



Foundation of Faith

Tell Everyone He's Alive!
The Message that Saves
The Living Christ
Resurrection

The **Message**
of the
Cross

MARCH 2024

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

The apostle Paul proclaims to the Corinthians with great certainty: “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Yes, since the exodus from Egypt, the Israelites were to celebrate the Passover and slaughter a Passover lamb. In doing so, they were to remember how the blood of the innocent lamb became their salvation. The blood on the lintel of the door and on the two posts was the sign of their obedience and faith when the firstborn were slain at midnight in the land of Egypt. That is why the Lord had commanded: “So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the LORD throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance” (Exodus 12:14).

This is why Luke wrote in his gospel that the Savior’s parents went to Jerusalem every year for Easter. When Jesus was twelve years old, He was allowed to go with them and experience how the Easter or Passover lamb was slaughtered.

So Jesus Himself celebrated the Old Testament Passover every year for a good 20 years from the age of twelve. In the third year of His ministry, we read: “When the hour had come, He sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him. Then He said to them, ‘With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer’” (Luke 22:14–15).

After the feast and the walk to Gethsemane, Jesus was betrayed, captured, condemned, and crucified on Golgotha. There Jesus Christ died for us, yes, for the whole world and also for you and me. Therefore, know and believe: “Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.” Yes, Jesus is the true, sinless Passover lamb, the true and eternal “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

*O precious Savior!
O precious Savior!
Wearing the thorns on thy brow;
Help me to love thee,
Could I despise thee?
No, for thou lovest me now.*

B. E. Warren

H. D. Nimz

Resurrection

A conversation on a city bus

“What nonsense!” Mr. A. angrily crumpled up the newspaper he was reading.

His neighbor startled visibly. “Excuse me? What nonsense are you referring to?”

“Oh, these romanticized Easter reflections! Just listen: “Resurrection! Spring is here! The ice and streams are thawed,” said the great poet Goethe. Everywhere, nature celebrates resurrection. The streams murmur more sweetly, the little flowers awaken, the birds return. It’s Easter. Everywhere . . .”—That is just nonsense!”

“Well, my good sir, but that poetry isn’t nonsense! What makes you believe that it is nonsense? Isn’t Easter the celebration of resurrection?”

“Yes, it certainly is! However, Easter is not about the resurrection in nature, as splendid as it is, but specifically about the resurrection of Jesus!”

“Ok, but what exactly do you mean? I must not be hearing right: The resurrection of Jesus?”

“Yes! You heard right! It’s about the resurrection of Jesus! The Son of God, crucified by humans, laid in the grave and then risen from the dead.”

“But does anyone still believe that today? Science has proved . . .”

“Yes? What does science have to say?”

“It has disproved the resurrection of Jesus. Every child knows that.”

“Well, unfortunately then, every child learned something that

is complete foolishness. My own children still sing: ‘Because I am Jesus’ little lamb, I am happy all the time.’ But tell me, how has science disproved the resurrection of Jesus? I fear you have some bizarre ideas about science.”

“Well, I read recently that one must understand the resurrection of Jesus spiritually. He lives on in His words!”

“That sounds nice. Only, Jesus’ apostles insisted that He physically arose. They emphasized that they touched Him and that He ate in their presence.”

“Really, sir . . . surely you aren’t referring to ‘the apostles’ and what they have said? That may have only been a vision that they had! Day and night they thought of nothing but the Resurrection. Well, in the end, they fancied they had seen Jesus. I read that in a scientific article.”

“That is some obscure science then! You should trouble yourself to actually read the New Testament! The disciples certainly did not think about the Resurrection day and night. They thought about the opposite. When Jesus came out of the grave, they were astounded. They were very critical and very sober about this occurrence. And no, that is not just autosuggestion!”

“But I simply can’t believe that someone rises from the dead!”

“The people in Jerusalem who crucified Jesus didn’t want to believe it either. However, they had a good way to verify that it was true.”

“What was that?”

“They just needed to open the tomb and see if Jesus was still inside. They surely did that. If the body had still been there, they would have made a big fuss. But we hear nothing of that. And, you see, the tomb was empty. Jesus arose!”

“But, my dear sir—I almost called you backward—that doesn’t prove anything. I recall hearing a very interesting lecture about it. It was clearly proven that Jesus was only in a state of apparent death. And so, on the third day, He walked out of the grave. There you have a very good, natural explanation for the Resurrection.”

“And you sir, seem to have a whole series of explanations ready. If one doesn’t work, you bring out the next. You’re a strange seeker of truth! But—don’t take it personally—what you said is really foolish!”

“Oh, please . . . !”

“Oh, no offense—so listen: On Easter morning, three women went to Jesus’ tomb, as the Bible states. It was, as is well known, a rock tomb closed by a very heavy stone. The women wanted to embalm Jesus’ body, as was customary at that time. On the way, they had troublesome thoughts: ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ So, the stone was so heavy that three healthy women couldn’t roll it away. Do you suppose that the Man who had been without food for three days, having undergone a cruel Roman scourging and crucifixion, whose hands were pierced, thus suffering injury, having bled profusely, and having

been pronounced dead, would be in a position to move large rocks? The Roman soldiers had previously ensured that He was truly dead. My good sir, such primitive explanations won't get to the heart of the matter!"

"Well, sir, then the body simply disappeared in another way. I remember hearing that the disciples stole it."

"So, you've heard of that too? Even the Bible speaks of it."

"Well, see, it's cleared up then . . ."

"Yes, it's clear. The Bible states that the enemies of Jesus spread this lie when the empty tomb could no longer be hidden. Of course, no one believed it even then; because, as is well known, Jesus' grave was guarded by Roman soldiers. And

I'd like to see the thief who steals a body from Roman soldiers!"

"Listen: Do you really believe in the resurrection of Jesus?"

"Absolutely, I do! Above all, I believe because I have encountered Jesus in my own life. I did not want to live without the certainty of having a living Savior. You can find Him in God's Word too. Why not read the Resurrection story today, this Easter?" ■

Foolishness and Offense

The excavation of an ancient Roman guard post took place on the Palatine Hill in Rome. There, a remarkable drawing was found on one of the walls. Apparently, a soldier had drawn it to mock his Christian comrade. It was a cross with a donkey's head, and underneath it was written: "Alexamenos worships [his] God."

One can almost hear the laughter—it resonates through all the centuries: "Look at this Alexamenos who believes in a crucified Jew! The statues of our gods, made of marble and gold, full of beauty and power, are entirely unlike this wounded head covered in blood!"

The message of the crucified Christ has been foolishness and an offense to many people, as Paul wrote centuries ago. To this

day, Christ remains an offense, not only to the Roman soldiers, the followers of Nietzsche, and the atheists, but also for many others.

Imagine that a seriously injured soldier is lying in the ditch. An officer crawls toward this seemingly hopeless invalid. He lifts the man on his shoulders in the midst of enemy gunfire, drags him through mud and dirt back to the trench, and finds himself also smeared with blood and mud.

If he were to show up at an elegant casino, people would mock him and turn away from him. How dare this officer show up at a sophisticated venue soiled with dirt and stained with blood! But for the rescued soldier, that uniform covered in blood and dirt is much more glorious than the

most splendid uniform adorned with medals.

Similarly, the concept of the crucified Jesus is foolishness and an offense to our upscale society. But those individuals who sank into the lowest part of life, self-despair halting their breath and feeling utterly broken, can be grateful for the incomprehensible love of God that stooped so low for every one of us.

At the cross ways will part. The result is either salvation or eternal damnation. For some, it is foolishness and offense; for others, it is redemption and the power of God. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). ■

Jesus' Battle in Gethsemane

Let us enter the Garden of Gethsemane in spirit with the Lord Jesus and His disciples. Do we not feel that we hear God's voice as Moses did at the burning bush: "Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand *is* holy ground" (Exodus 3:5)? What feelings might the Lord Jesus have had when He went into this difficult battle?

He was fully aware of the significance of this serious step.

His hour had now come, and He was ready to drink the bitter cup of suffering to the brim.

He wanted to carry out the will of His heavenly Father in full obedience.

The first sin was committed by Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Here in the Garden of Gethsemane, atonement for the immense guilt of sin was carried out by our Lord.

He went into the garden with His disciples.

He had often spent whole nights alone in prayer. This time, He needed comfort and their closeness. After all, He was a man like us but without sin. He also wanted to have His disciples with Him as witnesses to His struggle.

He was ready to drink the cup of suffering.

He asked the Father three times if it would be possible to free Him from it. But three times, the Father did not grant Him that "for God so loved the world."

What was the content of this cup?

All the misery and sin of humanity was laid upon Him here in Gethsemane. His holy and pure soul felt the hellish nature of sin and the torment of damnation as if He were a sinner Himself. "For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us" (2 Corinthians 5:21). As a true human, Jesus also had to struggle with His human nature, which shrank back from the terrible death on

the cross. But He was determined to be obedient to His heavenly Father at any cost, no matter how high, even unto death. He prayed: "Not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

He struggled with Satan's temptations.

Satan sought to tempt Him to disobey His heavenly Father. The whole power of hell came down on Him. To what terrible depths did our Savior descend for the sake of our redemption!

He Himself fought with death.

But He could not and would not succumb. Yes, thank God, He remained victorious and thus made our redemption possible.

He remains the victor.

He was strengthened by the angel. Yes, God, the Father, took part in this battle. He "who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest 'according to the order of Melchizedek'" (Hebrews 5:7-10).

His heart became calm.

He was filled with strength, courage, and peace of mind. He became willing to endure the terrible treatment and death with unspeakable love for the Father and man.

He endured everything for our sake. We too can now be certain that we will have the full compassion and support of the Lord Jesus in all our struggles. All the powers of hell have been defeated by Christ, and in His strength and with Him we may also be victorious. For "my Lord is greater, far beyond my need." ■

The Cross

The cross of Golgotha still stands victorious and exalted, even though attacks and storms have raged against it for centuries. However, all of these attacks have been crushed, and the cross stands undefeated. It will never be defeated!

On this cross of Golgotha, the greatest sacrifice was accomplished, but also the most terrible crime the world has ever seen was committed: the Son of God was murdered by His own creation. We should shudder and be horrified when we recognize the terrible fact that man, in his sin, blindness, and alienation from God, committed this sin against his own Creator.

However, in contrast, God's unfathomable love and mercy was revealed. He allowed all this to happen and made the immeasurable sacrifice in order to save His people from their terrible sins and certain destruction. The great sacrifice for sin was made, and death and Satan were overcome.

God has reconciled us with Himself through His atoning death. Time and eternity are joined. Time and eternity grasped hands. The finite merged into the infinite. The greatest mystery found its solution. From

the place of the cross, mankind not only sees the proper view of the temporal life but also glimpses into eternity.

Here is where our tempestuous hearts finds peace and calm. At the cross, our longing is satisfied, and the impetuous questions of our hearts are answered! If we come with a repentant heart and childlike faith, we will find the true resting place and deliverance from our sins. If we have surrendered ourselves to the Crucified One and hold fast to redemption through Jesus' death, we can conquer sin, the world, death, and Satan, and enter eternity victoriously. Through Christ's blood, we can be overcomers. "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Revelation 12: 11).

Captured on Golgotha,
Hung on the cross for me,
His blood flowed for me,
Salvation acquired for me.
Hallelujah, amen! ■



With Red Ink

After the death of a Scottish doctor, his financial books were examined. A number of invoices were found with the following written in red ink: “Debt forgiven because patient too poor.” This wise old doctor did not want to force his poor patients to pay. If they had nothing with which to pay their bills, he waived them.

However, his wife was not of the same opinion as him, as she demanded after his death that these bills, which had been written over in red, should be paid.

And so she turned to the court. The judge asked her: “Is this red ink your husband’s handwriting?” “Yes,” she replied. The judge replied: “Then there isn’t a court in the whole country that could collect the money for the bills that say ‘debt forgiven.’”

It is the same when Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on the cross of Golgotha, writes the word “Forgiven!” under my account of sins. Then I am free—free from judgment and hell. Then I have “redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7).

But how does one obtain this forgiveness of sins? God Himself did the ultimate: He sent His Son to Earth. And just think what a tremendous price the Lord Jesus had to pay so that He could write in “red” over our account of sins: “Guilt forgiven because sinners are too poor to pay!” Remember how the Savior fell on His face in the Garden of Gethsemane and prayed in a great struggle of the soul: “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as You *will*” (Matthew 26:39).

And then only on the cross of Golgotha! There, cruel men drove nails through His feet and hands! There He endured unspeakable agony and unfathomable mockery and was abandoned by God . . . Why? Why? The answer is: To pay the debt of sin-

ners who cannot pay! To let God’s justice shine in full light!

Therefore, the Apostle Paul writes: “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes . . . For in it the righteousness of God is revealed” (Romans 1:16–17). It does not say: “For in it the love of God is revealed,” although that is also true. But here God’s Word shows us that the good news can be proclaimed on the rock of divine justice. God can truly forgive the sinner and at the same time fully uphold His own divine righteousness.

God does not take sin lightly nor overlook a single one, be it sins of thought, word, or deed. But how then can He be just and at the same time forgive the sinner? God can do it because He sent His sinless Son as the true and perfect sacrificial lamb.

Those who see their lives in this ray of light of divine holiness and righteousness recognize that without the Lord Jesus they are eternally lost. This leads to repentance, to genuine conversion. They then cry out from the depths of their heart: “God, be merciful to me a sinner!” (Luke 18:13). Only those who do so will experience the forgiving love of God.

So the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the only basis on which God can forgive me, the sinner. The Lord Jesus came to this Earth as a human being. He, the completely sinless One, went into judgment and death for sinners. But He rose again in the flesh, and He will come again. That is the gospel; that is the good news!

Jesus lives; He has triumphed!
Who can proclaim His glory?
My sin lies in the grave,
No more guilt is to be found.
Yes, He lives! I will not die,
For His death took my punishment! ■

Christ and the Two Thieves

Jesus is always ready and willing and has power to save. The two thieves who were crucified with Him had an evil past and even displayed a reckless attitude while hanging on the cross. They were so hardened that even in facing death, they mocked Jesus. Yet one of the thieves had a sudden change of heart as he reflected on his previous life. His conscience was burdened by his sin which burned like fiery coals in his heart. As he neared the gates of death, he recognized that he must give account to the righteous Judge, and he trembled at that thought. He had no place to hide from the condemnation of his guilty conscience.

He heard Jesus praying for His enemies. Perhaps he had already heard that this was the Messiah. He clearly recognized: "This is the Man who can help me, even now." In a similar manner in which a drowning person grasps an arm extended to rescue him, so the thief turned to Jesus and said: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42). From a human standpoint, one would not expect Jesus to react to this wicked man's cry for help, seeing that He himself was suffering excruciating pain. But the love of Jesus to sinners is so great that even while experiencing the bitter pains of death, He heard and reacted to the cry of this deeply fallen individual and rescued him.

The thief on the cross calling for help saw the gates of death and hell open to receive him, and he saw no way out. To rescue such a wretched evildoer from the miserable curse of sin and to save him from the power of Satan and condemnation and secure for him a place in Paradise is something that only the One given all power in heaven and on earth can do. Yes, Jesus Christ is mighty to save!

But Jesus only saves those who come to Him in the right manner. The thief who was repentant and believed was assured a place in Paradise by Jesus. Unrepentant and unbelieving individuals will find the door of the kingdom of heaven shut for them. The thief craving forgiveness humbly acknowledged his punishment, openly confessed his guilt, and reprimanded his fellow thief who also hung there on the cross, for his attitude and foolish talk. The transformation in the heart of the first thief was so radical that he turned away from his sin and turned to Christ. Despite the mocking mob below, he claimed the innocence of Jesus. A mocking thief had turned into a repentant individual seeking grace.

The faith of this thief was even more remarkable than his repentance. With his natural eyes, he could only see a crucified individual seemingly forsaken by man and God. And nevertheless, he called him Lord of a kingdom into which he wanted access. There was no thought of an earthly kingdom. But his plea: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom," clearly shows his confidence that Jesus is king of a supernatural Kingdom.

The Holy Spirit had enlightened him so that he saw in this Man of Sorrows the promised Messiah. The Savior assured him a place in the Kingdom of Heaven by saying: "Today, you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). The thief on the cross was saved in his final hour, similar to someone rescued from a shipwreck and coming away merely with one's life. But what about the other thief on the cross? He did not take hold of the opportunity and suffered damnation where the "worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched" (Mark 9:48). ■



The *Living* Christ

The disciples' salvation depended on the fate of the Lord Jesus. All their hopes were based on Him. When He died on the cross, everything seemed lost to them. How sad and sorrowful the disciples were! To all appearances, Christ's three-year teaching ministry had ended in a tremendous failure. They could no longer have fellowship with Him. The enemies rejoiced, and it seemed that the disciples had no choice but to return to their former occupations, discouraged and broken-hearted.

They could not preach a dead Christ. Who would have believed in such a Savior? Who would accept a Messiah who had pretended to help others and who could not, in the most crucial hour, help Himself? Could one assume that such a Savior possessed saving power? What could He now do for others? No, people would not trust a dead Messiah.

But Christ's resurrection changed everything. It gave them a living Christ. This glorious resurrection confirmed the truth of all His statements and teach-

ings. It awakened a living hope in the disciples, as Peter himself testified. It gave them back their beloved Lord! He was not weakened by death and the grave but clothed with immortality and power as King of kings. They did not need to be ashamed to preach about Him. A living Christ was now working with them, a Christ who was exalted to the right hand of the living God and who had the power to save from sin and to keep from sin.

Yes, the great difference between Christ and others emerged at the Resurrection. When a teacher dies, his disciples only remember his teachings. But with the Lord's disciples it was quite different. Their teacher had been restored to them. They knew His teachings, but He Himself had been returned to them.

Just as Abraham, Moses, David, the prophets, and John the Baptist had died and remained in the tomb, they expected the same of Jesus. That is why they also went to the tomb. But here the angel asked them: "Why do you seek the living among the dead?" (Luke 24:5). Jesus was not in the tomb; He had risen! This Jesus wants to meet us on our journey through life, because we have a living Christ.

We are told that the disciples did not know the Scripture about Jesus having to rise from the dead. According to Scripture, they were well aware of this. Even Jesus had told them, but they had not understood it.

Don't we sometimes deal with the well-known story of Jesus' resurrection in the same manner? Is this recorded historical fact in the Bible all we know about it? Or have we grasped and experienced its significance and importance in our own hearts? Is Jesus alive for us and in us? Does He reveal Himself to us? Is He known to us? Do we walk with Him? Has He become our inheritance, or are we merely content to know His teaching?

We may zealously advocate for the written Word. Our intellect may grasp it. If our love for Jesus wanes and only human energy spurs us on, we will experi-

ence loss! Only in fellowship with Jesus will we find the satisfying riches of lasting peace and eternal life. Only in Jesus is life. He is the living Christ, and He wants to have a living relationship with us. Christ is the core of Christianity. True life and true spiritual food are at its core. Doctrines, rules, and ordinances only serve their purpose if they help bring us into a more intimate relationship with Him. Having this intimate relationship with Christ truly makes us Christians.

On that first Easter evening, after meeting their risen Lord on the road to Emmaus, the two disciples returned to Jerusalem with joy to bring the good news to the other disciples. The distance between Jerusalem and Emmaus was about twelve kilometers (7.5 mi). Although the disciples were tired from the journey, we read: "And so they rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem" (Luke 24:33). They had seen Jesus again and wanted to tell the other disciples.

Have we recognized Jesus in His fullness so that we are driven to bring the message to others? The revelation of the risen Lord moved those two disciples to act decisively. The revelation of Christ in our hearts will also spur us on to act.

The first day of that week was the beginning of a new experience, a new time. Before, the disciples had only known Jesus in the flesh, and when He died, their hopes were gone. But now they began to get to know Him according to the Spirit. Death lost its power. They were now united with a living Christ. Through Jesus' resurrection, their sorrow was transformed into joy, their weakness into strength, and their defeat into victory. "The Lord is risen indeed," was now their song of triumph. From that time on, Christianity was a power crowned with success, destroying the kingdom of Satan and planting the kingdom of God in the hearts of humankind.

This can also be your experience, dear Reader. When Jesus becomes a living reality in your life, sadness can turn into joy, death into life, and defeat into victory. ■

He is Risen!

The Man of Sorrows was laid into a dark tomb after His bitter, painful death, and with Him the hope of the disappointed disciples, who had followed Him so faithfully, was also buried. When Jesus was alive, He was their best friend and counselor. They recognized Him as the Messiah, as Master, and as Son of the living God. Daily, the disciples experienced the mighty deeds Jesus did and marveled at His splendid character. In fervent love they had drawn close to Him, and now their hope was shattered, their faith was crushed, and their hearts were full of sorrow. Their faith could not see an open grave and a risen Savior. They forgot about or did not understand the words that Jesus Himself had spoken about His own resurrection. Helpless and hopeless, the disciples scattered in deep sorrow over the death of their Lord and Master.

But see there: The golden rays of the rising sun shed light on the dark mystery of the black night. The angels of God descended and came to the cold stone tomb. The Giver of Life awoke from the slumber of death and triumphed over that frightful enemy—death.

In the early morning, a few women went to the grave to anoint the body of Jesus. They did not yet know about His wonderful resurrection. As they drew near, they said among themselves: “Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?” (Mark 16:3).

To their amazement, they noticed that the stone had already been rolled away and that an angel of the Lord was sitting on it. Out of his mouth, they heard the good news: “He is not here; for He is risen” (Matthew 28:5–6).

O wonderful message of Easter: “He is risen”! The resurrection of Jesus seals the sacrifice of atonement that was made for humanity. “Death is swallowed up in victory” (1 Corinthians 15:55).

He took away sin, the sting of death, and also conquered death itself. The Prince of Life rose from the grave. He rose for all people.

Christ’s resurrection is of unfathomable importance for us. Otherwise, the cold dark grave would shatter all our hope. We would have to give our loved ones over to the unsatiated jaws of death without ever seeing them again. “And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those

who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable” (1 Corinthians 15:17–19). But praise the Lord! With joyful assurance, the apostle can share this wonderful truth: “But now Christ is risen from the dead, *and* has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (verse 20).

The resurrection of Jesus Christ has often been questioned and challenged. This was the case right from the start, over the centuries, and to this day. Even in Paul’s day, there were those who believed neither in the resurrection of Jesus nor in any general resurrection to come. But as Paul shows us in his teaching concerning the resurrection of the dead, if one denies the resurrection of Christ then the whole plan of salvation completely crumbles. The Resurrection is not only the crown of the work of God, brought to completion in Jesus, but it is also the main pillar of Christianity on which our salvation is founded.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, then He was merely a human being and not the Son of God. Jesus simply dying as a martyr would be of no benefit for humankind. The sacrifice of atonement foreshadowed throughout the whole Old Testament would have no meaning. There would be no atonement and no forgiveness of sins, and everyone would need to die in their sin and be lost forever.

But we have the apostles as eyewitnesses of the resurrection of Jesus. They not only saw Him after the Resurrection, but they also had food and drink with Him. With great power, they gave witness and testimony of His resurrection. They not only did this once, but they kept on testifying in the power of the Holy Spirit as long as they lived. Thousands died as martyrs because of their testimony of the Resurrection because they were so convinced that Jesus rose from the dead and is now in heaven, where they too join Him after death.

The wonderful fact of this triumph of Christianity is perpetual proof that Christ indeed is risen. He is not only in heaven on His throne, but He also lives within His church through His Spirit. He keeps His church, builds it, and protects it until He will come again to reveal Himself to all humanity as the One who was crucified and resurrected from the dead. ■



Tell Everyone He's Alive!

It had been a long dark night for the followers of Jesus since he bowed his head and rested in the silent tomb. Was it possible? Jesus—the way, the truth and the life—was in the tomb! He who had raised the dead was now lying in the grave himself? What a victory for sin, death and darkness! What is the world when Jesus is in the tomb? Nothing but a vast field of the dead, without light, without hope!

But night did not fall over Golgotha. Easter morning dawned. And they had no idea until the women made the incredible discovery early in the morning: The stone is gone! The tomb is empty! No Jesus in the tomb! “He is not here; He has risen!” This news from the angel was like a sudden blinding light in their midnight darkness. Life is alive! Truth triumphs! Love triumphs over deadly hatred! “Thanks *be* to God, who has given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

“Tell his disciples,” the angel commanded the women. Yes, tell everyone that he is alive! But we read in Mark 16:8: “They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid.” Oh, how much weak Christianity today does not tell anyone about the power and hope of Easter! Get to work, “that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9)!

Come, all you witnesses, and shout it loudly and joyfully into our Easter morning: “Christ is risen!” Who dried your tears, Mary Magdalene, and made you happy and blessed at the open tomb? Christ, the Risen One! Peter, who rolled the burden of debt from your heart and made you a courageous confessor after you had denied Him? Christ, the Risen One! You travelers from Emmaus, who interpreted the Scriptures

to you and set your hearts on fire on the lonely road? Who broke bread with you in the quiet of the evening? Christ, the Risen One! All you disciples, the scattered multitude, who gathered you together again? Who put peace in your hearts and turned the timid lambs into lions that defy all enemies? Christ, the Risen One! And you, Saul, who snorted with threats and murder against the Lord and His church, who threw you down in the dust at the gates of Damascus? Who raised you up again and made you fit to bear the name of Jesus before kings, princes and nations? Who has made you willing and strong to let yourself be reviled and hated? Christ, the Risen One!

All you martyrs, from Stephen onwards, what drove you so joyfully to witness death? Is it a dead, forgotten, decayed Jesus for whom you bled? No, Christ, the Risen One! All you peoples who still come today from all directions, who bow before the cross and are baptized in the name of the Crucified One, you are witnesses: Christ is risen!

His church stands on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, because Jesus Christ is the cornerstone. It strides through the centuries of world history, hated to the death, fought against, but nevertheless always alive. “[B]y honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers and *yet* true; as unknown and *yet* well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and *yet* not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and *yet* possessing all things” (2 Corinthians 6:8–10)—for Christ is risen! He is the First and the Last and the Living One. He makes all things new. One day all knees must bow before him and testify: Christ is risen! ■



*"He was bruised for our iniquities;
the chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
and by His stripes we are healed."
(Isaiah 53: 5)*

was able to send a whole host of angels at His Son's request to free Him. But Jesus, the Son of God, voluntarily allowed Himself to be captured and beaten. Yes, He allowed Himself to be nailed to the cross and died out of love for mankind. Through the cross, redemption from sin became possible when Jesus said: "It is finished!"

Father then explained that the cross has been a sign of the Christian faith ever since. However, it does not help to visibly display a cross made of wood, metal, or any other material. All that matters is that we believe in what the Savior did on the cross and ask God for

forgiveness of our sins, i.e. that we turn to God. God is faithful and forgives our sins. He makes us His children, and then it is important that we follow Jesus every day and obey Him.

That made sense to Nicholas. He felt so light and happy now. He had just gotten saved a few months ago. Nicholas knew that Jesus lived in his heart. He hugged his father and said: "Thank you for explaining the cross to me again!" They knelt together and thanked God with all their hearts for His Word and for the fact that Jesus Christ died also for them on the cross.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ? Is He also your Savior?

Helene Rotfuss

The Meaning of the Cross

Nicholas was thoughtful. He had noticed that there were crosses in several places in his little town. A shiny cross was on the roof of the town church. At the edge of the forest, there was a small memorial with a picture of Jesus on the cross. There were also some wooden crosses in the cemetery. And from time to time, people wore small crosses on their necklaces. Do these people believe in Jesus?

Nicholas came to his father with these thoughts and this question. Mr. Werner listened to his son and then read to him from the Bible, how Jesus prayed to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, "not as I will, but as You will." For Jesus knew how terribly He would need to suffer and how His sweat would fall to the ground like drops of blood, and that God



The Mystery of the Seed

Have you ever seen how a small seed is planted in the ground and later green leaves grow from it? The seed disappears, and in its place, a new plant grows that can produce many new seeds. In the Bible, this path from seed to plant is used as a parable to illustrate death and new life.



It is usually dead and must spend eternity in hell. But Jesus died so that this does not happen. Anyone who repents of their sins and asks God for forgiveness can believe in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and follow Him. Jesus says: "He who believes in the Son has everlasting life" (John 3: 36).



Jesus died for us on the cross. His dead body was laid in the tomb of a respected Jewish man named Joseph of Arimathea. But after three days, Jesus Christ rose from the dead. He was gloriously victorious over sin, hell, and the devil. After appearing to His disciples, speaking to and blessing them, He ascended into heaven. Jesus lives and reigns for all eternity!

God created us with an eternal soul that survives the death of the body. The important question is where the soul will be after death. People who go their own way and only follow their own desires live in sin and have no fellowship with God. They are spir-

This means that we can already live with God here on earth. We can ask Him for advice and read His Word. We can learn from Jesus and allow Him to change us. God gives us the strength to make good decisions and behave properly. He hears our prayers and cares for us. He comforts us in difficult times.

One day, God will call us from this earth to Himself in heaven. Then our body will die and become earth again, but our soul can be with God forever. We will be given a heavenly body and can see Jesus Christ in His glory, for He is the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Him will continue to live after death (according to John 11: 25).

Helene Rotfuss



The Message of the Cross

HEALING AND STRENGTH

On June 4, 2023, I made the most important decision of my life. On that day, I brought all the baggage from my old, sinful life to Jesus on the cross. Now I too am finally a happy daughter of the King. I am especially grateful to God for the kind, loving way in which He knocked on my heart.

To His glory, I would like to tell you today quite openly about my very personal path to my conversion.

Ecclesiastes 2:1 says: “‘Come now, I will test you with mirth; therefore enjoy pleasure’; but surely, this also was vanity.”

This passage describes my life to date very well because I was also curious, wanted to get to know this world from its most beautiful and fun sides, accept as few boundaries as possible, and fulfill one life dream after another. Basically, my ultimate goal was to make myself happy.

Especially in my youth, I got to know the so-called pleasures of the world and learned to love them for a while. There were weekends, for example, when I went to youth meetings on Saturdays, afterwards to the nightclub, and then back to worship service on Sundays. And that wasn't the only thing What hypocrisy!—I knew that. But I wasn't prepared to

choose either the narrow path or the broad path, although in this way I had actually already chosen long ago.

Then on a Pentecost weekend, just as I was starting to try this and that, moving farther and farther away from God, I fell head over heels in love with who is now my husband.

There is no question that Rudi had a good influence on me at this crucial crossroads in my life, because I gradually began to change and became much more conservative. Today, I am doubly grateful for this, because who knows how far away from God I would be today if I had chosen a different husband back then. I am slowly beginning to understand this wise saying: Life is lived forwards and understood backwards. So much undeserved grace and protection!

However, the somewhat changed lifestyle that followed still did not make me a child of God. I knew that very well. Although I had actually really been touched by a sermon or a testimony here and there over the last few years, I became a master of repression, distraction, and postponement.

Today, I am downright ashamed of how consciously I organized my priorities and plans for everyday life in such a way that there was always something more important than dealing with my relationship with God.

Somehow, from the outside, I still had a fulfilled life: I was healthy, I learned a profession that I enjoyed, I was able to find the love of my life quite early on and have now spent ten very happy years of marriage with Rudi. We have two healthy children, and the list goes on, but I think you know what I'm getting at.

I was and am so richly blessed with my life. Every time I received one of these or other material gifts of grace, I thought to myself: Now I actually have everything. One life dream after another was fulfilled. But

no, over the last few years, I noticed more and more that something was still missing.

But God's speaking only really started about four years ago, during my first pregnancy. I'm sure some other parents are also familiar with pregnancy apps that allow you to track how your baby is developing so wonderfully from week to week. I can't explain many things in the world, but this baby, who grew in my belly and was eventually born as a perfect little girl, made me realize that this completely ingenious concept of the creation and development of a little baby can't be a coincidence and can't be man-made.

Even with my second pregnancy, I couldn't shake the thought: If I acknowledge God as the creator of my children, indeed of the whole world—and I undoubtedly did—how could I ignore the rest of the Bible, especially Jesus' huge sacrifice on the cross and the offer of eternal life that came with it? As I was, I began to pray repeatedly for these two miracles in my belly.

Through various nudges in everyday life and as the children grew up, more and more questions arose in my mind over time: What am I living for in this world? What do I want to achieve? What values do I want to pass on to my children? What am I working towards? What will my legacy be? Do I really want to use all my time to fulfill my own wishes?

Little by little, I became aware of my boundless self-centeredness not only in the big questions of life but also in small everyday situations with my husband and children. So I started looking through Christian books and sermons on YouTube to find out how I could be a better wife and mother. But what a surprise: They all pointed out what is aptly summarized in Matthew 23:26 (AMP), "You [spiritually] blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the plate [examine and change your inner self to conform to God's

precepts], so that the outside [your public life and deeds] may be clean also.”

On New Year’s Eve, I drew the motto for the year from Matthew 7:7, “Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”

It was a real goosebump moment when I held the card in my hands. How appropriate for my situation!

But again, I kept Jesus waiting with His arms stretched out wide. Everyday life rolled in, and more and more thoughts of self-reflection came to me. I saw myself more and more in a different light, saw more and more sins and mistakes. But every subsequent attempt to shed my bad qualities, such as selfishness, envy, and resentment failed.

In a very special way, God also used my role as a mother and my children to humble me and show me my limits in every respect. The high level of responsibility, selflessness, and love necessary to be not just any mother, but a good mother and wife I could not draw from myself, no matter how ambitiously I tried. And so, disappointment with myself and my life was suddenly a constant companion.

I was quite envious of those mothers who were able to place their children in God’s hands every morning, who were able to find real comfort, understanding, and guidance from God and His Word in the face of the many worries and uncertainties of this world. I realized more and more that I wanted that too.

So I started to listen to other more evangelistic sermons, dug out my old, now rather dusty Bible, and downloaded a Bible app. And suddenly everything touched me. My heart was so thirsty for these messages, for this new life according to Jesus’ example. I realized more and more how much sin I had already

accumulated with my actions, words, and thoughts and that I was producing anew every day.

This re-evaluation of myself was so astonishing because for many years I didn’t think I was such a bad person. I only skipped a few Sunday services, tried to keep to the commandments I was familiar with as best I could and as long as it was convenient, and generally displayed a passable character.

But far from it, dear ones! How often have I wrongly judged others, blasphemed, lied, and much more? At some point, it was very exhausting to keep up appearances, because inside I felt completely different.

On some Sundays, to be honest, I didn’t even know why we went to church at all. Out of habit? Because of our loved ones? Out of a sense of duty? Sometimes it was my husband or a voice inside me that said: “Yes, you are going!”

All those years, I was accompanied by the feeling that I shouldn’t stray too far lest I be the prodigal son from the parable who had such a long way to go home. Where did that come from?

Well, I’ve been going to this church all my life, I’ve learned what’s right and wrong in the children’s and youth classes. I grew up in a Christian home and got to know God’s Word from an early age. Even before I was born and throughout the years, my mother in particular prayed for me incessantly. Her service to God was and still is a huge example and testimony to me. And God has finally answered this faithful prayer! I’m sure there are many mothers who have been praying for their children for decades, and I just want to encourage you not to give up. You should have experienced that moment of joy when I was able to tell my mom after almost thirty years that her prayer had been answered!

I found myself in Mark 4:12. There it says: “Seeing they may see and not perceive, and hearing they may

hear and not understand.” Oh, how many conversions and baptisms I have seen, how many testimonies and sermons I have heard! But I didn’t want to hear it. I lacked the courage and the desire to deal with this topic.

One evening, I was reading the chapters in the Gospel of Matthew where Jesus was crucified and—I don’t know how many hundreds of times I have heard these passages in my life—suddenly they went straight to my heart.

I sat in front of my Bible and saw my sins on the cross, saw exactly how Jesus suffered for me. And suddenly it all made sense. The tears started to flow, and I began to feel ashamed for the many years of consciously rejecting this huge act of love and sacrifice.

I could tell you today about countless situations in which God spoke to me with precisely the right words through other people or His Word and convinced me bit by bit that the narrow path does not only include renunciation, prohibitions, limits, and unattainable standards, as I had previously thought, but He showed me what I would gain.

Nevertheless, something was still holding me back from conversion. One evening, in a conversation with my husband, I tried to put this “something” into words. Together, we realized that there were essentially three points that made me doubt. Inwardly I prayed briefly that God would please clear up these doubts for me, and we left it at that.

The next day, we read the Bible together in the evening—a wondrous new addition to our evening routine that has not yet been implemented very often, mind you. It was my turn to read the Bible, but I didn’t get very far. My voice began to tremble, and my eyes filled with tears because in just one short paragraph, my three counter-arguments were refuted. All three at once, within a few verses. I looked at Rudi and asked:

“How many more supposed coincidences must happen for me to recognize God’s words as such?” Three thematically unrelated fears, fortunately expressed out loud the day before, were shattered the next day. “How loudly should God still call out to me?” I thought.

Shortly afterwards, I gathered up courage and wrote to one of our church elders, who fortunately took the time to meet with me at short notice. I went into this conversation and finally to Jesus on the cross with a huge pack full of sin, worries, fears, and insecurities

What happened next is described very well in Psalm 32:5, “I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.”

Immediately after my prayer for forgiveness, I felt freed from this huge pack and was suddenly so grateful, so free. I knew immediately: “From now on, today and here, I am Your child, Lord! Take my life into Your hands; lead, guide, and shape me!”

At the time of writing this testimony, my conversion occurred several months ago. Although figuratively I’ve only taken a few steps in my life of faith, I’m overwhelmed by how incredibly changed I feel and how many answers to prayer I’ve already experienced. The Bible always seemed boring to me before, and praying was a bit like talking to myself.

But now I draw infinite strength and wisdom for all of life’s situations and everyday problems. I feel I have arrived, free, loved by my Father, valuable, and much more carefree. I can now bring everything, no matter how small, before God and place it in His hands and watch as He gradually rearranges my life and my priorities.

I am grateful to God for this with all my heart!

Anita Grötzinger, Herford (DE)

Announcements

Easter Conference 2024

March 29th – April 1st, 2024

Location: Hamm, Germany
Start time: Good Friday at 2:30 pm

More Information:
www.gghamm.de

Pentecost Conference 2024

May 18th – 20th, 2024

Place: Herford, Germany
Start time: Saturday 10:00 am

More Information:
www.gghf.de

Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren

August 16th – 21st, 2024

Bible Course of the Church of God

August 12th – 23rd, 2024

Place: Steinbach, Manitoba

The Message that Saves

In our lives as seniors, the message of the cross carries a special significance and responsibility.

The current issue of the *Foundation of Faith* addresses the theme “The Message of the Cross.” While this is important, is it also pertinent to older individuals? Suddenly, it becomes clear to me that this article would not have been written had it not been for the message of the cross. There would be no *Foundation of Faith*. The printing house in Flint, Michigan would not exist. It would indeed be a sad world without this message of the cross.

When I was a child, the cross played a significant role in my life. It’s been a while, but every time I approached the church building, my eyes would first focus on the cross on the exterior wall at Bielefelder St. 25 in Herford, Germany. Upon opening the door of the building, I would also see a cross on the front wall. It was evident that the cross was very important to the people gathering here.

In Sunday School, we learned more about the cross. We quickly realized it wasn’t just about a simple wooden cross; it was “the Message of the Cross,” the message the cross wanted to convey to us, that captured our attention. Both there and at home, we heard stories from our parents about Jesus—His remarkable birth, His message, the miracles, His interactions with people, His love and compassion when encountering those in need. As I grew older, I gained a better understanding of our Savior’s life mission. He came to die on the cross for us—and to rise again.

The story of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Jesus, also known as “The Message of the Cross,” was explained to us in the sermons. Indeed, this story is the focal point of preaching, whether in Sunday sermons, conferences, or evangelistic events—it is always about the cross. At some point and somewhere, we were personally confronted with this story. It touched our hearts and presented us with the crucial decision to either accept or reject it.

About 2000 years ago, Jesus Christ died on the cross at Golgotha—He, the incarnate Son of God who

sacrificed Himself for the sins of all humanity. As the “Lamb of God,” the Lord took all our sins upon Himself. This was prophesied in the book of Isaiah 700 years before it happened (Isaiah 53:6b). This chapter of the Bible emphasizes that Christ died on our behalf. In other words, He took my place. I should have been there.

I remember well, although it’s been some time, when the story of the cross deeply moved me. Suddenly, in the light of God, I realized I was a sinner, and my conduct before God was not right. Much like David in the Old Testament, I felt, “For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me” (Psalm 38:4). The pastor spoke about the concept of “acknowledging sin.” I understood exactly what was meant. Then he continued to the next point of his sermon, showing us that Christ’s suffering and death on the cross was for us, including me. Figuratively speaking, as a weary, worn traveler, I hurried to the cross. There, I was freed from my sins and found peace with God. Now I could joyfully join in singing the hymn:

“I stand, all bewildered with wonder,
And gaze on the ocean of love;
And over its waves to my spirit
Comes peace, like a heavenly dove.

Chorus:

The cross now covers my sins;
The past is under the blood;
I’m trusting in Jesus for all;
My will is the will of my God.”

-Wilbur F. Crafts

Your life may have taken a far different path than mine, yet the Lord has led you to understand the significance of the cross.

Paul refers to Jesus Christ as “the Savior of all people” (1 Timothy 4:10). This means that everyone can benefit from His sacrifice. Jesus suffered and gave His life for all. Therefore, He invites everyone to

come to Him: “Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.” (Matthew 11:28).

Most people in this world do not know Jesus, the Savior. Their world is “*under the sway of the wicked one*” (1 John 5:19). Therefore, it is crucial for them to hear the message of the cross. Paul once asked how could people believe in Jesus if they had never heard of Him (Romans 10:14)? This is a serious question. For people to believe, they must hear about Jesus. And who is responsible for passing on the message? It’s not an easy question. Perhaps God wants us seniors to help. We have enough time, and money is not lacking. What is missing is a passion for this work, sometimes referred to as a burden for souls. Jesus told His disciples: “Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest?’ Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest” (John 4:35).

A heart-wrenching observation. I want to go through life with open eyes and use my remaining time to tell others the message of the cross. There are various ways to do this. You can pass on a tract (or leave it somewhere), subscribe to the *Foundation of Faith* for someone, or simply mention the cross in a conversation. If we have a grateful and content heart, and share a cheerful smile, it might prompt someone to ask why we are happy. This gives us a good opportunity to talk about the cross.

An elderly man lying on his deathbed briefly awakens from his confusion. He softly says to himself, “One more soul for the Savior!” And then he passes away. This could also be a good resolution for us: Lead one more person to the cross before it’s too late.

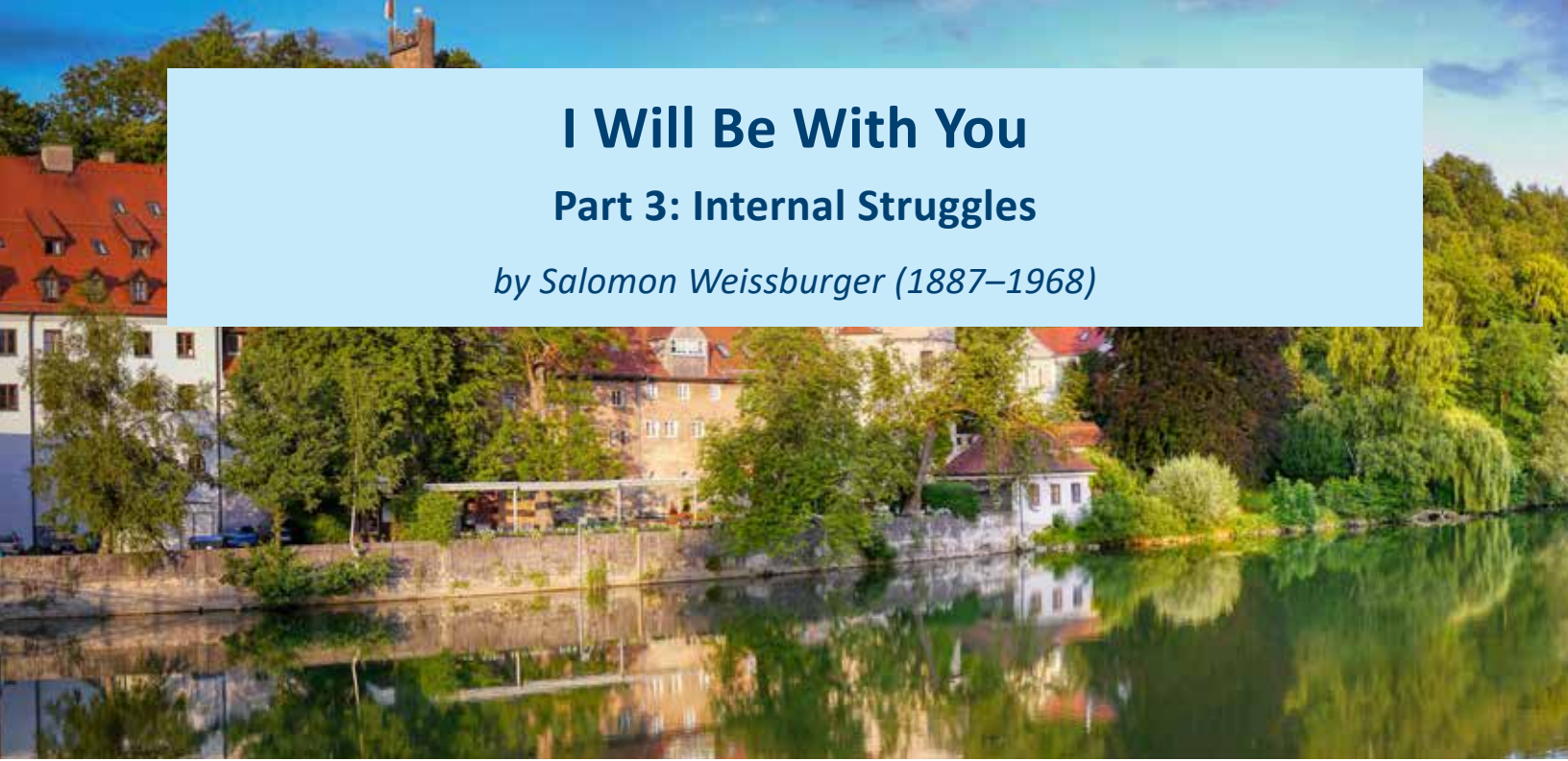
Think about this: “The Message of the Cross”—just a few words. But they hold great significance. You could include them in your prayer and ask God to show you how you can participate in this mission. Imagine how marvellous it would be to share this message, that has touched our hearts, with others.

Harry Semenjuk

I Will Be With You

Part 3: Internal Struggles

by Salomon Weissburger (1887–1968)



The Lord led me down an even more difficult path. Despite the wonderful experiences I had already had with Him, He saw that I still had much to learn. In order to be able to help others later on, I had to weather some storms myself.

These struggles primarily stemmed from my own spiritual ignorance, as I did not understand the difference between temptation and sin. Other issues arose because I was basing my decisions more on emotions than on spiritual considerations. I was 19 years old and content in the state of my soul. I was the only young man in the congregation, and although I lived all alone in the big city of Essen, worldly pleasures offered me no temptation. I was saved and sanctified to the Lord. However, God saw that my spiritual knowledge needed to grow deeper, and so He let me face heavy temptations that challenged me more than the conflict with my family.


One evening, I had some sinful thoughts, and a few moments later, Satan said to me, “You have sinned!” Since I was not yet able to discern between temptation and sin, I let the shield of faith fall, believing I had sinned. This plunged me into deep spiritual darkness, and I felt like God had forsaken me.

To address this feeling, I prayed and fasted and called a pastor, who prayed with me. Having repented of the sin I thought I committed, I regained my equilibrium. Due to my ignorance in equating temptation

with sin, this cycle recurred frequently. Over time, this caused me to become spiritually weak and discouraged. I was like a plant that is uprooted every day by a young child who wants to see if its roots are growing. I thought that someone who is saved and sanctified should have different feelings when being tempted. This phase of my life lasted around three years.

Gradually, God granted me insight, revealing some of the secrets of His will. I came to understand that God looks not at our feelings but at our intentions or, in other words, our heart. We can desire to do the right thing, regardless of our feelings. The whispers of Satan may cause us to have the wrong feelings, but God is concerned with what we want to do. It was clear to me that I wanted to do the right thing. It was my wish to do the will of God. When I learned and fully understood this, I had victory. I was able to firmly resist Satan and realized that as long as my will coincides with the Word of God, I have victory and God is happy with me. A sinner’s will is not free. Looking back at his old life, Paul says, “To will is present with me, but *how* to perform what is good I do not find” (Romans 7: 18).

Children of God have free will since they have been saved from the power of Satan. They can overrule their feelings in order to say no to temptation and yes to God’s will. That is the secret of salvation and victory. We need to live according to faith, not feelings.



*“Come and hear, all you who fear God,
And I will declare what He has done for my soul.”
(Psalm 66: 16)*

Scripture does not say that those who feel right will be saved but that those who desire and believe will be saved. God can give us both the will and the ability to do the right thing. We have no need to pay attention to our feelings or Satan’s voice. Be strong in the Lord, and build your faith on the Word of God (Ephesians 6:10–18)!

Clarity on the Doctrine of Sanctification

Having achieved victory in this struggle, I had developed a strong foundation for my soul and was able to be of help to others facing similar issues.

However, I did not yet fully understand sanctification. I was certain that I had been sanctified, and I saw evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in my life, but I had trouble explaining the experience of sanctification to myself, not to mention to others.

God granted me clarity in 1914, when I was living near the Siberian border, having been imprisoned during World War I. My feelings were an obstacle to me in this regard as well since I was expecting sanctification to express itself at an emotional level. Later, God showed me that the Holy Spirit does not take away our natural feelings; rather, our feelings are like a musical instrument that can play both high and low tones. God created us with these feelings. They are tools for our mind to use. After all, we are not made of stone or wood. People who have been saved and sanc-

tified still have feelings, and we can also be tempted through these feelings (James 1:14).

Salvation and sanctification are based on our will, not our feelings. In the garden of Gethsemane, Satan managed to make a big impact on our Lord’s feelings, but the Lord was able to win the victory through power from above and by remaining devoted to the will of God. The power of the Holy Spirit is not expressed in a frenzy of ecstasy but in joy in the Lord and in strength during suffering. The lives of the disciples before and after Pentecost clearly display the effect of sanctification and the power of the Holy Spirit. Although the disciples were born again before Pentecost, they had lacked the strength from above.

This brings me to the idea of original sin, or innate depravity. While the term “original sin” is not found in the Bible, the concept is biblical. The Lord revealed this secret to me over time as well. In our natural, sinful state, we cannot perceive the Holy Spirit; to do so, we must focus on spiritual things or have our eyes opened by God.

We see this inherent depravity in the apostles before Pentecost. They were already children of God, and the Savior Himself had referred to them as branches of His vine. He had also stated that they were not of the world, just like Him. These are only some of the verses that prove that the disciples were already saved.

How do we know that the disciples nonetheless struggled with their inherently sinful nature? For in-

stance, in Matthew 20:20–28, the pride of two disciples, James and John, was revealed, and the other ten disciples clearly struggled with jealousy. That is a result of egoism and the sinful nature we are born with. We can see the same issues, among others, in the lives of saved but unsanctified people, including many pastors today. Selfishness is an expression of inherent depravity. It shows that the Holy Spirit has not yet cleansed that person.

Without Pentecost, the apostles and the first church would never have become one heart and one soul. Our inborn egoism gives rise to disunity. In His omniscience, our Lord recognized this in His disciples and made them aware of the necessity of being baptized in the Holy Spirit, who would cleanse them of this obstacle. Jesus Himself provided a wonderful practical example of how they should aspire to lead their lives. The Holy Spirit, the faithful teacher, later made it possible for them to achieve this by cleansing and sanctifying them.

It must have made the Lord's heart heavy to see His disciples' impure motivations! He must have prayed for them often, as in John 17. Despite their absolute integrity and the perfect example of Jesus, this deeper cleansing did not occur to or for them immediately. This may be the case for sincere pastors and children of God today as well, who cannot understand that a deeper cleansing is necessary.

If the disciples had not experienced this cleansing through the Holy Spirit, they would soon have been divided through schisms as different denominations arose—perhaps Petrine, Jamesian, and Pauline—similar to the way things are today. The tendency towards schisms is also discussed in 1 Corinthians 3. It is caused by the spirit of the flesh.

Children of God are dead to the world and sin but not to their ego. In this state, they live both for God and themselves, not having fully submitted to God. Our original sin becomes apparent in our lives if we live for ourselves.

Over the years, God showed me that salvation does not require full comprehension of all of His plan. A willing, repentant heart and childlike faith are enough for us to become children of God. More knowledge and deeper understanding follow in time. Even then, much remains a mystery, and we will only fully understand everything once we are with the Lord (1 Corinthians 13:12).


We could say the same about sanctification. If we are fully willing to die to our ego and to submit ourselves fully to the Lord, God will make His promise come true for us and bless us with His Holy Spirit to cleanse us of the remaining obstacles. We do not need to fully understand this process, but it is important to know that the fire of His Spirit consumes everything that displeases the Lord, including our disruptive ego. The Holy Spirit gives us the love of Christ in greater measure, not in the same quantity as God Himself, but certainly of the same quality. This experience has nothing to do with our feelings. As long as we ask for it and sincerely seek it, we will receive sanctification.

Being saved, we need to be vigilant for threats to our salvation. When temptation comes, we must remain dead to sin in order to remain victorious. In the same way, being sanctified, we need to be vigilant for threats to our sanctification. We must maintain our submission to God every day and, if necessary, even increase it. A good comparison might be marriage. Speaking the vows on our wedding day is not the end of it; we then need to keep these vows despite the struggles and temptations we will encounter throughout our lives.

Why did the Holy Spirit keep the twelve apostles in Jerusalem for so many years even though they had already been commissioned to go spread the Gospel throughout the world? The answer may be that Jerusalem was the most difficult place for them to be. In Jerusalem, they had to prove their submission in practice, and they had to learn to practice unity by coming together as one heart and one soul and remaining that way. Unity and self-sacrifice represent the pinnacle of spiritual life in God. Because the apostles and the first church truly lived this out, the Holy Spirit was able to lead the church and spark revivals. It was a theocracy in the truest sense of the word. Due to a shortage of spiritual life in God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit has largely been lost today, and people have taken its place.

Human nature and the absence of sanctification are at the root of the many schisms and differing denominations dividing Christianity. There is a major lack of sanctified living, and that is why the Lord can do so little.

I have addressed this issue at such length because I myself went through many internal struggles before achieving clarity, and I have observed that others have yet to achieve it as well. ■



The Cross—My Glory

*O cross, thou only place
of refuge in this world of sorrows!
He who flees to thee is safe and secure;
even the forces of hell may come,
thou art a firm and strong castle.*

*O cross, thou only star of hope
in the dark valley of the earth,
thou showest the way to home
far away with thy mild radiance.
Who never, never goes astray,
who stands questioning beneath the cross.*

*O cross, thou only anchorage
in storm-tossed waves;
the ship that found anchorage with thee,
no storm can wreck it.
The wild tide rages in vain,
the anchor that rests in you holds fast.*

*O cross, thou only resting place
for those who wander, sick and weary.
-Come, all you who are weary and faint,
at the cross is rest and peace.
Here your hunger will be satisfied,
here is the spring from which refreshment wells up.*

*O cross, thou only heavenly fortress,
thou door to paradise,
through you alone we go to the place
that I greet with longing.
—Reviled cross—my sanctuary!
Cursed cross—my only glory!*

Report from Bolivia

We look back on the past year 2023 with gratitude. On December 3, 2022, we traveled as a family with our two children and

home, but the house filled up before the end of the year.

Our main task was to manage the children's home.

This included drawing up duty rosters for the staff and children, conducting devotions, taking the children to the doctor, providing childcare, sewing, and all the janitorial duties. The care of the animals (chickens, cows, and pigs) was also performed with the help of the children.

The early morning prayer meetings with the staff and the morning and evening devotions with the children were particularly important to us. Our deepest wish was to tell the children again and again about God's love and to impress on their hearts that God is there for us.

Over the course of the year, many people from different countries visited us. Some only stayed for a short time, others for three months, and some even for a year. We are grateful to God for everyone who helped.

Without this support, many excursions with

the children and other activities would not have been possible.

the Willi and Larissa Bese family, also with two children, from Herford, Germany to Bolivia. After much prayer, we felt convicted to take over the directorship of the children's home for a year.

Right next to the children's home is a beautiful apartment with three bedrooms, a bathroom, and a large living and dining area. As soon as we had unpacked our suitcases and looked around the children's home, we felt at home. Our children, Alina (14 years old) and Anne-Marie (9 years old), also immediately felt at home.

Since Willi Bese is a bricklayer and project manager, he worked intensively on the extension of the dormitories for the boys. After six weeks of work, the Bese family returned to Germany and subsequently came back to Bolivia for five weeks in October 2023 to complete the brickwork.

Our arrival marked the start of a different kind of work under changed circumstances. When we arrived, only ten children were living in the children's



Devotional



Feeding the Calves



In Front of the Finished Addition

Because of the building site, many helpers also came to work on the construction project. We are grateful that no one was injured during this time, and, after a lot of hard work, the first boys were able to move into the addition in the summer. Since November 2023, all boys and male employees have been housed in the new building.

Nine children now live in the home permanently, while others come to the children's home for the duration of their parents' stay at the rehabilitation center, usually for a period of three months. A maximum of 45 children at one time lived in the children's home. Over the course of the year, we took in around 100 children. We are also very grateful that the children can attend school at the children's home during their stay. This is a special privilege, as not all children have access to schooling.



Play Time!

During this time, our own children attended an online German school so that they could go back to their old classes when we returned to Germany.

A particularly difficult time was when dengue fever was raging in the children's home. The course



Wedding of Sonja & David

of the disease was so bad for many that hospitalization was necessary. But with God's help, we also got through this trying phase. To God be the glory!

At the children's home, three women work in the kitchen, three in childcare, two employees run the school, and a young woman tidies up and does the laundry. Leo Grötzinger has been working at the children's home since October 2020. After our departure, he took over the directorship again. All of the staff do a great job. It's not just a job but a mission in action. We are often asked whether this work is meaningful. The answer can be found in the happy eyes of the children!

During the year, we experienced God much more deeply and got to know Him better. "Unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman stays awake in vain." We experienced this anew every day. God is our protection.

We arrived home in Germany after an eventful year, immensely grateful and enriched by many experiences with God. To God be the glory and praise for everything!

Hagel family, Herford (DE)

Christ is Triumphant!

Christ Jesus, our Lord, He triumphantly saves;
Yes, free from all shackles He rose from the grave.

Rejoice, oh my soul, and eagerly tell:

Our glorious Lord defeated all hell!

Rejoice, oh my soul, Christ gloriously reigns;

Rejoice in His vict'ry, He triumphed again!

For Satan and sin, hell, sorrow, and death

Suffered defeat by His majesty's breath!

O grasp this truth, be strong in the battle;

Jesus is with you and helps in each struggle!

In each situation, new strength He gives!

Don't be fearful of death, for your Savior lives!

Ignaz Heinrich von Wessenberg