



Foundation of Faith

HOW WILL YOU FARE ON JUDGMENT DAY?
WHEN ETERNAL MORNING DAWNS
THE REWARD OF THE RIGHTEOUS
I KNOW WHERE I AM GOING!
THE REMAINING TIME

**You Lived,
*And Then?***

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

The world is full of contradictions. Light opposes darkness, and truth stands against lies. We know that Satan tempted at the very beginning of human history, in the Garden of Eden, by convincing the first people to doubt God's truth and instead believe a lie. This dynamic still plays out today, with people everywhere being misled, lied to, and deceived. What our Savior said so many years ago is still true today: "Men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3: 19).

But how do the love and wrath of God complement each other? Perhaps you are asking: How can a loving God also be angry? Many do not believe in a holy God, instead fighting against truth and God's wonderful plan of salvation.

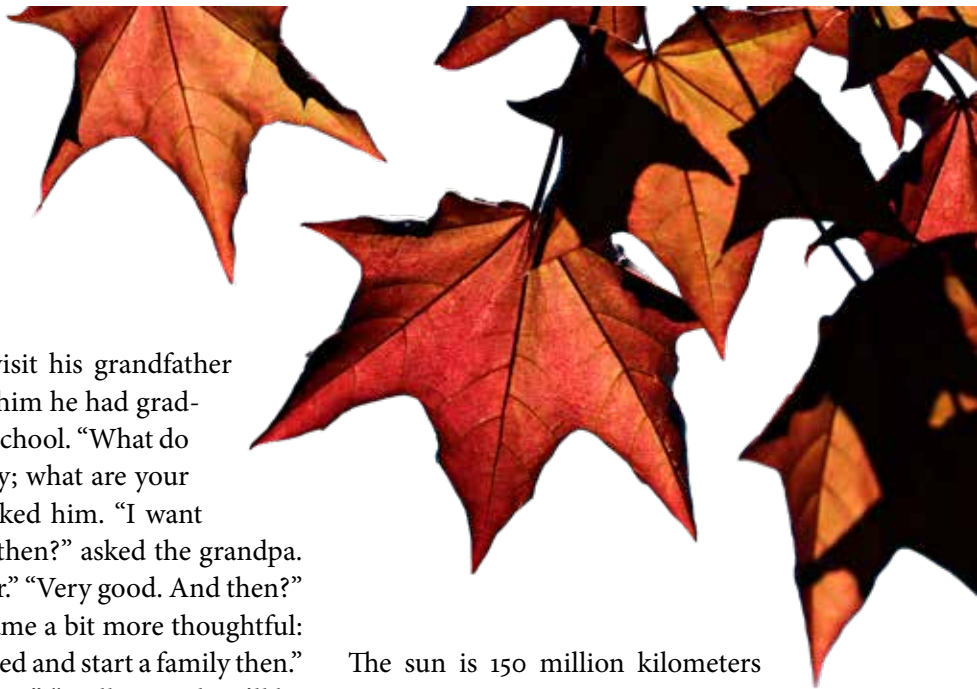
The Bible clearly and unmistakably shows us all that we have a holy God who, in His great love, offers us eternal life in Heaven. But God's Word also mentions the wrath of the Lamb and eternal damnation in hell.

Yes, God loves us so much that He sacrificed His son, Jesus Christ, to save everyone, including you and me. Nonetheless, God has nothing but wrath for everything that opposes His character and that rebels against Him and His holy order. The Lord wants to save us and free us from sin, but if a sinner does not accept this salvation, and remains in his sin, the wrath of God remains upon him.

Dear reader, listen to what the Savior has to tell you: "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him" (John 3: 36).

If we do not believe in God and submit to His will, and if we do not accept Jesus' love, we will continue earning God's wrath—and we will have only ourselves to blame for the eternal judgment we receive.

H. D. Nimz



And Then?

Matthew went to visit his grandfather and happily told him he had graduated from high school. “What do you want to do now, my boy; what are your plans for the future?” he asked him. “I want to study.” “Good idea. And then?” asked the grandpa. “Then I want to have a career.” “Very good. And then?” At that point, Matthew became a bit more thoughtful: “Well, I’ll probably get married and start a family then.” “I think that’s good. And then?” “Well, someday I’ll be retired, and I’d like to enjoy life and travel around the world a lot.” “And then?” Matthew was getting tired of the conversation; this question “And then?” was starting to get on his nerves. But he answered again, “I think then I’ll be like everyone else. I’ll get old and eventually I’ll die.” “Right,” said his grandpa thoughtfully, “but then what?”

Well, what then? Many people believe (and hope) that with death everything will be over. Others believe the reports of near-death experiences. The Bible tells us that man is destined once to die. After that, judgment follows (Hebrews 9:27). It then teaches us that after death, an infinite period of time, eternity, begins, which each person will spend either in hell or in heaven. In Ecclesiastes 3:11, the Bible actually states that God has placed the knowledge of eternity in the heart of every human being. But eternity and infinity are not terms for enlightened, modern-thinking people, are they? Yes, they are—and in fact, we know that they are! We encounter an inkling of infinity in various places, for example, when we try to understand the universe. Where does it begin, and where does it end? Since when does it exist? What was there before, and where does it all come from?

The part of the universe known to us is so unimaginably huge that one has stopped calculating in kilometers. The unit of measurement called a “light year” is used, which corresponds to approximately 9.5 trillion kilometers (5.88 trillion miles).

The sun is 150 million kilometers (93 million miles) away from the earth or 8 minutes of a light year. Our Milky Way has a maximum extension of about 100,000 light years. It is, however, only one of the estimated 100 billion galaxies in the universe. In fact, we don’t even know if the universe has an end at all. It also hardly matters since our minds have long since given up at these distances anyway. However, the universe gives us an idea of infinity in the dimension of “space.” Eternity is infinity in the dimension of “time.”

The greatest thing is that the One who created virtually infinite space is not infinitely far away at all! Even though we are much less than a speck of dust in the universe, God loves us with a love that is greater and purer than anything we know and can imagine, even when there is little that is lovable about us.

The very essence of God is divine love and, likewise, divine holiness. That is the complete opposite of sin in any form. That is why the question “And then what?” is so uncomfortable for us, because sin separates us from communion with God. This applies to this time now, as well as to eternity.

Nevertheless, no one must perish because of his sin, for Jesus bore our sin vicariously on the cross. That was the only viable way to do justice to both God’s love and God’s holiness. Only in this way could He make the way back to God possible for us.

“And then what?” This question is answered forever only when we find Jesus Christ. Wouldn’t it be worthwhile to seek Him? ■

The Reward of the Righteous

The Scriptures speak of a reward for the righteous. This reward is given to those who have served God faithfully. In the parable of the entrusted talents, we read: “So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, ‘Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.’ His lord said to him, ‘Well *done*, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:20–21). The Lord spoke the same words to the second servant. He was also given a reward for his faithful work.

On closer examination of this incident, we come to the conclusion that these servants had not acted in this way for the sake of a reward but out of an inner urge to honor the trust placed in them. They acted in all loyalty to their master, seeking nothing for themselves. The reward must have been a surprise for them.

The reward of the righteous is not measured by human standards but by divine standards. It is the recognition of every good deed we have done for Jesus’ sake. But it is not a merit but a free gift of God’s grace. So what is the reward? It is to be received into eternal glory with God, to be eternally united with Him. The deepest longing of the heart will then be satisfied when we are allowed to look into the face of God who loves us so much. An overflowing bliss will fill our hearts.

There will also be other reasons for the bliss of the righteous in heaven. As long as we live on this earth, we are weighed down by worries, toil, and work. Also, disappointments and oppositions come that want to stop us on the way to heaven. Nevertheless, it is important to go on ahead and not give up, because the reward beckons the overcomer. There in glory, earthly things can no longer weigh down the soul. Free from everything, the righteous stands in the eternal light, and that causes this inexpressible bliss. “And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no

more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain” (Revelation 21:4). Darkness will be gone, and the eternal morning will dawn, which will no longer be followed by night.

The devil often causes us inner distress in this life. He sets everything in motion to bring us down and to tempt us to walk away from our salvation. It is necessary to watch and be careful day and night so we don’t become the enemy’s prey. The righteous in heaven are forever free from this danger, for they are at home when they are with Jesus. The certainty that there is no longer any possibility of being unfaithful and lost will be an incredible joy. The time of hard struggles is over, and the day of crowning has come.

Another reason for bliss is being united with all the loved ones who have gone before us into eternity. Natural relationships will no longer exist there, but we will still recognize and love each other as children of God.

Fellowship with all the righteous who have ever lived on earth, and communion with the angels, along with the many prophets, apostles, saints, and great ones of the Kingdom of God, will be another of the highlights for us as the redeemed of the Lord. Among these all, there is a perfect unity—it is the true oneness in God. In a great choir, we will praise God and the Lamb who bought us with His blood.

Heaven is the place of future reward for the righteous. The Lord said: “Great *is* your reward in heaven” (Matthew 5:12). This is also the place where God and all holy angels reside. The Lord says of this place: “In my Father’s house are many mansions; if *it were* not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, *there* you may be also” (John 14:2–3).

The prospect of eternal reward should spur us to live before God in all faithfulness and humility, for the days of tests and trials are brief, but the reward endures forever. ■

The Hour of Decision

For several weeks, a preacher had been giving lectures in a big city. In these gatherings, a middle-aged woman was a regular attendee. The speaker had already been invited to many home Bible studies by various visitors and had gotten to know many of his listeners personally. This particular woman, though she came to the services, remained silent, listened attentively, made notes of the scripture passages—and left. One day, she approached him and handed him a note. She asked the pastor to visit a patient with her in the hospital. She provided the time and place.

At the appointed hour, he arrived at the hospital with a bouquet of flowers. The woman greeted him warmly and gratefully. They entered the hospital.

“You probably wonder why I asked you to come here with me. I would like an explanation from you, in the presence of my only daughter, who is suffering terribly, about why such profound suffering exists!” She softly opened the door. The pastor, somewhat apprehensive, entered the room with the deeply afflicted mother.

Once the door closed behind them, a soft, gentle voice from the bed asked, “Mom, is that you there?”

“Yes, my child. Do you also know who I have brought with me?”

“Perhaps the pastor you’ve told me so much about?”

“Yes, I asked him to visit you, and now you can talk to him yourself.”

He approached the bed of the patient. There lay a twenty-year-old woman who had succumbed to complete blindness due to a severe illness. She was not only blind but also unable to walk, and her only hope was that death would bring her relief.

The pastor, deeply moved, quietly placed the flowers on the bed. When the pale hands reached for them

and caressed the petals affectionately, with tears rolling down her cheeks from unseeing eyes, he had to turn away, genuinely affected. The mother stood aside from the bed, covered her face with her hands, and wept quietly to herself.

“Mother, why does it have to be this way? Why must I suffer so even though I am still so young?” The words came painfully from her lips. Then the mother wrapped her critically ill daughter in her arms, pressed her to her heart, and remained silent for a long, long time.

After the patient had calmed down, the clergyman bent over and took her hand. After a brief silence, the patient spoke: “Mother often comes to comfort me, trying to dispel my doubts that are consuming my soul. I used to sing and laugh, rejoicing like a child, and was grateful for all the joys of life. Not long ago, I was a nurse in this hospital myself. Then I suddenly fell ill. I fell out of bed in a fever, suffered a severe head injury, and—well, you can see for yourself! I’m just a ruin, unable to do the smallest task, and, it appears, condemned to death. If only I still had my eyesight! But everything is dark around me all the time! I can’t even see my mother. You have no idea how dark it is for me. I even had doubts about God and was ready to let go of Him because my countless prayers went unanswered.

Then one day, my mother came to me. She seemed different than usual. Even though I couldn’t see her, I felt how much she was suffering because of my affliction. She joyfully told me about your lectures; she even claimed that her life had undergone a great change. She was beginning to understand that all things work together for good for those who believe. She also told me about the hope of a glorious world in eternity—



where all suffering is supposed to end. Is it really as my mother described?”

The preacher took the Bible, this Book of comfort for all situations of life, this source of strength for the weak and worn, and read the words of the Master, “What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this” (John 13:7).

And he continued, “All who come into this world carry the seed of death within them. Some die in tender childhood, others fall victim to death in the midst of carefree youth; still others are torn from diligent work, even though they have not even remotely fulfilled their life’s mission. Only a few die old and sated with life. One thing is certain: we all must go when death knocks. But when a person believing in a better world, claiming the redeeming power of the Son of God in faith, closes their eyes to this world, then God will raise them up on that great Day of Resurrection.”

There was deep silence in the room for a long time. The patient lay still on her bed, and only the twitching corners of her mouth revealed that she was deeply moved. Suddenly, she said, “Please, read some words from the Scriptures that tell me clearly and certainly of such wonderful hope!”

And word by word, the clergyman read: “Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.”ⁱ - “For I will turn their mourning to joy, will comfort them, and make them rejoice rather than sorrow.”ⁱⁱ - “Blessed *are* the dead who die in the Lord.”ⁱⁱⁱ - “And this is the testimony: that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life.”^{iv} - “I am the resurrection

and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.”^v - “He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.”^{vi}

The girl had listened in silence to the words of the Holy Scriptures. Then she turned to the pastor, extended her hand, and thanked him wordlessly. Often the most dynamic encounters with God do not take place in solemn religious ceremonies, but where people break down under the overwhelming burden of life and reach out for help.

So it happened here as well. A simple hospital room, a terminally ill young woman who could be called into eternity at any moment, a mother bowed down by suffering who wept for her only daughter, and a messenger of God whose own words dwindled on his lips. However, as he read the clear words of the Almighty, they became a source of comfort. Here was a very small congregation—only three people. In such moments, God is near.

This first visit was also the last. Shortly thereafter, death gently released the young woman from her suffering. The mother was not dismayed nor distraught by this outcome. Her joyful anticipation was the hope of greeting her daughter again, drawing her close and embracing her on the day of resurrection, and giving thanks to the One who is the resurrection and the life.

M. Schmidt

i John 14:27

ii Jeremiah 31:13

iii Revelation 14:13

iv 1 John 5:11–12

v John 11:25

vi Revelation 21:7

Eternal Gain and Loss

“What profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matthew 16: 26)

This Scripture prompts us to ask: What is man’s soul that God places such a high value on it? The Word of God gives man clarity about who he is. It tells us that we are created in the image of God (see Genesis 1: 27). The spiritual part of man was created holy and pure by God and equipped with a free will, with the ability to choose and decide for himself. The soul of man is a spiritual being and therefore cannot be seen with the mortal eye. The soul is immortal; it lives on when the body dies.

The value God places on the soul

After humanity fell into sin, God said “For the redemption of their souls *is* costly” (Psalm 49:8). Man could

not redeem himself, and no man could have redeemed another, since all have sinned and need redemption. Even the angels were not able to do so. Therefore, the only begotten Son of God was chosen to accomplish the magnificent work of redemption.

In anticipation of this great atoning sacrifice and in reference to it, the people of Israel were commanded to offer sacrifices. This was done until the time of the great atoning sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the world. “But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law” (Galatians 4: 4).

Through sin, the immortal soul of man has been plunged into ruin. But thanks be to God that through



redemption by Jesus Christ, the soul can be saved from corruption. “For this purpose, the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). In 1 Peter 1:18–19, we read the glorious words: “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 a lamb without blemish and without spot.”

The value of an object is calculated according to what it costs. The redemption of the world cost the Lord Jesus Christ an extremely high price. There are millions of souls who have already perceived the high value of redemption.

The eternal loss of the soul in hell

Eternity is a big, meaningful word. Forever and ever, without ceasing, the soul will continue to live there. What will it mean for the one who has rejected the grace of God, when at the end of his life on earth he arrives there without having obtained salvation in Christ! The Bible teaches that the inevitable fate of unsaved humanity will be an eternity in hell. We find a description of the terrible condition of lost souls in Jude 13: “. . . raging waves of the sea, foaming up their own shame, wandering stars, for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness forever.”

What would those who have gone into eternity without God and without hope give if they could once again return to the time of grace! How differently they would then use their time!

The glorious gain of the redeemed soul in heaven

Let us now turn our gaze from this gloomy picture and cast a glance over into that life of blessedness and glory which follows a godly and holy life here on earth.

Through the eye of faith, we see God there, Christ, the holy angels, and the loved ones who have passed

away in the Lord, who have gone before us. We see our own name inscribed in the Book of Life. How glorious it is to think of this and to have the certainty that one day we will see our Savior and Redeemer face to face. Indeed, if we remain faithful to the Lord, we will one day walk the golden streets and hear the heavenly harps, and we ourselves will join in the heavenly song of praise. In John 12:26, Jesus says, “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him *My* Father will honor.”

Give up all sin and let the Lord save your soul!

We were created by God for a variety of purposes. But no human being was created for hell. However, where we will spend eternity depends on our spiritual condition at the time when we leave this world. People have lost their money and also their health and have gained them back, but if the soul is lost on that day, it is irretrievably lost, and its eternal fate and destiny is then sealed.

The Bible tells us clearly that to be carnally-minded is enmity against God. Satan has many people so blinded that they do not even recognize and appreciate their most precious and valuable possessions. They only chase after vain and perishable things and do not care about the salvation of their souls. Judas sold his soul for 30 pieces of silver. Also today, many sell their souls for things that have no eternal value.

In order to obtain salvation, God only requires the sinner to repent, confess, and forsake his sins. To all those who are willing to forsake sin, He offers salvation and eternal bliss. This is the greatest and most glorious gift a person can receive.

Have you already received this glorious salvation, dear Reader, or are you still living in your sins?

S. C. Boggs

Heaven!

Heaven, of which the Bible speaks, is the dwelling place of God. It is the residence of the angels and all those saved by Christ—indeed of all who have washed their robes and made them bright in the blood of the Lamb.

The glory of heaven for the redeemed will consist mainly in being allowed to be there with Jesus forever. When Jesus was still on Earth, He said: “If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also” (John 12:26). In John 17:24, He prayed: “Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am.”

Heaven will be the reward of the righteous. In this life there will be some struggle, some sadness, temptation, hardship and misery, some suffering, tears, and pain. But all this shall not be of lasting duration. Therefore: “Truly God *is* good to Israel, to such as are pure in heart” (Psalm 73:1). Already in this life, God dries our tears and gives us the oil of joy for sadness. But something even better awaits the righteous. “God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

Although we already love, serve, praise, and glorify God here on Earth, we will love Him even more perfectly there and serve Him day and night. “Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes” (Revelation 7:15–17).

When we see Jesus face to face there, we will regard everything else as nothing, just as it is said of the twenty-four elders who threw their crowns before the chair and said: “You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and

honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).

So it is not in vain that we serve God, even when we face struggles and temptations in this world. After all, we have Jesus who so willingly helps! And living with Him is far better than serving sin and being without hope. Even though we are challenged and tested in this life, let us remain faithful to God! Paul encourages us in 1 Corinthians 15:58: “Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.” Let us accept our mission and tell many people about the wonderful promise of God. Let us awaken their longing for what God has prepared for those who love Him. May many more leave the wrong way and turn to the heavenly goal!

Unfortunately, there are still so many people who are not on the way to heaven. Everyone would like to be happy and eternally blessed, and God wants that too. That is why He gave His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, not only for some but for all. Jesus is the way, the door to this eternal and glorious heavenly place. If we do not love Jesus here and do what He has commanded us in His Word, then we are not on the way to heaven. Jesus said: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Those who live sinful lives and do the works of the flesh (as described in Galatians 5:19–21) will not enter heaven, for no sinner will be admitted there. We need to know if we are on the way to heaven before we start the journey to eternity.

Yes, dear Reader, you too are on the journey to eternity. Have you already studied the roadmap to heaven and made sure that you are heading for the right destination? Take the Bible, the sure guide, because in it you will find the right instructions on how to reach that place of joy and bliss. ■



If That Were Me!

Many years ago, the son of a factory owner was on a business trip. In Königsfeld in the Black Forest, he had to wait for an hour. He went to the beautiful cemetery high in the hills. It was winter with deep snow, so the graves with their monuments and inscriptions were covered by it. Then he saw on a gravestone, which was somewhat protected from the snow by the branch of a tall fir tree, his last name “Mez.” He walked to it and wiped aside the snow lying on the other part of the gravestone to read the first name. And lo and behold, it was also his own first name: Carl.

This experience touched the young man deep in his heart. He could not rid himself of the thought: What if that really was me? What would be with my life and my eternity? He came to the living God, and found the Lord Jesus Christ and the forgiveness of his sins and became a happy and assured man.

If that were me! Perhaps you meet a funeral procession. Or you take part in a funeral, not readily—like most—but of necessity, because a relative or acquaintance of yours has passed. Do you think that one day that hour will come for you too? Do you ask yourself what your life and, above all, your eternity will look like?

Physical afflictions also remind you that you do not have a permanent place here on earth. And yet most people act as if all the others have to die, but they themselves will continue to live. Again and again, they think death will not strike them yet. They still have

enough time, and it would be best to put such thoughts of dying on the back burner if possible.

And then at some time, sooner or later, suddenly or after a shorter or longer illness, death comes. Even then, they try to close their eyes, listen to the reassuring speeches of their family and friends, and realize, perhaps only at the last moment, that it is now really over and that it is too late.

Are you also one who goes through life so superficially, and pushes aside the seriousness of life and eternity with a wave of the hand, someone who thinks only of the earthly, and whose heart has no place for eternal and godly thoughts?

In the Bible, we are told about a rich farmer who did the same (see Luke 12:16–21). He then died suddenly, and Jesus denotes him with the word, “Fool!” Such fools abound on the wide earth, and perhaps you are one of them. Remember that Moses prayed the words in Psalm 90:12, “So teach *us* to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.” The right wisdom consists in thinking about eternity, not forgetting it, but arranging your life according to it.

Jesus also said: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26). An old saying goes: “Money lost—nothing lost! Time lost—much lost! Soul lost—all lost!” In all circumstances, at all times, under all conditions, the most crucial thing is your immortal soul! Do not forget it and take care of it!

Walther Zilz

How Will You Fare On *Judgment Day?*

In Revelation 20:11–15, we find a description of God’s final judgment, at which all people must appear before God to receive their reward. The world has already seen many horrible events, terrible earthquakes, pestilence, and wars. But the greatest event is yet to come: the great judgment of the world. Jesus tells us in Matthew 25:31–46 that when He comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, all nations will be gathered before Him. Then He will separate them all, placing the righteous on His right and the evil on His left.

Life is serious, but how few take their lives seriously! God in His great mercy has done everything He could to make the way to Him possible for all people through Jesus’ suffering and death. His Spirit and Word show us the way, and His grace is sufficient for every person to be saved. Jesus gave His blood for all people, but very few let the Savior enter their hearts. How sad!

Dear Soul, how will you fare on Judgment Day? Have you already been cleansed by Jesus’ blood? Do you have the assurance that all your sins and guilt have been cleansed by the blood of the Lamb? And are you still clean today? Have you perhaps stained your clothes again? Blessed are you if you are reconciled to God through Jesus and remain reconciled to the end! Then you need not fear the eternal Judge; then you can meet Him with joy.

Revelation 20:12 states, “And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.” All the deeds of men are recorded in these books. What will be revealed there! Here on Earth,

many an evil deed remains hidden from earthly judges. Some people go free because their guilt cannot be proven. But there, everything will be revealed. Nothing will remain hidden. Everything will come to light. What horror will seize the person who did not confess their sins here in life and obtain forgiveness through Jesus’ blood! It will be especially hard for the person who knew the way to salvation and indifferently ignored it.

When the books are opened and people’s whole lives are revealed, what weeping and gnashing of teeth there will be! Today, God offers grace, but at that time, there is no more grace. Today, we can still run to Jesus, but with death all opportunities are gone. It will then be eternally too late. The writer of the letter of Hebrews tells us: “It is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). Many a person has tried to turn to God on their deathbed, but they could no longer do it. They had missed the time of grace; it was too late! “They were judged according to their works.” God will pronounce a just judgment but also a very harsh one on the wicked and sinner who has forfeited their salvation.

“Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts” (Hebrews 3:15). Tomorrow may be too late. You don’t know if you will be alive tomorrow. The writing in the books will prove it. Today, the writing that condemns you can still be erased with the blood of Jesus that flowed on Calvary.

In Revelation 20:12, we also read about another book, the *Book of Life*. Whoever was not found in the *Book of Life* was thrown into the lake of fire. When we are born again by God’s Spirit and Word, God writes us in the Lamb’s *Book of Life*. But if we sin again, our

name will consequently be erased from that Book of Life.

When the people of Israel sinned against God and made themselves the golden calf, God wanted to destroy them. Then Moses pleaded with the Lord: “Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written” (Exodus 32:31–32). The Lord said to Moses, “Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book” (verse 33). Here we have clear proof that we are erased from the Book of Life when we sin. If man

were to die in such a state before returning to God through godly sorrow and repentance, he would be eternally lost.

Our text in Revelation 20 tells us that all whose names were not found in the Book of Life were cast into the lake of fire. This shows us that after death there will be no more room for repentance. So there is no more time of grace after this life, as some think. With death, our fate is sealed. As the tree falls, so it remains.

Oh, that many souls may still be warned, hurry to the Lord, and seek and find mercy before it will be too late!

Karl Arbeiter

Are You Ready?

One day, old Mr. Rothschild in Frankfurt, Germany had one of his chief officials called into his office and asked him how much time he needed to prepare for a journey to America. The Rothschild company wanted to establish a branch there. After the official had considered the matter, he said, “I will be ready in ten days.”

“Very well,” Rothschild replied, “I will notify you if I decide to use your services.”

Another gentleman from the office was called, and the same question was asked him. “I ask three days’ notice,” replied the latter.

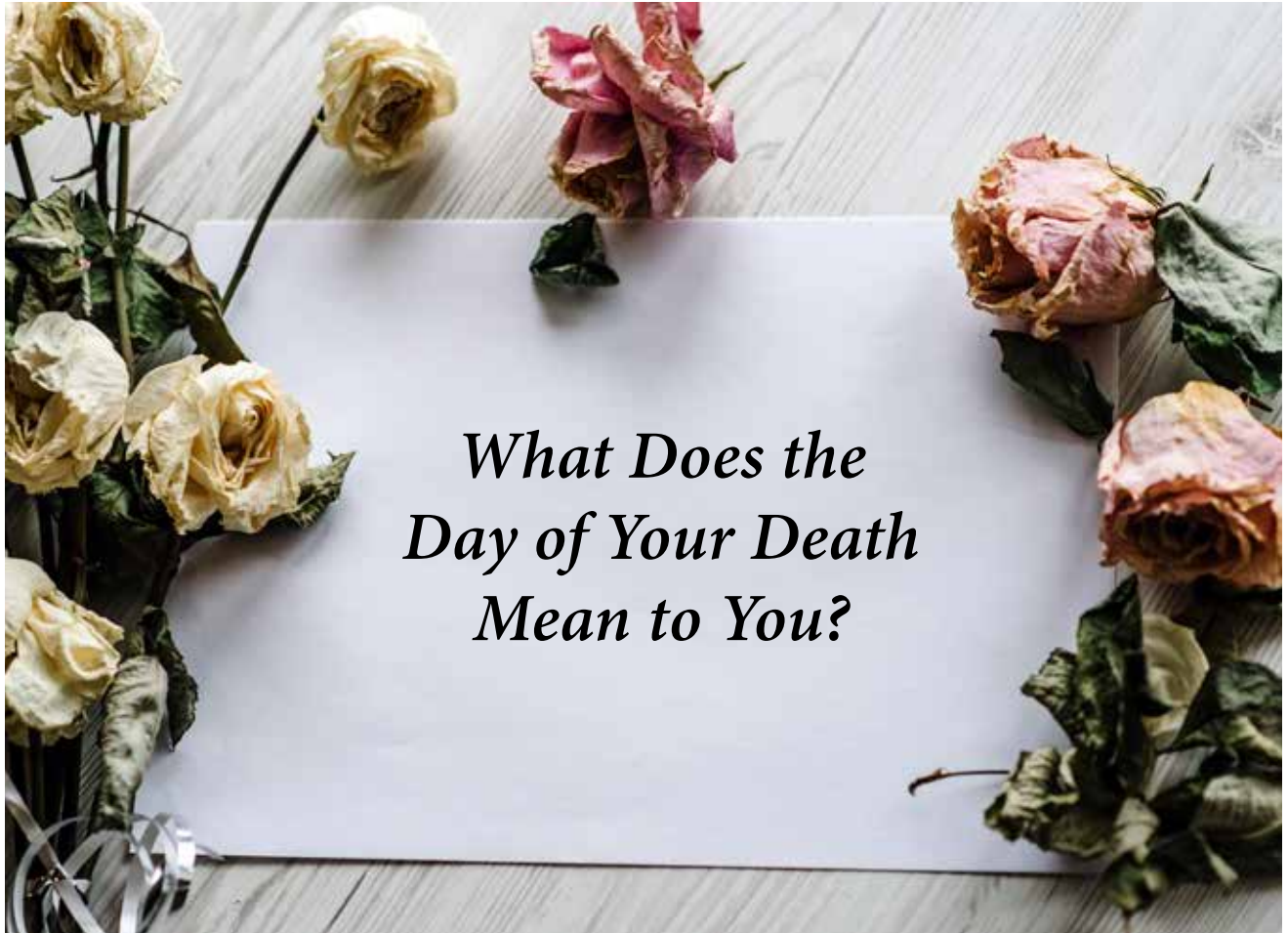
A third was called, but this one gave a brief and definite answer, “I am ready at once!”

“Good, very good,” Rothschild replied, adding, “From today on, you are a partner in our new firm in San Francisco. You will leave tomorrow morning and preside over our business there.”

It was Mr. Julius May who, by his willingness and efficiency, laid the foundation of a great fortune.

If only all men were so willing to listen to the call of our Lord and Savior and to turn to Him when He says, “Come!” and from then on do His will!

He says, “Follow Me!” So let us be faithful in following Him, watching and praying for His return, for He commands His disciples, “Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect” (Matthew 24:44). ■



What Does the Day of Your Death Mean to You?

Death is an inescapable fact of life. Whether rich or poor, educated or not, everyone's life will one day come to an end. The transition from here to eternity is not only the most certain but also the most important time in our lives.

Regardless of cause, perhaps a prolonged illness or a sudden heart attack, our death is defined by a single, crucial fact: whether we die in our sins or in peace with God.

In John 8: 21–24, Jesus emphasizes three times, that His unbelieving accusers would die in their sin. Judas, who betrayed his Savior for money before ending his own life—he died in his sin! King Saul, who rejected God and sought refuge in spiritualism before killing himself—he died in his sin! Ananias and Sapphira, who sullied their lips with lies—they died in their sin!

It is not only in these extreme cases that people die in sin. In fact, every life ends in sin if one dies without repentance, forgiveness of sin, and hope of eternal life. If we die in our sin, we will be consigned

to the deepest darkness of God's painful absence—to damnation!

Many believe that eternity will not be that bad for them because they have done their duty, committed no crimes, and maintained a good reputation. The error in their calculations, however, is that these things are not enough in God's eyes. For instance, the wealthy man mentioned in Luke 16 certainly had a good reputation, but he died in his sin and ended up suffering eternally because he had received neither forgiveness of his sins nor peace in God.

If you, dear reader, wish to pass into eternity one day confident of your salvation, take this opportunity to go to Jesus Christ, who died on the cross for you, and ask Him to forgive your sins. Do not wait until you are old, your strength wanes, and your last hour arrives. Instead, come to Him in childlike faith. He is ready to forgive everything. Do not count on doing this on your deathbed! Satan catches the most people by getting them to put off seeking salvation.

*The day of your death will be a day of terror
if you lived in sin and threw away God's grace!*

If we exit this world without Jesus, gloom and horror await us on the other shore, where we will be bound with chains of darkness to wait for the day on which everyone will be judged. It is so important to prepare for the day we die. Let us use our time of grace wisely, seeking Jesus and holding fast in faith until we have crossed through this vale of tears and arrived in the land of eternal joy!

*The day of your death will be a day of joy
if you are a child of God!*

As children of God, we are not spared the pain of death; it is, after all, the last enemy we face. However, regardless of the pain, conflict, and suffering we go through in death, our hearts will remain filled with heavenly joy.

We will see Jesus! We will see the One who died for us on Calvary, who freed us from our sins and eternal damnation, and who is the reason for our hope and the object of our longing! We will see Him in person and be with Him forever! It is hard to comprehend the wonders that await those who have served their Lord!

*The day of your death opens the door
from believing to seeing!*

While precious, faith in Jesus is incomplete in one aspect, which only resolves through death. "For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face" (1 Corinthians 13:12). In the vale of tears, we often feel that Jesus is both near and beyond our reach. Only once death lifts the veil from our eyes will we be able to see what we held fast to in faith: the One we loved more than anything else in the world!

*The day of your death will open the door
to the home prepared for you!*

Jesus said, "In My Father's house are many mansions" (John 14:2). We will make our home in mansions of light, entering them as children of light who always walked in the light of God's presence. Here on Earth, it often feels like we have no lasting home,

but in our Father's house, we will have an eternal home.

Believers have a deep longing for this pure, everlasting inheritance. Paul writes, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him" (1 Corinthians 2:9). This glory is intended for those who honored and venerated God in this life.

*The day of your death is a homecoming
if you are a child of God!*

Our home is not on this earth, and as children of God, we know what Jesus was talking about when He said, "In the world you will have tribulation" (John 16:33). Here on earth, we face trials and tribulations and various conflicts, and the pilgrims' path is rough and steep, but we can keep our eye on the goal: eternal glory, where we can rest in our forever homes, where all our longings will be sated, where "we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:17).

We will joyfully reunite with our loved ones, never more to part. The bonds of love, connecting us to other saved souls, will never be torn, and all tears will be dried. What a contrast to life on earth, where death severs even the tightest bonds! Blessed is the one who can say:

*Shall we meet beyond the river,
Where the surges cease to roll?
Where in all the bright forever,
Sorrow ne'er shall press the soul?*

As wonderful as it will be to reunite with those who went before us, it will be an even greater joy to see Jesus, worship Him, and spend eternity in His presence. Jesus, the Lamb, will be the song of the heavens and the substance of all salvation!

What does the day of your death mean to you? Does it offer you comfort and hope in the midst of the suffering here on Earth? Is it your golden gate to the treasures of eternal glory? If so, you can joyfully go your way, without any fear of death or the terrors of hell! ■

*Believers have a
deep longing
for this pure,
everlasting inheritance.*

I Gave Him My Sinful Life

To the glory of God, I want to share my testimony and tell how wonderfully God has worked in my life. I grew up in a Mennonite Colony in Bolivia until the age of 13. Then, my parents decided to move away, and we started attending the services of the Church of God. When I was 14 years old, God spoke to me, and I sought Him. I tried to serve God to the best of my knowledge, but then I chose friends who had a negative influence on me. I was also confronted with pornography and immediately became addicted to it. I tried to break free of it, but I kept falling back into it.

Shortly before I got married, I got free of porn but once again, it didn't take long before the enemy had me captive again. I kept trying to break free, but because I was trying to do it in my own strength, I couldn't escape it. Then, I entered a period where God stopped speaking to me. I was deeply in bondage to video games, movies, and pornography. I kept praying to God repeatedly, asking Him not to let me die in my sins.

During our Spring Services this year, I earnestly prayed again for God to speak to me. In His mercy, He graciously responded, and I was able to surrender my sinful life to Him. God also showed me that He wanted to lead me deeper and that He required a complete surrender to Him. I was ready to give Him everything, and I experienced how He filled me with His Spirit. Since that day, I have been able to live a victorious life! Indeed, God has taken away all of Satan's power over me.

Dear reader, if you are living in bondage to sin and want to be free, stop trying to do it in your own strength. You will only attain a victorious life if you let God work it in you.

God bless you,

*David Friessen
Ibnias, Bolivia*



I Know Where I Am Going!

Hans was a real boys' boy. His father and mother often said, "Hans, Hans, where is this going to end!" But Hans couldn't help himself. If there was a prank to be played anywhere, he was sure to be part of it.

Finally, summer vacation was just around the corner. Hans wanted to go to the seaside for a youth retreat. So many activities were planned there! If only the wait wasn't so long! But even the longest wait passes, and finally they were on the Island of Borkum.

The retreat touched Hans in a strange way. In the morning, small groups went out to the dunes with their New Testaments. A passage was read, and the group leader would speak to them about it. Hans was gripped by the message. He realized that there was a voice speaking to him, but he did not want this voice to become too loud. He realized that his young life would have to change, and that did not suit him at all.

In their free time, there was a lot of horsing around. They had been told many times not to climb on the flat roof of the house. The roof could break through, and if the weather was bad, rain would come into the halls and rooms. But prohibiting something made the temptation even more enticing for Hans.

One afternoon, the group came out of the dining room. Hans got a crazy idea. He decided to go up on the dining room roof and stomp around. He wanted to show off. But before he knew it, he fell off and broke his foot. At the hospital, he got a massive cast. In the evening, he was brought back to the house.

In the following days, there was a remarkable sight to be seen. Hans, with his arms slung around their shoulders, was carried by two boys. They took him up the dunes for their daily Bible study. Afterwards, while the others went to the beach, Hans was left lying alone. He couldn't join in. And again he heard that voice inside him. Someone was speaking to him.

One day, I come upon him, but he didn't even notice me. I saw the

little black book in his hand. I sat down beside him. From afar, we heard the other boys playing. We talked about the voice that invites us to take that step towards God.

After four weeks, we all drove back home. The plaster cast on Hans was gone, but he had changed completely.

Then one day, Hans' father came and brought me the news that he was in the hospital for an operation. He requested that I visit him. The following day, I was too busy to go. When I finally went to visit him, his mother was standing in the corridor of the hospital with a pale face. I asked about Hans. Hans had just passed away. I couldn't believe that this boy who walked over tables and chairs was no longer there.

He had not survived the operation. I tried finding words of comfort for his mother, but I could hardly speak myself. His mother told me about his last minutes. He had grabbed her hand and said:

"Mother, promise me one thing. If I have to go away from you now, you mustn't cry. Look, Mother, I know where I'm going!"

When his mother looked at him questioningly, he said, "I am going to my Savior!" Then he quietly passed away.

Reflecting, I went home. "Yes, Hans could die like that," I thought. He had accepted Jesus into his heart.

This story reminds us again that we need to be ready to meet Jesus at any time! ■



The Twelve Apostles— **NATHANAEL—BARTHOLOMEW**

Name and Person

Nathanael is named in all lists of apostles as Bartholomew. Only in the Gospel of John is he always referred to as Nathanael. Bartholomew is a Hebrew name and means “son of Talmi.” The name Nathanael means “God has given.” Thus, he is Nathanael, the son of Talmi. Bartholomew, then, was his family name.

There is not much written in the Bible about Nathanael. Actually, only in the Gospel of John do we find a few details that give us a clue as to who Nathanael was. He was from the small town of Cana in Galilee, where Jesus performed His first miracle. Cana was near Nazareth, and Nathanael was probably also a fisherman by trade.

Nathanael must have been a close friend of Philip, because the first thing Philip did after meeting Jesus was to go and get Nathanael. Philip knew his friend Nathanael and was convinced that the news about the Messiah would interest him greatly. Apparently, at that time, Nathanael, like the other first disciples, was down by the Jordan River where John the Baptist was baptizing. Philip, in fact, found him very quickly and joyfully brought him to Jesus.

In the statement that Philip uses to tell Nathanael about Jesus, we find a remarkable fact about Nathanael. Philip says to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote.” The Scriptures seemed to mean a lot to Nathanael. Philip addressed him with the Scriptures because he knew that Nathanael was familiar with them and would only be convinced by them. Philip did not say, “Nathanael, I have found someone who

will change your life” but rather, “Someone Moses and the prophets wrote about.”

Nathanael was a seeker. Even before he knew Jesus, he studied the Word of God and sought the truth. Perhaps he even studied it together with Philip. They were friends and possibly also went together into the wilderness, to John the Baptist, to hear him and learn from him. They both had a healthy interest in the truth.

Prejudices

“Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” This question, which has almost become a proverb, came from Nathanael’s mouth when Philip found him. He was a sincere, searching man, and yet he had certain prejudices.

Nazareth was indeed not an important city, but an insignificant village. Someone writes, “Although Nazareth is situated on the slopes of the Galilean hills, it is not a town that is fondly remembered. In Jesus’ time, it was even worse. The Judeans looked down on all the Galileans, and they in turn looked down on the inhabitants of Nazareth.”

Although Nathanael came from what was probably an even smaller town, he nevertheless shared the general disdain for Nazareth. It was unthinkable that the Messiah would come from such a town.

Prejudices! How they can deceive us! Many fall for this false way of thinking and then simply have a wrong view of certain things, places, people, or the like. Most Israelites rejected their Messiah because of prejudice and wrong ideas. They could not imagine that the Messiah would come from Nazareth. “How? Is He not Joseph’s son? Aren’t his brothers and sis-

Don't form an opinion until you really know the truth.

ters with us? And they are ordinary; how could He be a Messiah?—Search and you'll find that no prophet arises from Galilee!" That is how the people talked, and Jesus was rejected.

Many today are steeped in prejudice. People label others and put them in certain "boxes" without knowing their true colors and motives. The worst thing is when we spread ideas or opinions, and thus fuel the "rumor mill" without really knowing the background or the people.

Let's be factual and level-headed and not judge. Don't form an opinion until you really know the truth. "Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking" (1 Peter 2: 1).

A true Israelite

Thank God, Nathanael's prejudices did not run so deep that they prevented him from seeking the truth further. How did Philip convince him? With a simple invitation, "Come and see." Look at it, determine for yourself, and form your opinion based on facts! Isn't that also a good way to fight prejudice today?

Nathanael went, and what he then experienced surpassed anything he could have imagined up to that point. Jesus spoke about him as if he knew him very well. What a testimony: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!"

"How do You know me?"—"When you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Why under the fig tree? It was probably the place where Nathanael pondered the Scriptures. In those days, houses were small and often consisted of only one room. Cooking was often done in the house, with the fire burning, so it was

stuffy and full of smoke inside. Trees were planted around the houses to keep them cool and to provide shade. Fig trees were especially good for this—they brought delicious fruit and plenty of shade. They grow six to nine meters high. Their branches have many leaves, extend on all sides, hang low, and can grow up to nine meters long. A fig tree near the house provided a large, shady, and sheltered place outside. It was a kind of private place in the fresh air, where one could reflect in peace and be alone.

Nathanael sought communion with God under the fig tree. In this quiet place where no one saw or disturbed him, he studied the Law and the Prophets. Here he drew near to God in prayer and asked Him for instruction and advice. Probably no one saw all this, but Jesus did. Nathanael did not make a show of serving God and had a sincere heart. That is why Jesus called him "an Israelite indeed." This convinced Nathanael and took away all remaining doubts:

"Rabbi, You are the Son of God!"

How about you? Can Jesus find you under the "fig tree" too? Will He also say about you, "Behold, an Israelite indeed"?

Let us put aside all prejudices and instead spend time "under the fig tree," alone with our God, in His fellowship, in His presence, filled with His Word. We may talk to God and let Him talk to us until our hearts are filled and we worshipfully exclaim, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King! Reign in my heart and life!"

*Eduard Albrecht
Eppingen, Germany
Text: John 1: 45–51*

Growing Older Gracefully

CONCLUSION



Over the last few months, we have talked about what it is like to grow old and how it is even better to age gracefully. Not only do we wish to experience this blessing ourselves, but we also want to convey it to those who share our aging process.

It is wonderful when we can gratefully and happily walk the last stages of our life's journey. In doing so, we hope that silent observers will also be inspired to strive to age gracefully.

We have considered what we want our aging to be like and also heard advice from other people about the way in which they would like to grow old. Sometimes growing old can be scary, especially when we think of all the things we should keep in mind and not forget. The important thing is to know that we are not alone. God is always with us, no matter where we are or what is happening.

An old, yellowed devotional page from 1981 was given to me. In it I read about a young man named

Heinrich Giesen, who was to conduct a worship service and was nervous and anxious. "I waited with a heavy heart for the service to begin. As I did so, I must have sighed heavily, as a preacher often does before a service. Then Brother Schmitt approached and placed his hand on my shoulder and said, 'Heinrich, *He* is here!' That was all he said, but with that he said everything. I understood. Everything was all right."

He is Here

"Heinrich, He is here!"—To make it a little more personal, just put your name here and read it to yourself for encouragement: "_____, He is here!"—God is with us. Whatever we face and whatever challenges may come our way, God's Word reminds us, "I will never leave you nor forsake you" (Hebrews 13:5). God is always there! Whether we are sitting in a waiting room or alone in our own homes, God is there. Whether we understand our children or our children understand

us or not, God is there! Even when our lives turn out differently than expected, God is still there! There is no moment nor situation where God is not with us.

In the song, "There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus, no, not one! No, not one!" we sing in the third verse: "There's not an hour that He is not near us, no, not one! No, not one! No night so dark, but His love can cheer us, no, not one! No, not one!"

There are hours when we may not immediately feel God's presence, in the sense of the song, "E'en when I am not feeling Thy love or might," but still He is there! We can end the song with confidence, "Still Thou art safely leading, though dark the night." God is there! Even when we walk through "dark valleys," we are not alone. David puts it this way in the 23rd Psalm, verse 4: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You *are* with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me." Even then the words "*He is there!*" apply.

He Helps Us

The Bible emphasizes again and again that God helps us. This is His promise: to stand by us during our journey through life. On our way, we encounter problems and obstacles that often accumulate with age. Even when we ask for changes and for the removal of difficulties, this does not always happen as we imagine. Nevertheless, God assures us, "I will help you!" *He is there!*

The apostle Paul found himself in a very difficult situation. He spoke of a "thorn in the flesh" that he

wanted to be rid of and asked God to remove it, several times. However, God could not remove this thorn because it was necessary for Paul. God knows the reason why certain things happen, and He does not make mistakes. Paul himself writes about this: "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness'" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

*"And He said to me,
'My grace is sufficient for you,
for My strength is made perfect
in weakness.'"*

in other words: God will help! *He is there!* Paul finally understood his situation and accepted it. He continues in verse 10: "Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in

distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." No matter what happens, as long as God helps us, everything will turn out well.

He is here, and He helps us. These are two important thoughts that we should remember. In the Old Testament, there is a verse in the book of Isaiah (41:10) where *He*, God Himself, speaks: "Fear not, for I *am* with you [*He is there*]; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you [*He helps us*], I will uphold you with My righteous right hand." If we read this verse again, we will realize that there is no reason to fear because God takes care of us.

We want to contribute, as much as we can, to the process of aging gracefully in a blessed way. With God's help, we want to radiate joy and confidence. On the other hand, we also know that *He is here, and He helps us.* This is a tremendous gift!

Harry Semenjuk



Wayward Children

Part 11

M. Schmelzle

The Hardened Heart

Those children who have always been a comfort to their parents may think that they have a special relationship with them, and therefore may be hard on their siblings who have been disobedient.

Sometimes this problem exists in congregations as well. Brothers and sisters who have had little experience with open sinful living, may lack the right compassion for others who seek God with a penitent heart. More or less, people express through their reaction and behavior what the older brother in this parable expressed:

Luke 15:29–30: So he answered and said to *his* father, “Lo, these many years I have been serving you; I never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends. But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.”

He boasted of himself and his goodness and obedience. “See, I have served you for so many years and never transgressed your commandment.” With people who appear more virtuous than others, there is a great danger that they may be conceited about it. It may be that the son was exaggerating wildly in claiming that he had *never* transgressed his father’s commandment, for if that had been true, he would not have been as stiff-necked in his response to his father’s plea as he

was now. Those who have served God for a long time and have remained faithful have a lot to humbly be thankful for, but nothing to be proud of.

The son reproached his father and accused him of misconduct. He was in a very bad mood toward his younger brother. Some “good” people tend to get caught up in this sin of pride. They look down on those who have not kept their reputation as pure as they themselves did, even if the other person has sincerely bowed before God in deepest repentance and asked for forgiveness, and his new life proves that he now has a new heart. This behavior does not testify to the spirit of Christ but to that of the Pharisees.

Our text states that the older son did not want to go in to celebrate. He didn’t even want to call the younger son “brother” but called him “this son of yours,” which sounds quite arrogant. Let us pay attention to how we approach those who have received new life from God, who have “come home,” bowed before the Father, and whom the Father Himself has received as His children. Often human thoughts may come: “It can’t be that *this* person is now a child of God.” “Others, yes, but not *that* person.” “I know his life so far. There is no way that this person is a child of God!” It is impossible to accept that the old has passed away and that everything has become new. Let us remember what the Scripture says: “The things which are impossible with men are

“Son, you are always with me,
and all that I have is yours.”

possible with God.” Let us recognize the miracles of God and accept them as such!

In this context, someone who comes to my mind is Ananias of Damascus, who is an example for us. God told him that the evil, bad, dangerous Saul from Tarsus was now His chosen instrument! Saul? The one who had so many Christians on his conscience, who went from place to place hounding and persecuting Christians? Ananias received the order from God to seek out Saul, and Ananias did it. Whenever I come to this passage in my Bible reading, I marvel at the way Ananias addressed Saul: “Brother Saul, the Lord has sent me” (Acts 9:17). Does this have something to say to us? It has something to say to me. Until the opposite were to be established, this Saul was a brother in the Lord to Ananias! God in His love and grace can change any person. Let us not set limits where there are no limits!

Luke 15:31–32: “And he said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours. It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found.’”

The older brother particularly emphasized his younger brother’s guilt and harbored resentment. He could not accept that his father was so kind to his brother. Sometimes these silent rebels come to the

parents and are full of accusations and charges. How should we respond? Let us learn from this father. How gracious and kind he was in his behavior toward this rebellious son. With his bad temper, the older brother showed that he had no more respect for his father than the younger brother had had. He lectured his father and refused to give in to his request. The father was generous, even now to the self-righteous older son. He had enough love for both sons. He did not call him an ungrateful son but tried to understand him and help him to be a bighearted brother.

In his anger, the older son derogatorily referred to his younger brother as “this son of yours.” He treats him as even less than he already was. It is always easier to treat someone badly when he is already down. But the father countered “this son of yours” with “your brother.” He showed the son that the reason for the anger was not material possessions, because “all that I have is yours;” nor was the problem that the older son could not spend enough time with him (“you are always with me”). The problem was the older brother’s hardened heart. The older brother had lost his compassion. To have compassion for others, we must see them as they really are and not as we want them to be or as we think they should be.

- *To be continued* -

The Remaining Time

“Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.” (1 Peter 4: 1–2)

Peter gives a great command to his readers, as well as to us, namely that we should not live the remaining time of our lives in the lusts of men but according to the will of God. You cannot do anything more meaningful with your time.

The time a person has in this world is short. This has caused people to think, and some have made remarkable statements about it.

Some say, “Time cannot be taken; God gives it to us for free. And it is actually not just a little time that we have but a lot of time that we don’t even use.” “Time . . . is days strung together, and each day is a vessel that we can pour into.” “Our time is a great alarm clock! Through it you can become rich, including rich in God!”

Even the Bible makes profound statements about time. Paul wrote to his brethren in Corinth, “But this I say, brethren, the time *is* short” (1 Corinthians 7: 29). To the Colossians, he exhorts, “Walk in wisdom toward those *who are* outside, redeeming the time” (Colossians 4: 5).

In John 9: 4, Jesus gives us a glimpse of what His attitude was at the time: “I must work the works of Him who sent Me while it is day;

the night is coming when no one can work.” In Galatians 6: 10, we have another admonition: “Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.” How true all these thoughts are!

In 1 Peter 4, we are reminded of two very significant periods of time: the “time that is past” and the “time that is yet to come.” These two periods of time are a part of every person’s life. What has or has not happened in your past and mine cannot be changed. It has already been won or lost. For this very reason, everyone should seriously ask themselves how and for what purposes they want to use the “time that is left.” Let us therefore recognize the opportunities and possibilities to create lasting values in the time that we still have left.

On a Christian calendar, someone wrote a statement asking people to think about what should come first in their lives. We should not be preoccupied with trivial matters because we lose valuable time in our lives and could suffer great losses. That’s how some people end up with nothing at the end of their lives. Complaining about the lost time is useless then, because the time is gone! One can-

not catch up the missed profits any more.

In 1 Peter 4: 3, Peter mentions the “lusts of men.” How much precious time is sacrificed for these worldly, transient lusts! To all appearances, some of the Christians who came from the Gentiles were not yet completely detached from them either. With great earnestness, Peter seeks to rebuke them, saying, “For we *have* spent enough of our past lifetime in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in lewdness, lusts, drunkenness, revelries, drinking parties, and abominable idolatries” (1 Peter 4: 3). These are not only time-wasters, but they place our whole lives in a very dark place that neither we nor others can take pleasure in. A poet says it well:

*The time is short, the years are flying
Like tempest clouds across the sky.
Today we smile and weep and labor,
Tomorrow we in silence lie.*

Isn’t that a very meaningful allusion to the time that is left? The “good journey” begins when we start living according to God’s will. But what does God want? He wants all people to receive help and come to the knowledge of the truth. This includes the knowledge of self, the

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knowledge of sin, the knowledge of salvation, the knowledge of Christ and God, and the knowledge of His will and His saving grace.

The will of God is that we seek forgiveness and peace in Jesus Christ and begin to serve Him, and serving God means living according to His will. This is the most valuable thing we can do and gain from our time, and it is precisely for this that time is given to us. Our time is really a time of grace, and God's Word tells us, to look "carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God" (Hebrews 12:15). Think of the hand's position on your life's clock and be mindful of the time you have left!

*Today you live, seek salvation;
Ere tomorrow, for it may change!*

Dear Soul, take this to heart! And if you have lived your whole life without God, let it be enough and make the resolution today to start with God and to live the remaining time according to His will. There is nothing greater and more rewarding in this life. Whoever does not want to die without Jesus must live with Him and for Him.

Friedrich Krebs

One day when James M. Black (1856-1938) walked through the impoverished part of his hometown of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, he saw a little girl sitting on the doorstep of a dilapidated house. Her tattered dress, torn shoes, and sad demeanor told their own story; they alluded to alcoholic parents and a dwelling undeserving of the name "home."

Addressing the child, he asked if she would like to come to Sunday School. At this question, a longing appeared in the child's eyes, and she replied softly, "Yes, I would like to come, but . . ."

Mr. Black understood the yearning in the child's heart. The next day, a package arrived for the girl with a new dress and shoes. The following Sunday, Bessie was at the children's church service and many Sundays after that.

One Sunday, as attendance was being called, every child responded except Bessie. Her name was called again, but still there was no answer. James soon learned that the girl was ill, too sick to come. The thought troubled him. What if this girl would never respond again? What if she were to die? Would she be present when the final roll call is made before God's throne?

Then he realized that, subconsciously, he had spoken these words in response:

*When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound,
And time shall be no more,
And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;
When the saved of earth shall gather
Over on the other shore,
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.
When the roll is called up yonder,
When the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there.*

He liked the words very much. He sat down at the piano, and in a short time, the song was complete.

The little girl did indeed pass away shortly afterward. But the song inspired by the girl's illness still lives on and is sung in many countries. ■

Prayer Topics for 2024

P *Prayer in the Last Days.—Prayer is essential in the life of every Christian for our faith to grow and not wither. Our lives in Christ need daily encouragement and direction for us to weather the storms of life. As we look around us, we find we are living in a society that has become like living in the days of Noah. The Lord Jesus clearly stated that in the last days the love to God would grow cold. Many would turn from God and His ways to the self-centered ways of the world (Matthew 24:36–39). What are we to do as servants of God, and how are we to pray and be saved from the coming flood of God’s judgment? This prayer week, we wish to focus on learning from Noah, who obeyed God and saved his family from the great flood. May his life of faith inspire each of us to lead godly and holy lives of prayer and be found faithful on the great day of the Lord’s return (v. 44).*

Harry Klinger
Winnipeg, Manitoba

1. Walking with God in Prayer

Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God. (Genesis 6:9 ESV)

What a wonderful testimony of Noah’s faith, who lived in a very wicked time. The earth was filled with wickedness and violence to the extent that man’s heart was seeking evil continually. God was grieved that He had created humankind and planned to destroy life on earth with a great flood (Genesis 6:5–7). “But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD” (v. 8)! In our fallen world today, we see the increasing rise of sin, where the works of the flesh are actively promoted. As the

darkness of the last days increases (2 Timothy 3:1–5), will we be found blameless and righteous in Christ? Are we walking with God and leading a vibrant prayer life with the Lord Jesus?

Let us pray:

- For God’s nearness and guidance in these last days to walk in faith as Noah did in his time.
- To follow sound doctrine and live godly lives despite any trials or persecution (2 Timothy 3:10–15).
- To hear God’s voice through His living Word in our daily lives (2 Timothy 3:16–17).

2. Growing by Faith in Christ

By faith Noah was divinely warned of things not yet seen. (Hebrews 11:7)

Noah’s life focused on God, and he heeded God’s voice to build an ark despite not seeing any floodwaters. Is our faith in these last days focused on God and His Word? Like Noah, let us be found serving God with all of our heart when our life ends or He returns to judge the world. We are called to be watchful and prayerful all the days of our lives, as Jesus warns in Luke 21:34–36. God wishes to form His children to grow in grace by faith. In Christ, we have access to a well of grace to

live holy lives, overcome evil, and please God in our daily walk with Him. Let us listen to the Spirit who wishes to direct our lives by faith.

Let us pray:

- To diligently seek God in faith and expect His reward and blessing (Hebrews 11:6).
- To obtain a good testimony before God and belong to the heroes of faith (Hebrews 11:1–3).
- To access the bounty of grace for our daily walk with Jesus and rejoice in this living hope (Romans 5:1–2).

3. Living with a Faith that Works

By faith, Noah was moved with godly fear and prepared an ark. (Hebrews 11:7)

Noah listened to God's voice with godly fear and prepared an ark for the saving of his household! He not only had faith in God, but he acted on it as God commanded him. James teaches us that faith without works is dead (James 2:20–26). Once we are saved by grace, good works must flow from our faith in God. He has prepared good works for each of us to live by, as Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8–10. In Noah's case, he worked diligently preparing the ark

over many, many years until the work was complete. Will we persevere with a vibrant faith in our time and bear the good works and spiritual fruit God expects of us?

Let us pray:

- That our daily lives would be pleasing and holy unto God (Romans 6:22–23).
- That we would, with godly fear, love and serve the Lord with all our hearts (Matthew 22:37–40).
- That we would serve others and bless them in Jesus' name (James 1:27).

4. Faith that Overcomes Adversity

By faith, Noah prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world. (Hebrews 11:7)

We all must face various challenges and trials in our lives. Imagine Noah facing the mocking of the crowds as he built the ark, and yet he persevered year after year. It is to God's glory when we face our life's trials and grow in faith and in character and become more like Jesus (Romans 5:3–4). Despite persecution, the church in Smyrna continued to bear good works and remained faithful to the Lord's calling (Revelation 2:8–11). The Lord promised them and all of us

who press on through adversity the crown of life! Let us learn from the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11, who through many trials and temptations honored God by their example of faith!

Let us pray:

- That in our trials we will look in faith to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:1–3).
- That our example of faith will bless and encourage our children to serve the Lord in His Kingdom.
- That we may always extend the hand of grace, love, and patience to everyone we meet (Romans 12:14–18).

5. Faith that Inherits Eternal Life

Noah became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. (Hebrews 11:7)

Noah was known as a preacher of righteousness despite living in a very sinful world (2 Peter 2:5). Imagine if Noah and his family had only built part of the ark and given up. In our time, we too must not give up hope or grow cold in our love to God. With a living faith, we can persevere and never lose hope in our calling. Grace abounds for us to serve our Savior out of love and in the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 5:5). Remember that our faith brings us hope every single

day. May we truly be an example of faith to our families, our churches, and our neighbors as Noah was in his time.

Let us pray:

- Giving thanks to God that we who believe will receive the crown of life (James 1:12).
- That we may build our ark of faith in Christ all the days of our lives (Matthew 24:9–14).
- That as faithful servants we will enter into the everlasting joy of our Lord and Savior Jesus (Matthew 25:23)!

Be Prepared!

Matthew 25: 1–13

- 1 “Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.
- 2 Now five of them were wise, and five *were* foolish.
- 3 Those who *were* foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them,
- 4 but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
- 5 But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.
- 6 And at midnight a cry was *heard*: ‘Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!’
- 7 Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.
- 8 And the foolish said to the wise, ‘Give us *some* of your oil, for our lamps are going out.’
- 9 But the wise answered, saying, ‘*No*, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but go rather to those who sell, and buy for yourselves.’
- 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.
- 11 “Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open to us!’
- 12 But he answered and said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.’
- 13 Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.”