vigilance we can stumble and fall. When that happens, should we despair or even give up? No, never! That is the devil’s goal: to get us to give up. In times like that he will tell us that it’s no use and God’s grace is over. But there too, Jesus’ blood is our greatest hope. We must humbly confess our sins and offenses to God. We can know that the blood of Jesus was shed on the cross so that we can receive forgiveness.

Because I claim forgiveness in the blood of Jesus for myself, Easter means grace for me.

## **Jesus lives!**

Easter means that Jesus lives! He conquered death and is not in the tomb. He doesn’t live somewhere far away in the sky. No, He lives in me, in my heart. To everyone who has accepted His grace He is closer than any man can be. We get to serve a living Savior. Why do I know that Jesus lives?

- He hears my prayers

- In my everyday life I can experience His help. When I bring my burdens and difficult situations to Him, He takes the load off my shoulders and makes everything work out for the best.

- I can feel His blessings time and time again, blessings that no person can give.

- He speaks to me through His word. When He speaks I learn a lot and can be encouraged and strengthened.

- I can sense His presence when I pray to Him.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven He told his disciples: “I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:20).

Easter continually reminds me that Jesus is alive!

## **Victory**

Through the resurrection, Jesus conquered Hell, the world, and the devil. Therefore we can also be free from sin and do not need to be servants of sin. If we cling to Him in obedience, we can overcome temptations with His power and live in victory!

“O Death where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory? . . . But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1 Corinthians 15:55, 57).

So, to me Easter means victory!

Dina Groetzing,  
Eppingen (Germany)





When I think of the resurrection of Jesus, I become very small in my own eyes. When I think of describing the Resurrection and explaining its meaning, I become smaller yet. There is nothing else to do but to fall on my knees and thank God for His resurrection and ask Him to help me to better understand its implications. I also pray for grace to glorify Him in everything I do, because He has done so much more than I can ever do. The Resurrection fills me with deep respect and great reverence before Him, the Almighty.

The Resurrection is the completion of Jesus' suffering and His sacrifice on the Cross. At Easter, the perfect work for the redemption of humanity was fulfilled. It is the central message of the Bible; all the promises were fulfilled and the Son of God died in order to give us life. But He did not remain in the tomb, He rose from the dead.

When I think of the Resurrection, I am reminded of the promise of Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel." Jesus would destroy the head of the snake (Satan), the head being the nerve center. Jesus fulfilled that promise. He triumphs over death. Jesus crushed the power of the enemy. Jesus triumphs over the forces of Hell. Jesus conquered this enormous victory of spiritual warfare. Jesus is the conqueror!

Jesus won the battle and thereby displayed His omnipotence, His incredible strength. One of His statements after the Resurrection echoes through our time: "All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18). His victory above all means strength. Strength also for me. Jesus has triumphed, so through Him I can prevail against the forces of sin. The victory of Jesus enables me to live in His power and in His will.

On the one hand, I am humbled by the power of the resurrection of Jesus. But I can also have access to this wonderful power. I can know how powerful my Savior is. I can know that I serve an almighty God in whom it is safe to place my confidence. I should know that although I am small and weak, by His power I can do all things (Philippians 4:13).

Because of this power in Jesus, I do not need to view temptations as giants. When I remind myself of Jesus and His resurrection, the fear vanishes; fear of man, uncertainty and difficult circumstances in life. I receive courage to stand for Jesus and for the battle of faith. The Resurrection fills me with joy and heartfelt gratitude for His victory over death; I can live by this victory. I can be on the winning side!

He died and arose—for me. He did everything out of love. He has paved the way to give us a wonderful relationship with Him, with God. He alone has transformed me from a slave of sin to a child of the King. He alone has done and will do everything. Because He loves me.

I can know that my Jesus is alive.

I can know that my Jesus is victorious.

I can know that he loves me.

Daniel Lang, Hamm (Germany)

*"For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again." (2 Corinthians 5:14-15)*



## *Experiences with God*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in the Lord,

I always receive the *Foundation of Faith* and the *Evangeliums Posaune* and I really enjoy reading them. When I'm done reading them I bring the German one to the senior care home for them to read.

I enjoy reading the testimonies and I would like to tell you about a very serious experience I had last fall: I was on my first helicopter ride.

My daughter from Grand Prairie invited me to visit them for a few days. My neighbor offered me a ride, so I went along and stayed with my family.

But now I needed a ride back home. I really did not want someone to drive me for five hours and then go all the way back again, but my son, David, has a helicopter and he and a friend of his were near Grande Prairie at a meeting. So my daughter drove me to the meeting place and we started our flight home. It was a very beautiful day, the ride was good, and I enjoyed seeing so much from the air.

Now when we were nearing home, we had to fly over the Buffalo Head hills and there was a cloud that covered the hills. All we could see was a thick white cloud under us and the blue sky

above. David's friend kept looking down to see if there might be an open spot where we could go through. The men had not talked for a while and it was getting a bit stressful. So I prayed: "Oh Lord, please keep the pilot calm!" It seemed that cloud was following under us and there was no change. We only had fuel for half an hour yet, and we were still above that cloud, and there was no change.

I knew we were in desperate need of help. So I earnestly called out to the Lord: "Your Word is always the truth, and your Word says, when we are in trouble we shall call on You and You will help us. We are in trouble. Please, help us!"

And right away He answered my plea for help. We did not know what was happening, but He took us through the cloud. Our windows were as if wrapped with thick batting. For a few seconds we could only see the inside of the helicopter, but then we landed in David's yard. Our loving Lord was very gracious to us. We can't thank Him enough. He deserves all the praise. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).

Mary Driedger, La Crete, AB

# Jesus Went With Them

So it was, while they conversed and reasoned, that Jesus Himself drew near and went with them” (Luke 24:15). It would be best if you would read verses 13-16.

Can you imagine what happened there? Jerusalem had just experienced some emotional days. One theme occupied the minds of the city and the nation: Jesus of Nazareth had been crucified, and now the rumor was circulating that He had risen again. “Too good to be true!” many probably said to themselves.

Among these many were two men who were sadly returning home to Emmaus from Jerusalem. What had they

not all expected from Jesus! And now everything was over.

And yet Jesus was risen! He probably first listened to the conversation of the two men as an invisible companion. But then He visibly approached them. He had the urge to help them in their despair. He didn't reveal Himself immediately, but they could already tell Him their trouble.

We are more privileged than the two disciples from Emmaus. We know that Jesus is our constant, invisible companion. To be sure, we often act as if it were not so. We brood and worry how everything will go on. Meanwhile, Jesus is just waiting for us to believe that He is with us and will show us the right way.



# Our Trip to the Philippines

**O**n Monday, January 13, 2017 the time had come. In the early morning, I entered the airplane that would bring me to Vancouver, B.C. Here I met up with Bro. Ron Taron as we had planned. Together we began our “world tour.” The destination was the Philippines on the other side of the globe. The flight path from Edmonton to Manila amounted to 13,260 km (8,239 mi) and included a time difference of 15 hours. Late Tuesday evening, we reached the capital city of the Philippines, from where we left the next day by car in the direction of San Jose City, our home base during our stay in the Philippines.

Since 2002, brothers and sisters from Canada have been travelling regularly to the Philippines. Why is this?

The history of the Church of God in the Philippines goes back to the year 1975 when Church of God literature ended up in the hands of Bro. Matias Tangunan. Convinced by these new truths that had just been revealed to him, he immediately began to preach them. The words of Bro. Tangunan touched me deeply: “I realized that topics like foot washing, a holy life, and being filled with the

Holy Spirit were unfamiliar in the congregation that I attended. Suddenly it became clear to me that I had been preaching a false doctrine. From that moment, I preached these new-found truths. Because of this, my friends became my enemies. All support was cut off. We had to leave the piece of land that was given to us as a means of livelihood. Persecution followed. Suddenly we found ourselves penniless in a location where we no longer had a home.”

This ministry began with one man. Today, 42 years later, it consists of 22 congregations in 5 provinces. Sixteen fulltime pastors, as well as a few part-time “Sunday pastors,” take care of the congregations. Some of the congregations are small, whereas others have up to 60 visitors. The motto that is seen everywhere is: “Truth, Holiness, and Unity.”

The congregations are primarily sustained by donors from Canada. The pastors receive monthly financial support. Church buildings, in a style we are unfamiliar with, have been erected that are for the most part plain and simple. Because there is no winter there, the church buildings often have only brick walls and a corrugated metal roof.



Choral group during the Camp Meetings



Bro. Matias Tangunan



Camp meetings in Palestina, San Jose City



Pastor Jeffrey Albitos and Choral group from Dingalan

Three private Christian schools that are financed by the “Henry Gusse Foundation” are part of the ministry. In total, 413 children are taught by 32 teachers. Although the main focus is the education of the children, the central theme again and again is to familiarize the children with the teachings of the Bible and to lead them to Jesus.

Our brothers and sisters in the Philippines live simply; some live in poverty. Without support from abroad, the ministry could hardly exist. Again and again, the people thanked for the financial assistance.

The 100 million inhabitants of the Philippines are 80% Catholic, and about 5-10% are Muslim. The godly “must” applies to all people according to John 3:3: “You must be born again.” The brothers and sisters feel an urgency to preach this to the world, or as they so often say: to win “souls for Jesus.” The pastors meet every month to further their training and plan mission outreaches. They literally take the good news of Jesus from house to house; they start home-based Bible studies where



Pastor Jover Flora and Family on his “Tricycle”



Bro. Taron and translator, Pastor Harlito Tangunan



Pastor Bro. Carlos Bianan – Church in San Quintin, Pangasinan



Pastors and Helpers - Participants of the Pastors Conference



Congregation in Gapan



Baptism Service at the Camp Meetings

they teach the doctrine of the Bible. Through this, people repent and are added to the church. With gratitude we can say that God is acknowledging this work.

This all started with one person. One person made it his or her job to send literature. God made sure that it landed in the right hands. I am fascinated. Could this repeat itself? The printed Word of God can accomplish great things when it is among people. Someone just has to make it their job to distribute literature.

On January 24th, we arrived back in Canada and are thankful for God's help and His blessing. It is my wish and prayer that God continues to bless the work in the Philippines.

Harry Semenjuk, Wetaskiwin, Alberta



Teachers and Administrators of the Henry Gusse Christian School



A typical Classroom



Henry Gusse Christian School

*For Our Seniors*

# God has Taken the Brush from my Hand

When I was a student, I had an extraordinary experience. Perhaps you are familiar with the name of the painter Steinhausen, that gifted artist who has glorified the living God throughout his life with his artwork. You can probably imagine that it was a huge honor for me as a twelfth-grader to visit this artist.

I admittedly came to him in a very painful moment. At that time, Steinhausen was about to complete his greatest work of life. A stroke had befallen him and paralyzed his right arm. Imagine for a moment: There lay a man full of bold and rich plans, but he could not carry them out because his hand was paralyzed.

Somewhat embarrassed, I stammered my condolences when I came to him. Then this man made a statement, the greatness of which only became clear to me much later. “Look,” he said to me, “until now I have painted pictures to God’s glory. Now God has taken the brush from my hand so that He may make of me a picture to His glory.”

At that time, I did not understand much about God’s guidance. But I still remember how overwhelming it was for me that a man who had to suffer such deep affliction was not grumbling, was not gritting his teeth, and had not become bitter in his grief. No, he saw a hidden blessing in this suffering.

This is something new and completely inconceivable for us: when God leads us into the depths of suffering, then He has a blessing in store for us.

There can be nothing more important to us than the fact that with our hearts and lives we are coming ever closer to God, that we come home from the unrest and

alienation, to the heart of our God. Let us therefore not be so concerned about our worries and sadness. Do not sense that from the darkness that surrounds us, an unspeakably faithful Shepherd’s voice shouts: “Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you” (Jeremiah 31:3).

We should now have only one concern, namely, that the full blessing of our tribulation will be given to us. Going through sorrow is difficult, but to not draw closer to Jesus, that is terrible. What an overwhelming blessing could flow from the stream of suffering, if we only dared to lift our hearts to Him who alone can heal and make things right!

I was still very young when my father died. It was a period of deep inner and outer distress for us all. During that time, I had the opportunity to travel to southern Germany with my mother. During our stay there we visited some magnificent castle grounds. There we saw a huge beech tree lying on the ground. Ivy had overgrown it, and, of course, fallen into the dust with the falling beech. My mother sadly said to me: “Look, this is how it is for me. I was allowed to grow up like a vine around your Father. Now that he has fallen, I am also lying on the ground.”

Suddenly, alarmed, she cried out, “Oh, what am I saying? I can reach to the Savior!”

I understood it very clearly then: This Jesus must be an incredible Savior to be able to offer such strength and power in deep sadness!

Are you stumbling or already lying on the ground? Hold on to Jesus!

J. B.

# The Lord's Prayer

by Gerhard Mielke - Part 1

Probably the best-known prayer is the Lord's Prayer:

*Our Father in heaven,  
Hallowed be Your name.  
Your kingdom come.  
Your will be done  
On earth as it is in heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our debts,  
As we forgive our debtors.  
And do not lead us into temptation,  
But deliver us from the evil one.  
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and  
the glory forever. Amen. (Matthew 6:9-13)*

In this prayer that Jesus taught, every word is significant. The first Word in this prayer is “our.” This shows us that Jesus wants us to include others in the prayer. We do not pray just for ourselves. God is not just my Father alone, but I belong to a family of believers who support me and with whom I can pray together. That is one reason we have our weekly prayer meetings. The Bible has a special promise for those who bring a shared burden to the Lord. Jesus says, “Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:19-20).

I remember planning to go away to school when I was 19. Unlike today, at that time, trains were less expensive than planes. I was to take a two-day train ride to get there, but I

needed some information to establish whether I should attend that school or not. I did not want to take the two-day trip and then discover I had best come back home again. Consequently, I asked my mother to pray with me. Jesus had promised that if two agree on earth, the Father in heaven would hear our petition. I still remember the joy of receiving a letter about two days before my departure, with exactly the information I needed.

I remember a few years back when my mother was in the intensive care unit in the hospital. My daughter had come home, because she was told if she wished to see her grandmother alive once more, she should not delay. Otherwise, there was no guarantee. Meanwhile saints all over the country were praying for my mother. God answered those prayers. Mom made a miraculous recovery. During my mother's three week stay in the hospital, we had at least four answers to specific needs. God answered many of our prayers. We were not alone in petitioning “our” Father for help.

The word “our” indicates that we are not alone, but we serve the Lord together.

“Our” is a personal pronoun. It indicates that God is not only “the Father,” or perhaps “a father,” but He is also in particular “my Father.” He is “our Father” and we belong to Him and He belongs to us. We can come to Him, for He is ours. If He is our Father, then this indicates a relationship that we have with Him.

Not just anyone can phone up the Prime Minister of Canada, or the King of Sweden, or the President of the United States and expect to be able to speak to them. However, if the son of the Prime Minister, or the daughter of the King, or the





child of the President wants to speak with their father, they have access, unlike the general public, who cannot say that one of them is their father. Similarly, we can come to God in prayer at any time of day or night. He loves us and cares for us because He is “ours.”

Unfortunately, there are fathers who do not have a loving relationship with their children. They are not faithful, loving, or caring. However, God is the perfect Father, and even if you had an earthly father who let you down, you can pray “our Father in heaven,” because God has promised never to let you down. He loves you and will never leave you if you ask Him into your life. He will go through all of life with you. He is the faithful Father.

When we pray “our Father,” we think of others and pray for others. When asked by a lawyer what the greatest commandment is, Jesus said to him, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37-39).

In the words “our Father,” we recognize that Jesus includes both God and our neighbor. These words are linked with the greatest commandment and the second, which is like it. Jesus insists, “On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:40). Think of it! We could say that in the first two words of the Lord’s prayer we have all the Law and the Prophets implied!

But, “Who exactly is my neighbor?” Who exactly is included in this “our?” That is exactly what the lawyer asked Jesus: “And who is my neighbor?” (Luke 10:29). Jesus then

told him the story of the Good Samaritan, and said, “Go and do likewise” (Luke 10:37).

There is so much opportunity to be a good neighbor in our communities. However, this “our” also includes our families. The Bible says: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8).

In Luke 16:19-31, Jesus relates the story of the rich man and poor Lazarus, full of sores, who was laid at his gate. The rich man did not fulfill his duty to the poor beggar, nor did he show the love and compassion that God expected him to. I sometimes feel that we in the West are the rich man, and our brothers and sisters in countries that do not share our standard of living are Lazarus. I feel convicted that there is so much more that we could be doing. Jesus says: “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me” (Matthew 25:40). But He also says: “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me” (Matthew 25:45).

In summary, this word “our” implies that we are not alone. We have a great God and Father who loves and cares for us. We have a family of believers who support us. We have the privilege of praying together and for one another. However, the word “our” also shows us great opportunities and obligations. We are not to think of or live only for ourselves but for others. Christ came to serve and give His life for us. We are to follow His example.

# Peter: At the Fire, Under Fire, and On Fire

## ***Peter At the Fire***

“Now when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the courtyard and sat down together, Peter sat among them” (Luke 22:55).

Here Peter sat at the fire. It was the fire kindled by those who had assisted with the capture of Jesus. It was the Lord Jesus’ enemies who had set this fire where they now sat.

Peter actually had no business being there. It was just a short while ago that Jesus had warned him and predicted that he would deny Him. Peter had protested and promised that he would never and under no circumstances ever do so! Yet here he sat at the fire with Jesus’ enemies, trying to stay warm.

There is no doubt that he was honest when he promised to serve the Lord and not deny Him no matter the circumstance. Unfortunately, like many today, he feared people. It was a great risk for him to be warming himself by this fire.

Dear brother, dear sister, where do you try to warm yourself? Could it be in places where people of the world gather? Do you seek warmth in the assembly of God’s children or do you seek it in worldly pleasures?

“And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, ‘This man was also with Him’” (Luke 22:56). This servant girl knew that Peter did not belong at this fire.—Even the children of the world know where children of God belong. If while warming themselves at a “worldly fire,” people see those who profess to serve Christ, who have possibly even invited others to come to Christ, the influence of these so-called “Christians” is lost.

## ***Peter Under Fire***

“And Peter remembered the word of Jesus who had said to him, “Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me

three times.” So he went out and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:75).

Oh, the gaze of the Lord! How it must have penetrated Peter’s heart! This gaze that Jesus turned on Peter was enough to make Peter fully and completely aware of what he had just done. It reminded him of the warning that Jesus had given him and of the promise he had made never to deny Him. How he regretted his words now! But he had stated them. If he had only stayed away from the fire of Jesus’ enemies. Yes, now Peter was under fire. The fire of the realization of his sin burned deep within him. He went out and wept bitterly, and in doing so, his heart will have no doubt cried out to the Lord for mercy and forgiveness.

The Lord also gazes compassionately at all those who are lost in their sins today. He would so gladly help them, so gladly save them. To how many of these will He one day have to say what He said to the people in Jerusalem: “You were not willing!”

If you, dear reader, are still living in sin today, then do what Peter did when the Lord gazed at him. He went and gave his tears free rein because the Lord’s gaze had penetrated his heart and brought him to the realization of his sin. He was truly sorry that he had grieved the Lord. That is always the first step to receiving forgiveness, the first step in true repentance. Peter repented after denying his Lord, and he received forgiveness.

## ***Peter On Fire***

After the fire was poured out at Pentecost, it changed Peter. Anyone who has received the forgiveness of their sins and who is willing to completely consecrate themselves to God will be changed in the same way. The same Peter, previously so full of fear that he did not have the

courage to acknowledge his Lord at a crucial moment, now stood fearlessly in front of an entire crowd of people and not only publicly acknowledged the Lord Jesus, but delivered a powerful sermon. A short time later, when the lame man was healed outside the temple gate and John and Peter were asked in whose power they had done this, they once again gave a strong testimony for Jesus. Peter spoke such powerful words full of the strength of the Holy Spirit that everyone marveled. We read: "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus" (Acts 4:13).

The people knew that Peter and John were not highly educated, and yet they were filled with a power that could only be explained when they remembered that they had been with Jesus. The baptism of the Holy Spirit changes

us in a way that no human education or nothing anyone can give us can replace.

If we have been born again and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit, then we have had the same experience as Peter and John. The world will also see that we are walking with Jesus, that we have a living connection to Him. This is what the world today needs: more people who are truly on fire for God and filled with the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Lord would like to help each one of us not to lose sight of the necessity of experiencing complete sanctification. It is through this that we, like Peter after Pentecost, can be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit, that we can always acknowledge our Lord and Master with holy fearlessness, and bear witness to His power and willingness to completely redeem us.

O. Decker

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## Special Services 2017

*Easter Conference in Hamm, Germany*

APRIL 14-17, 2017

*Fest in Winnipeg, Manitoba*

MAY 20-22, 2017

*Pentecost Fest in Herford, Germany*

JUNE 3-5, 2017

*Fest in Aylmer, Ontario*

JULY 1-2, 2017

*Youth Bible Days in Tuningen, Germany*

JULY 27 - AUG 1, 2017

*Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany*

AUGUST 20-27, 2017

*Convention in Swartz Creek, Michigan*

SEPTEMBER 2-3, 2017

*Fest in Edmonton, Alberta*

OCTOBER 7-9, 2017

It is finished!

Can you hear Jesus saying:  
“It’s finished” at His death?  
His blood our sins allaying,  
We’re granted righteousness.  
O hear the words of love and grace:  
“It is finished” – no more disgrace,  
Your sins are all forgiven.  
He’s risen!

Now we have peace and favor  
While journeying below.  
And as we toil and labor,  
Our thoughts to heaven go.  
Lift up your eyes to God above.  
He has prepared for us with love  
A glorious home in heaven.  
It beckons.

Praise Him! Nothing can sever  
Us from the Lord our God;  
Not death, nor pain, or ever  
What’s found upon this sod.  
We’ve access to the throne of grace  
Through Jesus Christ, who pleads our case.  
Let all our hearts embrace Him,  
And praise Him.

Our lives are dedicated  
To Him, the worthy Lamb.  
His cause be celebrated;  
He is the great I AM.  
For us our Savior tasted death.  
So let’s praise Him with every breath.  
It’s joy on earth or heaven  
To love Him.