



# Foundation of Faith

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**DON'T BE AFRAID!**

**GOD'S FAITHFULNESS GIVES US COMFORT**

**LONELY—AND YET NOT ALONE**

**DON'T BE AFRAID—GOD CAN HANDLE IT!**

**EXPERIENCES WITH GOD**

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## FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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## *Editorial*

Dear Reader,

We all know what fear is. That is a fact of life. For instance, I remember being seven or eight years old and my parents sending me out on a few small errands one winter evening. It was already dark, so I sang as I went along, trying to make my voice sound like a grown man's. When I got home, my mother asked me, "Were you scared? I heard you singing." Yes, I was scared!

Where does fear come from? What causes it? We find our answer in the Word of God.

In the very first chapters of the Bible, we read how God created Adam and Eve. They initially lived in peace and communion with the Creator in the Garden of Eden, but when the serpent Satan deceived them, they disobeyed and sinned, bringing shame and anguish into their hearts.

As a result, they fled from the face of God and hid among the trees, and when the Lord called for Adam, we read that Adam answered, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself" (Genesis 3: 1-10).

God's Word shows us that as humans, we have reason to fear the dark powers that surround us: sin, death, and Satan. However, God's Word also shows us Someone who is stronger than all the powers of darkness and the world: Jesus Christ, our Redeemer, our Savior, and our Deliverer from these powers. He, the Son of God, calls to us, "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; you *are* Mine" (Isaiah 43: 1).

Turn to Him, dear Reader; He can free you from all fear and give you inner peace!

*H. D. Nimz*

# Do Not Be Afraid!

“Do not be afraid . . . I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.” (Genesis 15: 1)

I had gotten to know a very ungodly man. After many a conversation, I finally convinced him to promise me to read through the New Testament once without prejudice.

He did it. And from then on, he never missed a Sunday service again.

“How did you do with this book?” I asked him. He said: “There was a lot I didn’t understand. And I would have given up reading if it hadn’t been for my promise to you.

“There was so much in it that worried me that I would have preferred to throw the book away. But on the other hand there was a lot that comforted me unlike anything else in my life. That’s why I want to build my life on this book.”

This man had learned: God’s Word can comfort!

Abraham also experienced this more than 3000 years ago. It was a time when he was confused. He could not cope with the way God was leading him. Then God’s word came to him: “Do not be afraid.” It is as if a loving mother’s hand strokes the hot forehead of a child who feverishly hallucinates.

“Do not be afraid.” As a student, I heard a phrase from a philosopher that I didn’t quite understand at the time: existential anxiety. I’m sure we understand this phrase today.

No comfort of the world helps against the anxiety in this world. But the Word of God, which became flesh in Jesus and dwelt among us, comforts us: “Do not be afraid . . . I am your shield.” ■

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## I Will Fear No Evil

A few years ago on a Sunday evening on the train, a mother sat opposite me with her five-year-old daughter. It was pitch black outside, and the rain pattered incessantly against the windows. The girl stood on the bench and gazed happily out into the dark night. As she drummed on the window, she sang quietly to herself: “Because I am Jesus’ little sheep.”

What made the little girl so happy? At her age, she couldn’t yet fully understand the meaning of the song she was singing. And the dark night looking in through the window was certainly no reason to sing.

There had to be another reason for the secret: Her

mother was holding her tightly, and she felt safe and secure in those arms. “You’re with me.” That’s it!

How different the lives of people who do not know Jesus often look. They are trapped in fear. It is as if the night of a dark, blind fate is knocking on the windows of their hearts and homes and robbing them of the joy of life. They have no songs, they see no sun, and no star of hope shines for them. The fear of misfortune is their only faithful companion. What a bleak life!

But if “the LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psalm 27: 1). He is with me in every situation! ■



## Under the Protection of the Most High

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighbourhood in which I laboured was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardour to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest; I felt that my burden was heavier

than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words:—"Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. ■

# God's Faithfulness Gives Us Comfort

| *"My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!" (Haggai 2: 5)*

Anyone who looks at the development of our world from a biblical perspective increasingly gets the impression that we are living in the last days. The anti-Christian forces are gearing up for battle—secretly and openly.

Nevertheless the "little flock" has God's promise (Luke 12: 32), a promise that holds even when His people are facing the most difficult testing of their faith. It is comforting for God's people, His church, to know that the strongest ally is on their side! The Bible verse from Haggai assures us: "My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!" That is light in darkness, even in the darkness of our time.

## The historical background

The words of the prophet Haggai were pronounced around 520 BC. The mighty Babylonian kingdom had collapsed due to the victory of the Persians. Darius ruled in the Persian Dynasty begun by Cyrus. Thanks to the leniency of the new government, the Jews who were in Babylonian captivity were allowed to return to Judah and Jerusalem and commence rebuilding the temple. This shows how God can guide hearts to the benefit of His chosen people.

The prophet Haggai was faced with a difficult task. Through him, God speaks to those who have returned from Babylon: "*Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses, and this temple to lie in ruins?*" (Haggai 1: 4). Times of construction are often times of trial. They can reveal the true disposition of those who are called to work. In this case, their priority for rebuilding did not coincide with that of the Lord. They said: "The time has not come, the time that the LORD's house should be built" (Haggai 1: 2).

But that changed. And it changed because the Word of God was taken seriously again. The secular and spiritual leaders, namely the governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua, as well as the people, took

notice. God's announcement of judgment was no longer ignored. The Spirit of the Lord was at work. They reconsidered their priorities. There was a new spiritual awakening. As a result, God says: "My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!" Now the people of God who had returned home could get to work. God was with them.

## This word of God is also for us

As a message inspired by God, it is also valid for the New Testament church. The Spirit of God activates the living Word. He convicts, gives knowledge of sin, and makes us willing to repent. Those who are sincere accept God's salvation through Jesus Christ. They experience salvation and are born again.

The blessings of God are showered upon us through the Holy Spirit. God's banquet table is lavishly prepared. We read of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5: 22. We read of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12. The Spirit has these treasures for us. They are part of the normal Christian life. We are told to strive for the best gifts. The best gift according to 1 Corinthians 13 is love.

In our time, it is especially important that the Holy Spirit can work, because only in His power can we remain faithful to the truth of the Bible. It is therefore comforting that God has promised His Spirit to His people as a perpetual blessing.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of love, of prayer, of confidence, certainty, service, and wisdom. The path by which we increasingly experience how and what the Holy Spirit works is called sanctification!

It is only through the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to live in obedience to God's will. His will must be the first priority in our lives. Paul says, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2: 20). What entire sanctification signifies is expressed in the following poem:

*All I think and speak and do,  
let it, Lord, be done for You.  
Let there not be anything  
not subject to Christ, my King.  
May it be my heart's pursuit  
to display the Spirit's fruit  
So that all the world may see  
God's pure love that dwells in me.*

### **The Holy Spirit may withdraw**

The Bible says: “Do not quench the Spirit” (1 Thessalonians 5:19). If the Holy Spirit is ignored, quenched, or grieved by self-love, disobedience, unforgiveness, and worldliness, He withdraws. Concerning King Saul, who disobeyed God and did not repent, we read: “But the spirit of the LORD departed from Saul, and a distressing spirit from the LORD troubled him” (1 Samuel 16:14). In the New Testament, we read about the tragedy of Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), who also grieved the Holy Spirit.

### **We are never alone**

If we follow the Lord, we are never alone. “My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!” (Haggai 2:5). The Holy Spirit is there for our salvation and to counsel us. He gives us victory over sin, equips us for ministry, empowers us to witness in word and deed, and strengthens us to persevere even in sickness and persecution if need be. By the grace of God and the guidance of His Spirit, we can continue to be faithful until He calls us home. God keeps His promises. That is why we need “not fear” because we have the promise that His Spirit remains with us. He will preserve us and bring us to our goal. Therefore, despite what is happening in the world today, we can live victorious lives because God is faithful, and this gives us comfort.

W. G.



# Trust in God

“Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward” (Hebrews 10: 35).

**T**rust in God requires faith. Without faith in God, one cannot speak of trust in God. However, should it be difficult to have faith in God? If we look at the wonderful creation and then think about how everything was brought into existence by an omnipotent word of God and how God sustains everything by His power and His omnipotent word, it will certainly not be difficult for us to trust such a great and mighty God.

If we then consider God’s faithfulness, how He always faithfully fulfilled His promises; how wonderfully He led His people who trusted and obeyed Him at all times; how He proved Himself faithful to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for example, and led them so wonderfully, our trust will grow stronger.

Let us think of King David and the wonderful experiences he had. Even as a boy, he had learned to trust in God. When he was confronted by Saul, he could testify that he had fought and overcome a lion and a bear by trusting in God. That is why he was not afraid of the godless giant who had mocked the God of Israel. Trusting in God, he undertook the fight with Goliath. God, whom he trusted, did not let him be put to shame but gave him victory. He emerged victorious from many years of persecution by Saul. So, what was the cause of all his glorious victories? We can say it short and simple: “Trust in God.”

Asaph felt as if it was over for him, but God remained faithful. He did not abandon him, just as He does not abandon anyone who trusts in Him. The distress had risen to the highest level, but the psalmist’s resolve was firm, and he exclaimed: “Nevertheless I *am* continually with You; You hold *me* by my right hand” (Psalm 73: 23).

What a rock-solid and at the same time childlike trust David also expresses in the 23rd Psalm: “The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want.” Even in the dark valley, David was not afraid because he knew that the Lord was with him and would not leave him nor forsake him. His trust in God did not waver, and God

stood by him. He has never put anyone to shame who has trusted in Him.

Are you perhaps also going through difficult trials, dear Soul? Does it seem as if all your hoping, praying, and longing is in vain? Be of good cheer; the Lord loves you! Don’t throw away your trust; God sees and knows your situation. In fact, He knows it much better than you do. He will not abandon you!

How clearly and firmly the prophet Isaiah expresses this when he says: “Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10). And in Isaiah 43: 2, it says: “When you pass through the waters, I *will be* with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you.” Oh, what a strong and mighty God we have! And this strong and mighty God loves us and is interested in us. So, shouldn’t we trust Him? How can we hesitate to rely on His promises? Confidently believe that God is close to you even in the darkest hours and that He will not abandon you. When things get bleak and dark around you, cling even more firmly to the glorious promises of God, all of which are yes and amen in our Lord Jesus Christ.

If only we keep our eyes open, we can see every day how true it is that God will not let anyone be put to shame who trusts in Him, who believes and obeys His words and places their trust in them. Even if God strikes a wound, He has balm for it and also heals it again. In everything He does, His intentions are only loving, and He will work everything out for our good. Therefore, let us trust in Him in a childlike way, be confident and undaunted, and wait for the Lord at all times and in all situations. He will bring everything to a glorious conclusion and make everything beautiful in His time. All we need to do is trust and obey God.

Charles E. Orr



# Be of Good Cheer!

“Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.” (Matthew 14: 27)

One might ask whether it is necessary to remind God’s children of this message. Originally, it was addressed to the disciples—those who were with the Lord Jesus and often witnessed His works. They had experienced the feeding of the five thousand. Yet, they had seemingly forgotten that their Master was not an earthly king but a King of Heaven.

Life is pleasant and easy when surrounded by good company. It is easier to fulfill our duties when the sun is shining. However, it is also beneficial to go through wind and weather because it strengthens us. Thus, the disciples were sent by their Master onto the lake, where their boat was soon caught by a storm, tossed about, and driven off course. Not only outwardly but also inwardly, they lost their direction. They saw no glimmer of hope and felt abandoned and alone. When the Lord approached them, they didn’t recognize Him at first and thought they were seeing a ghost. Only His calming words, “Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid” brought them peace.

Isn’t our life often similar? For a time, perhaps in our early youth, we knew nothing of storms and struggles. The world seemed bathed in a rosy glow. But then a small cloud appeared on the horizon and soon grew into a wall of clouds, and, eventually, we had to face the reality of stormy winds raging around our little life’s

boat. Do we then forget that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, watches over us on our journey? Are we allowing ourselves to be thrown off course in the storms that we presently face—you in your circumstances, and I in mine?

When we set out onto the turbulent sea at the Master’s command and the wind opposes us, it is not to our detriment. Let us sail on with confidence, assured that He knows our difficulties, knowing that they will give Him the opportunity to reveal His glory to us even more fully.

Is there anything in our lives of which He cannot say, “I know”? These two words run like a thread through the Holy Scriptures: “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. . . . I know your works, tribulation, and poverty . . .” (see Jeremiah 29:11; Revelation 2 and 3).

The words of Jesus brought the disciples back on course. In the little boat, all became calm. His words are meant to calm our hearts as well. If the storm has driven your little life’s boat off course and you feel you are gazing into darkness, let Him once again grant you a clear vision of faith and call out to you with His word: *Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid.* ■



# Lonely—and Yet Not Alone

*“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”*  
(Philippians 1: 3–5)

This is written by a lonely man. He is in a Roman prison with a clanging chain on his hand. The future lies dark and uncertain before him. The next day could be his last. Perhaps the messenger of death will knock on his door today.

A lonely man, a prisoner, with one foot already in the grave, on the threshold of the place of execution that robs him of his life, and yet a grateful man. His first emotion is praise and thanksgiving—a happy man. He writes a letter to the Philippians that is saturated with joy and overflowing with peace. Lonely, and yet not alone—he knows something of spiritual community. He feels as if many unseen people are kneeling and praying with him.

There are so many lonely people in the wide world. Some are lonely as soon as they are born. No father acknowledges him; no mother wants to know anything about her. They have to spend their youth with strangers. Some remain lonely, unloved, misunderstood, unappreciated, and shunned by everyone, eventually fading like the rose in the valley. Some people become lonely; yesterday they were happy in a rich circle with nurturing love, and suddenly they are robbed of all happiness and all people. And some die lonely, with no hand to lay on their head, and no one to speak a word of comfort to their soul as they close their eyes one last time.

But what about us? Don't we sometimes feel completely alone in the midst of the hustle and bustle of life? The greatest suffering, the deepest joy—don't we often have to bear and fight through our greatest suffering alone? Sometimes we cannot share even our deepest joy with others.

So the apostle's example in our text applies more or less to all of us. He calls out to each and every one of us: You are not alone, despite your loneliness. You do not need to be lonely because God is with you. No one and nothing can prevent you from having fellowship with Him. And if your body was bound, your hands were tied and your mouth shut, who would deny you the

opportunity to commune with your God in thanksgiving, petition, and intercession? If only we were serious about our faith in God. If only we would hold on to the fact that He is omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient. If only we would fully rely on His mercy.

Loneliness in particular can help us perceive God's closeness. When people leave us, we can feel His comfort. When old ties are broken, it is all the easier to forge a new bond with the One who remains forever. When the sound of the day falls silent, the ear listens all the more keenly to God's voice. When the eye becomes duller and darker, the enlightened spirit looks upwards all the more longingly. The more silence there is around us, the more reason we have to give thanks. I am not alone; the Father is with me. “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” (Psalm 23: 4).

But Paul knows another community. He stands on the same ground as the church. They have found each other through the gospel. The Savior has brought those who were once so far apart close together. In Him they have become one heart and one soul. A chain of love has been woven from heart to heart. Nothing can tear it apart. They meet daily in prayer before the throne of God. There, even the strangers become known to each other; there, even the lonely find their family.

Those who can pray are never alone. They are in invisible and yet tangible communion with countless others who are on the same road. They feel how they are carried and strengthened by others who have the same hope in their hearts. And even if you sometimes want to sigh like the prophet Elijah as if you were left alone, even if you so often feel misunderstood, then open your eyes and your heart, pray, believe, and give thanks. Lonely and yet not alone, because through the fellowship of the gospel you have been placed in the great multitude of the redeemed.

Jesus Christ promises us: “I am with you always, *even to the end of the age*” (Matthew 28: 20). ■



## Go Forward

When the spies returned from spying on the land of Canaan, they came to Moses with the fruit of the land and said, “We went to the land where you sent us. It truly flows with milk and honey, and this *is* its fruit. Nevertheless, the people who dwell in the land *are* strong; the cities *are* fortified *and* very large; moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. . . . Then Caleb quieted the people before Moses, and said, ‘Let us go up at once and take possession, for we are well able to overcome it’” (Numbers 13: 27–30).

But the other spies brought the land they had explored into disrepute among the children of Israel. They told them about the giants they had seen and compared themselves as locusts to the giants. “So, all the congregation lifted up their voices and cried, and the people wept that night” (chapter 14:1).

Continuing on seemed dangerous, but returning to a vast desert was discouraging. The question of which way they should go was a serious one. So, the people began to grumble, wishing they had died in Egypt or would still die in the desert. Joshua and Caleb spoke words of comfort to them and said: “‘The LORD *is* with us. Do not fear them.’ And all the congregation said to stone them with stones” (verses 9–10).

God’s displeasure was now aroused, and He wanted to destroy the children of Israel, but Moses interceded before the Lord on their behalf. Now God did not allow them to enter the land. They had to return to the desert, where they would all die, while their children were later allowed to enter the Promised Land.

As I read how God dealt with the children of Israel, my thoughts were drawn to our spiritual battle. We sometimes come to a place in our lives where continu-

ing ahead seems almost impossible, but going back into the wilderness of sin would bring certain death and destruction. When God sometimes places spiritual duties and responsibilities upon us, our inability and human weakness rise before us like great and insurmountable obstacles. Satan will bring all this out and make our inability seem credible. Mistakes made in the past will rise like mountains before us, and then we must decide. Should we go forward? Or do we want to go back like the Israelites? If they had obeyed God, they would have been allowed to enter Canaan.

It is the same with us. If we obey God, we will receive all the promised blessings. But if we refuse to obey God, we will experience what the people of Israel did. But we need not go back, we need not succumb. In the power of our God, we can go forward victoriously. God Himself gives the upright the necessary strength to do so. He also helps us to pass all tests and always provides enough strength and grace if we humbly ask Him for it. He wants a faithful and tested, indeed, an established people. But if we are not obedient to God, we will return to the wilderness of sin. Those who are faithful will take our place.

How good it is to know that God will always give us enough grace to do what He requires of us! If we look to Jesus, we will always be victorious.

Let us go forward courageously in the name and in the power of the One who is mighty to save and to preserve and who can and will always give us victory.

“O God, *You are* more awesome than Your holy places. The God of Israel *is* He who gives strength and power to *His* people. Blessed *be* God!” (Psalm 68:35).

M. L. Meyer

# The Lord Was with Joseph

When reading the wonderful story of Joseph's life, several times we find the expression: "The Lord was with him."

When he was sold by his brothers to the merchants going to Egypt, he must have been terrified. He was certainly very frightened at first as he was now facing a dark future. For a slave at that time, there was little hope of ever being free again. But as dark and bleak as it looked in human terms, we read: "The LORD was with Joseph, and he was a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian. And his master saw that the LORD *was* with him and that the LORD made all he did to prosper in his hand. So Joseph found favor in his sight, and served him. Then he made him overseer of his house, and all *that* he had he put under his authority" (Genesis 39: 2-4).

When Joseph had somewhat recovered from his initial fright at his situation, he no doubt offered everything to God in childlike prayer, and he was certainly comforted by God. He became aware of the glorious fact that God was with him. That was the most important thing. And this fact that the Lord was with him made a huge difference to his situation. God gave him, his faithful servant, the ability to adapt to all circumstances and conditions. We can be sure that Joseph asked for strength from God every day, and he received it in abundance.

But just when Joseph had found new hope, when he could clearly see that God was with him and stood by him, something quite unexpected happened. He was tempted by Potiphar's wife and resisted the temptation. At the instigation of this wicked woman, he was now unjustly accused and thrown into prison, even though he was innocent.

Again, Joseph's situation looked extremely bleak and dark. But once again we read: "But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him mercy, and He gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners who *were* in the prison; whatever they did there, it was his doing. The keeper of the prison did not look into anything *that was* under Joseph's authority, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made *it* prosper" (Genesis 39: 21-23).

If we continue reading Joseph's story, we find that it was precisely because God was with him that Joseph was later able to interpret the dreams of the other two prisoners. The awareness that God was with him also gave him the strength and the willingness to forgive his brothers. It was God who was so close to Joseph, who made him so gentle and loving that he was able to lovingly meet even those who had wronged him so greatly.

After the death of their father, Joseph's brothers feared that he might now treat them differently and repay them for trying to destroy his young life. So they went to him and asked for forgiveness. Joseph said to them: "Do not be afraid, for *am* I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50: 19-20).

Oh, how wonderfully God helped Joseph to practice love and to repay evil with good! God was with Joseph, and He turned all the evil that people did to him to good.

Let's take the story of Joseph to heart. Have you perhaps been treated unfairly, or have you been misunderstood? Do you need to go through difficulties? Remain faithful to God, cling to Him, and believe with all your heart that He means well for you. Does God live in your heart? If this is the case, then God is with you, and He will give you the strength and grace to be and remain victorious in all situations. What a difference this makes. Yes, then we too will find enough reason to thank God, to praise and glorify Him, just as Joseph and many others once did.

Are you in prison like Joseph once was? Perhaps not in a literal prison, but in a prison of sickness and suffering? If so, remember that God can work this for the good, just like everything else. Is God with you? Do you have fellowship with Him? Then do as Joseph once did without doubt when he suddenly found himself in prison. Bring everything to God, place everything in His hands in childlike faith and trust that He will do everything well and bring it about gloriously.

"What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can be* against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" (Romans 8: 31-32). ■

# Press Forward with Courage!

Each of us have difficulties to overcome in life. Since we cannot escape them, we must face them with courage. We have all been created with a purpose, and we should therefore never give up the fight until we have achieved our goal.

Even in our spiritual life, there are many struggles for a follower of Jesus, and many obstacles often stand in his way. Here the battle must begin and be fought with fresh and bold courage. Scripture warns us: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. Resist him, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Peter 5: 8–9).

Whoever wants to win the prize, the crown of life, must be victorious in the Christian battle. But thanks be to the Lord that we can all be victorious through Jesus Christ, whose power is mighty in us who are weak. He wants to

lead us from victory to victory, if we only fully entrust ourselves to His guidance.

It may often seem as if everything is against us. However, in such hours we should not despair and lose heart but look up to the Lord, who is at the controls and knows how much we can endure. He is the wise leader, and if we follow His guidance and allow Him to lead us, we will walk safely. We will be victorious in the most difficult battles if we are obedient to Him. Our motto should be: “press forward with courage for God and His cause.”

We all love to see a bright sky. However, if it were always clear, there would be no rain and consequently no harvest. Wind and rain are necessary for growth and prosperity. This is also the case in the spiritual life.

When we overcome the trials we face and gain victory over them, we are strengthened. This is also how the outside world recognizes that we are true followers of Christ. Let us not be discouraged when we are tested and tempted or when difficulties stand in our way, but let us press forward with courage, for we know that God will give us victory if we are faithful to Him and obey His Word.

Many trials could not have been overcome victoriously if there had been a lack of courage and complete trust. If the enemy succeeds in discouraging someone, he has already won a lot. Furthermore, it is important to remember that every defeat we suffer can have

profound consequences. Others who must also go through similar trials are discouraged by our defeat. But if we do not lose heart and remain victorious, the courage of others will be strengthened, and they will be encouraged to push through to full victory. Let

*When we overcome  
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us fear neither storm nor rain but keep our eyes fixed on Jesus and move forward courageously, knowing that through Him we will be victorious.

To everyone who has suffered defeat, I would like to call out to you: Take courage. Pick yourself up. With the Lord’s help, you will be victorious!

Blessed are we if, at the end of our lives, we can say with Paul: “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day” (2 Timothy 4: 7–8).

Let us therefore be faithful, stand for the Lord and His cause, face all problems with courage, and trust in Jesus. He will lead us to victory! ■



## “Don’t do it!”

“Hey, what do you bet I can hit you on the first throw?” Nicholas asked his classmate Simon during recess, giggling.

“But take a few steps back!” Simon shouted.

Nicholas shook his head: “No, then you have an advantage!”

“I can’t get out of the way that quickly in my wheelchair,” protested Simon.

Nicholas took a step back and began to form a snowball. The teacher, Mrs. Schmidt, approached the two of them. “What are you doing?” she asked.

Nicholas quickly hid the snowball behind his back.

Mrs. Schmidt raised an eyebrow: “You know you’re not allowed to throw snowballs on the school playground, right?”

Disappointed, Nicholas dropped the snow, and the teacher moved along.

“She’s gone,” Simon grinned after a few seconds.

“No, let’s not do it,” said Nicholas. “She clearly said it’s forbidden.”

At lunch, Nicholas told his mother and little sister Laura about the incident.

“Did you throw snowballs afterward?” Laura wanted to know.

Nicholas shook his head.

“Why not?” Laura continued to ask.

“Because Jesus wants us to listen to the grown-ups. And Mrs. Schmidt is older than us,” Nicholas explained.

His mother nodded: “That was the right thing to do. Even if it’s not always fun, we should obey God’s will. Doesn’t Simon have an illness?”

Nicholas nodded: “Yes, his bones break very easily. That’s why he’s in a wheelchair.”

“Think about it, you could have seriously injured him unintentionally. It’s a good thing Mrs. Schmidt came in time.”

Nicholas thought about it and nodded. His mother was right. God had made sure that the teacher was there at the right moment. ■

## “Stop, Listen, Learn”

What do we do when an adult or older person asks us not to do something? Are we able to stop and do something else without any objections? Or do we think: “They’re just trying to spoil our fun”? Such thoughts come from the devil, and we must learn not to follow them.

Is it difficult for us to listen to what our elders say? God says in the Ten Commandments that children should obey their parents. The apostle Paul even says that we should all respect and listen to one another (Ephesians 5: 21). There are also rules in the church. God wants order in society, in the family, and in the church. That is why we should keep to this order voluntarily and out of love for God, not just because we have to.

In this way, Jesus is an example for us. When He went to Jerusalem with His parents to celebrate Passover, He stayed in the temple after the feast. His parents thought He was with the other children. When they did not find Him after a day, they returned to Jerusalem and discovered Him among the teachers in the temple. His mother asked: “Son, why have You done this to us? Look, Your father and I have sought You anxiously.” Jesus replied: “Why did you seek Me? Did you not know that I must be about My Father’s business?” (Luke 2: 48–49). Although Jesus was right, He still went home with His parents.

Why does the Bible say that we should take the advice of our elders? Older people often have more life experience and know better what consequences our actions could have. They usually only want the best for us, and it is wise to listen to them. If we don’t understand

why we shouldn’t do something, we can ask questions and learn from them.

And what do we do when our friends encourage us to do something even though we know it is wrong? We can pray, and God will either give us the right words or create a situation that helps us follow His commandments.

Katharina Raiser



*“Likewise you younger people, submit yourselves to your elders. Yes, all of you be submissive to one another, and be clothed with humility, for God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.”*  
1 Peter 5: 5

# Biblical AND Courtship MARRIAGE

Scripture tells us that God designed marriage in the Garden of Eden after He created the first woman for the first man. The design of marriage is by no means outdated; Jesus and Paul both referred to Genesis to answer difficult questions about love, commitment, and divorce (Matthew 19: 4–5; Ephesians 5: 31). In Genesis 1: 26–28, we read how God created man (Adam) on the sixth day of creation. Though God was pleased with how He created Adam, He was not pleased with the fact that Adam was alone, and so He intervened (Genesis 2: 18). Scripture says in Genesis 2: 21–23: “And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. And Adam said: ‘This *is* now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.’” Furthermore, Genesis 2: 24–25 says: “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.” Within this creation story of Adam and Eve, we find a number of God-designed purposes for marriage.

1) Separation from parents — “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother” (v. 24a): Marriage is designed to separate children from their parents (which is not a negative thing). When you’re a minor living at home, you’re dependent on your parents. They are your caregivers and guardians, but through marriage, this changes. With marriage, both parents and children need to cut these ties so that the husband and wife can provide for each other’s needs. This doesn’t mean that a married couple can’t seek the help or advice of others, but in such situations the couple should first discuss and determine together how best to seek help.

2) Lasting covenant — “be joined to his wife” (v. 24b): Marriage is designed to be a lasting covenant. Marriage is a covenant, not a contract. A contract is when one person agrees to do something as long as the other person does his or her part. The moment that the other person no longer carries through, a contract is no longer binding. A covenant, however, is a lasting promise. A marriage covenant is a promise before God that no matter what comes their way, a married couple will be faithful to one another, care for one another, protect each other, and love each other.

3) Unity — “and they shall become one flesh” (v. 24c): Marriage is designed to create unity between husband and wife. Jesus says in Matthew 19: 6, “So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, let not man separate.” Though a marriage covenant unites a man and woman before God, the couple does not leave the wedding ceremony perfectly unified in every manner of thinking or moral conviction. People are different and should be afforded the right to think for themselves. That said, after years of caring for one another and living together, married couples will often notice how similar they become. They learn to share each other’s values and even think in similar ways. This is why it is vital that Christians find marriage partners who serve Jesus. Paul warns us, “Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?” (2 Corinthians 6: 14–15). We need to be very careful and discerning about who we choose as a marriage partner. However, when we find someone who loves and serves Jesus, and someone we love and who loves us back, uniting in marriage is a wonderful thing.



4) Intimacy — “And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed” (v. 25): Marriage is designed to provide for the intimate, emotional, and physical needs of adults. Intimacy isn’t just physical; it is the assurance that we can be completely transparent with another individual without feeling afraid, embarrassed, or self-conscious. Adam and Eve were not ashamed to be together. To have this kind of intimacy in a marriage, there needs to be trust. If you can’t fully trust the person that you’re together with before you’re married, then this level of intimacy will be lacking once married.

5) To bear offspring — “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1: 28b): Marriage is designed to bear off-

spring and create stable and healthy environments for children to be raised.

“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was very good*” (Genesis 1: 31a). God’s design of marriage is very good. He was pleased at what He had created and enjoyed His communion with Adam and Eve. Married couples can still experience a part of Eden today when they follow God’s design for marriage and serve Him together.

*To be continued*

*David Knelsen  
Hamilton, ON*

CONCORDIA AVENUE CHURCH OF GOD  
MAY CONFERENCE: MAY 15 - 18, 2025

**Youth  
CONNECT**

**17**  
MAY, 2025

**9:30 AM**  
705 CONCORDIA AVENUE  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

*all youth and young adults ages 14+ are invited for a day of  
worship, fellowship, food, and activities.*

with guest speaker  
Pastor Knelsen  
from Hamilton

billeting deadline: April 30  
registration deadline: May 9

[www.cachog.org](http://www.cachog.org)



## Don't Be Afraid—God Can Handle It!

I fondly remember a song from my childhood. Even as an adult, it still resonates with me, especially when I'm struggling with worries and questions or when circumstances threaten to drag me down. The song has several verses, but two impact me deeply. Referring to God, the poet writes: "He's got the whole world in His hands," and in another verse, he makes it even more personal: "He's got you and me, brother, in His hands." What he is expressing is that our world is not out of control, even though it may seem that way to us. Although

God allows certain things that we don't understand, this naturally raises questions. Sometimes, we may even question God's actions. This children's song aims to help us understand that God has not lost control. Invisible to our eyes, God is working behind the scenes, steering the events of all humanity, including us. Even though He has given humans free will, the ultimate outcome is according to His plan and works for the good of those who love Him (Romans 8:28). A story from the Old Testament clearly illustrates this point.

Joseph, a young man, was sold into slavery by his own brothers. As his father's favorite, his dreams and his conduct did not appeal to them. He was hated and eventually rejected. Fast forward almost 30 years, and here we are. He reconciled with his brothers, and the entire family was relocated to Egypt, where they were provided for during a time of widespread famine. When their father dies, the brothers fear Joseph's revenge. As he stands before them, Joseph's entire life flashes before his eyes. Taking everything into account, he concludes: "But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive" (Genesis 50:20). Joseph's path was a difficult one. Some people may find themselves in a situation like Joseph's, perhaps even you. Unexplainable circumstances, hurts inflicted by others, unjust accusations, physical ailments, and many other struggles. Understandably, these events don't seem to make sense to us. We are confused—we ask questions. But for now, we find no answers. At least, not yet.

The details of Joseph's life were documented, providing us with two lessons:

1. We cannot avoid difficulties and injustices. Joseph's life was probably far more difficult at times than we can imagine. God never promised that we would be spared from life's storms, but He promised to be with us in them. In Acts 7, we find Stephen's rebuttal. Before the assembled Jews, he tells of the patriarchs of Israel, including Joseph and his life story. He summarizes: "But God was with Joseph" (Acts 7:9). And suddenly, Joseph's biography takes on a whole new meaning, and we realize, as the song says, "He's got you and me [and Joseph] in His hands."

2. Joseph's brothers intended to harm him. What they did was wrong—not only against Joseph but also against their father, Jacob. Sold into slavery, Joseph was taken by traders to a foreign land, where he had to live in a pagan environment. It seemed that God remained silent through it all. Our human nature will often ask, "Why does God allow this?" Even then, God remains silent. These are distressing situations. God has provided little about the details of our path but promised to be with us and assured us of a good ending. Joseph's story is the prime example of this truth. In His plan, God used even the evil actions of

Joseph's brothers to lead to a positive conclusion. Of course, it's clear in Joseph's life, but in our own lives, it's not always easy to see. Do you know why this is? The ending of our life story is not revealed to us. And because we are human, fear and worry combine to make life more difficult.

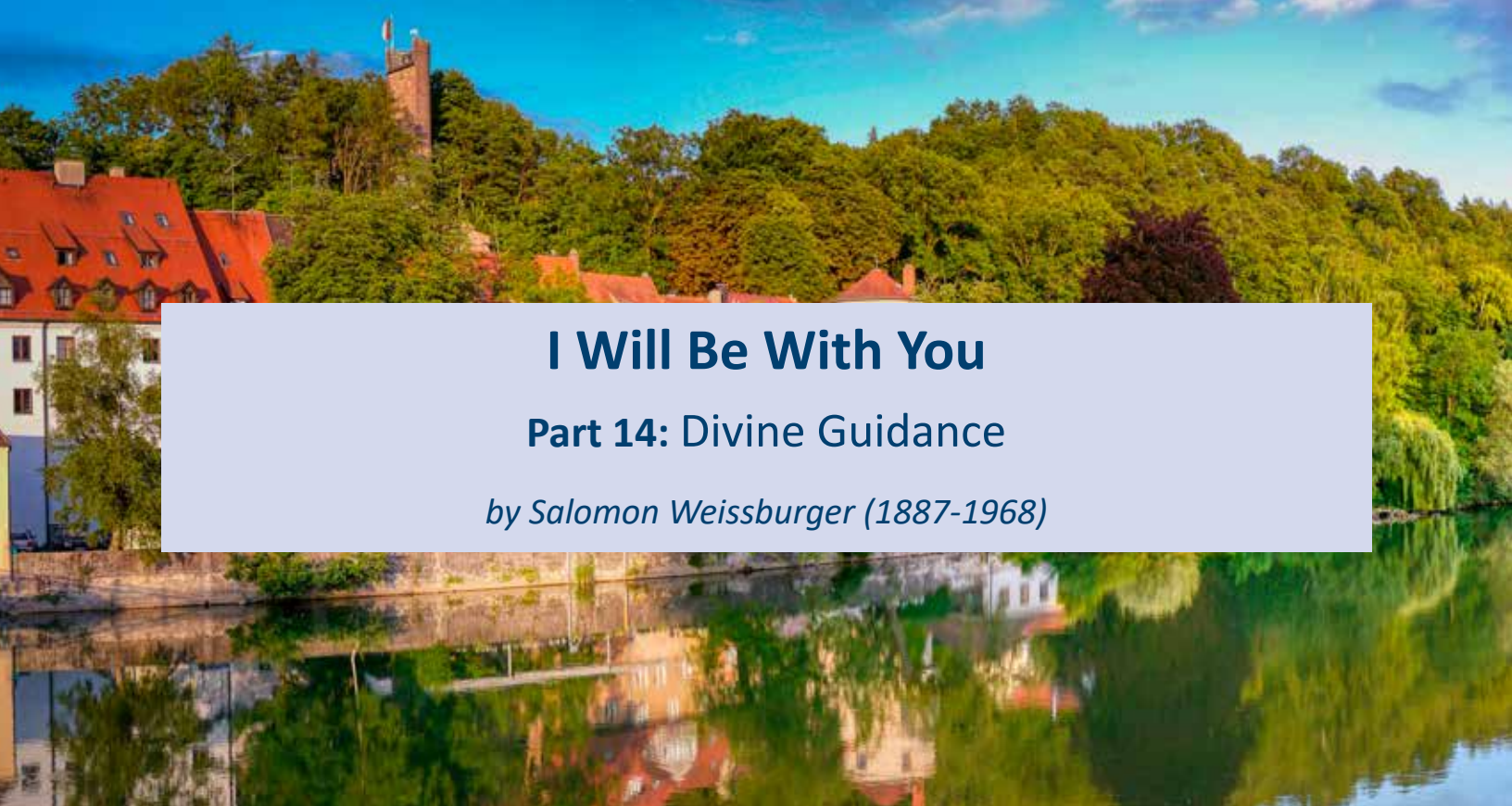
I realize that God wants to encourage us through the numerous "Do not fear" verses in the Bible. It would be one thing if this message came from me, but these three words are guaranteed by the living and great God who loves us. When the Creator of heaven and earth says, "Do not fear," it changes everything. It's as if God is assuring us, "Don't worry, I've got this!" When we take these words to heart, suddenly everything looks different. It reminds me of a bookmark that's been in my Bible for years. A little girl gave it to me for my birthday. When I see it, I can't help but smile. "You and I, we've got this"—God.

The secretary of the great English statesman Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658) was dispatched on an important mission to Europe. He stayed overnight in a harbor city, tossing and turning in his bed, unable to sleep. According to custom, his servant stayed in the same room, and he slept soundly. Eventually, the secretary woke up his servant, explaining, "I fear something will go wrong on this trip." "My lord," said the servant, "may I ask you a few questions? Did God rule the world before you were born?" "Certainly, He did," replied his lord. "And will He continue to rule it after you're gone?" asked the servant. "Of course, He will," answered his lord. "Then, my lord, let Him govern the present as well!" In just a few minutes, both the secretary and his servant were sound asleep.

The servant had made an accurate assessment of the situation. God holds the whole world, including us, in His hands. My dear friend—let me encourage you to trust God's words: "Do not fear!" In many cases, this statement is supplemented, as in the prophecy of Isaiah. There we read: "For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you'" (Isaiah 41:13).

The psalmist David draws this conclusion in Psalm 56:4: "In God I have put my trust; I will not fear." I quietly speak these words to myself. Why don't you do likewise?

*Harry Semenjuk  
Wetaskiwin, AB*



# I Will Be With You

## Part 14: Divine Guidance

by Salomon Weissburger (1887-1968)

**A**fter the First World War, the Ruhr area was occupied by the French and the Belgians. On the one hand, this was a difficult and turbulent time, but on the other it served the spiritual progress of God's cause. Many people put up passive resistance. People went to work, but they did not work, and still received their wages from the authorities.

At the time, it was thought that this situation could lead to war and that I could therefore be interned. I was advised to leave Essen. For weeks I prayed for clarity and divine guidance in this matter. Then, while I was traveling in East Prussia, the Lord spoke clearly to me through Hebrews 11:24–26. For the sake of the work, we should not leave but stay in Essen.

Further developments have shown how right this guidance was. If I had only thought of my own advantage and the preservation of my family, I would have needed to turn to secular work, and the development of the Ruhr region would have ceased. Much that was there would have declined.

The poet C. W. Naylor wrote in a song:


*Had I the choosing of my pathway,  
In blindness I should go astray,  
And wander far away in darkness,  
Nor reach that land of endless day.*

There was no uprising and no war. The occupying powers withdrew voluntarily. A different agreement had been reached. It is good to be guided by God and to always seek first the kingdom of God.

Similarly, it later happened again. When I had to give up my public ministry as a preacher, I had the choice of going to Poland or Brazil. In Poland, there were large congregations and only a few preachers. In human terms, the need seemed greater there. Going to Brazil was the more difficult path for me. Brazil in 1936 was not what it is today. There was also no mission and no church to support us financially. But it was clear to us that we had to go to Brazil, and we were not going to be stopped.

### **Call and trip to Brazil**

Because of my Jewish ancestry, it became impossible to work in Germany under the Nazi regime. When Brother Waurich took over the leadership of the congregation in Essen, it was still possible for a while. But the pressure on the “non-Aryans” grew stronger and stronger, and I gave up the ministry of the Word in Germany altogether. Most of our brothers and sisters in the Essen congregation didn't see the danger as that great and were determined to keep me on as a preacher. It took three church meetings before I was able to break



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

*Psalm 66:16*

away from the congregation. The brothers and sisters then accepted Brother August Borbe as my successor.

The hardest thing for me was to part from my co-workers and fellow pastors. I was so united with them that it was difficult for me to part. The years of working together had bound us together. I was very worried about the future of the work. Then the Lord met me and said: “If the work is built on you, it may perish. But if it is built on the Lord, it will stand.” So I was able to let go inwardly and put myself, my family, and the Lord’s work in God’s hands.

At that time, the congregation no longer dared to continue supporting me. As a result, my financial support was suddenly cut off. As we had no savings, we were suddenly destitute. But the Lord took care of us in His own way and didn’t let us down.

At the same time, a request came from Brazil to send a pastor. The letter went to Brother Brose, who was head of the mission headquarters at the time. Brother Brose passed the letter on to me, and after many prayers we clearly saw our way to Brazil.

At the time, Brother Zuber advised me to go to Poland because the need there was so great. However, when I asked at the Polish consulate, I didn’t get an entry permit. But what would have happened to us if we had gone to Poland? I would probably have been

killed, along with the many other Israelites. As you know, 6 million Jews were murdered in cold blood under Hitler. My two sons, who were left behind, also suffered and only miraculously escaped with their lives.

I will never forget that Brother and Sister Grannas had the courage to take us into their home for a few days until our emigration papers were in order. When the time came to leave, some of our brothers and sisters from the congregation out of love accompanied us to the train station and said goodbye to us, despite the great danger.

As I write down these memories, 31 years have passed since we last saw our children and grandchildren and the churches. Many a call came from over there during this time, also to help. When Brother Zuber was still alive, he wrote, among other things: “I still think with tears of the time when you were in Germany. With what love and unity we worked together!” And he asked me to come back and work with him in the ministry.

The human desire to see our children, grandchildren, and the ministry again was sometimes very strong, especially when my wife was still alive. But so far, the Lord has not allowed me to do so. We are in a holy battle. If God has placed us in a location, we have no right to leave it, even when danger or death threatens—unless we receive a new command from above.



## Judas Iscariot

*Text: John 12: 1-11*

Judas Iscariot is to this day despised among the disciples because he became a traitor. That is why he is in last place in all the lists of the apostles. Wherever we encounter him in the Gospels, we also find a reference to the fact that he became a traitor. He committed the most terrible and sinful act that a single person has ever committed. He betrayed the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for a handful of money.

The story of Judas is dark and gloomy and reminds us how far a person can fall. The other disciples loved Jesus more and more. The longer they were with Him, the stronger their love for Him became. With Judas, it was the other way around. Like the other disciples, he had three years of fellowship with Jesus, but his heart grew harder and harder until he

betrayed Jesus. The other eleven disciples are a great encouragement to us. Judas, on the other hand, is a great warning to us.

### **Name and origin**

The name Judas actually has a beautiful meaning: “the Lord leads.” But because of this betrayal, the name Judas always evokes negative thoughts. It was not the Lord who led him but the devil.

His surname was Iscariot. Some Jewish translations mention “Judah from K’riot.” His surname or epithet refers to his hometown and means “man from K’riot/Kerioth” (Rienecker). The city of Kerioth was in Judea. Judas was the only disciple from Judea, while all the other apostles came from Galilee.

### **Follower of Jesus and then dissociation from Him**

It is obvious that Judas had already followed Jesus even before Jesus chose the twelve. This applies to all disciples, including Judas. But why did he follow Him?

He lived at a time when most Israelites were waiting for the Messiah. When he heard about Jesus and saw His miracles, he must have thought that this was the true Messiah. He gave up everything and followed Jesus like the other disciples. He continued to stay with Jesus even when many others left Him.

Judas was probably a young, zealous Jew who hated the Romans and hoped that the Messiah would defeat all enemies and re-establish the kingdom of Israel. He saw that Jesus possessed power like no other, and this attracted him. He hoped for an earthly kingdom. He was probably less interested in the spiritual and emotional side. No, he followed Jesus in the hope of becoming powerful and rich himself. These were probably his motives.

When he began to understand that Jesus would not establish an earthly kingdom, his heart hardened more and more. To hide his increasing hardening and disappointment, he became a hypocrite. He was an excellent hypocrite. No one but Jesus realized what was going on in his heart. Jesus already called him a devil in John 6:70–71, while they were in Galilee. At that time, Judas was already disgruntled. He did not accept Jesus' spiritual kingdom and did not believe.

Greed and hypocrisy are the sad features of his character. One of the clearest examples of his love of money is described in John 12 when Mary poured out a precious anointing oil on Jesus' feet. This really upset Judas, and here we also find the comment that he was a thief and helped himself to the money that was donated. His betrayal also reveals a main motive that drove him to take this step. Money! He came to the rulers, and the first question was: "What will you give me?" That drove him on. He was greedy!

As he was a hypocrite, he was able to hide his true identity well. For example, he covered up his greed by appearing to care for the poor. In the next example, he was present at the Last Supper shortly before Jesus' death and pretended that nothing had happened, even though he had already met with the high priests and discussed how he was going to betray Jesus. He had his feet washed by Jesus and even asked: "Is it I?" when Jesus said that one of them would betray Him. None of

the disciples had the slightest idea that Judas would be the betrayer.

### **Betrayal and death**

In the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus often stayed with His disciples, where Judas had also always been present, he betrayed Him. And how he betrayed Him—with a kiss! That wouldn't have been necessary, as Jesus Himself came out and said: "I am *He*." But Judas was so filled with evil and so hypocritical that he kissed Him anyway (Matthew 26:49).

Kissing is a sign of love, affection, respect, and familiarity. Judas, on the other hand, used a kiss to betray Jesus. He addressed Him as "Rabbi" and betrayed Him at the same time. This only made His deed worse. He was hypocritical to the end.

Even in this situation, Jesus remained loving and kind to Judas. "Friend . . ." Here you can hear Jesus' deep compassion. He loved him, just like the others, but Judas rejected His love. This rejection brought him eternal death—through suicide.

### **What we can learn from this**

It is the darkest and most terrible story in the Bible, and yet it is there. It was written down through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. It is there to warn us.

1. Do not play with sin. Judas played with sin. It began harmlessly and ended terribly.
2. Do not despise the grace of God. Judas knew about the grace of God. He heard the invitation: "Come to Me, all *you* . . ." He understood what it was about, but he consciously rejected it.
3. You too are going into eternity. Judas walked step by step towards his eternal destruction. You are also going to eternity. Where are you going? To eternal darkness or to eternal light?

No one must end up like Judas. No one has to spend eternity in hell. There is another eternity. That is where God will be, where there is no sin, where God will wipe away all tears from our eyes—that is heaven. The way there is Jesus Christ. He invites you today. Please accept His offer.

*Eduard Albrecht  
Eppingen, Germany*

# Jesus is Visible– *In Actions and Attitude*

*Just as in many countries students from abroad can study and work, Canada has also welcomed a particularly large number of young people from India. For several years now, some of them have also come to the worship services in Kitchener-Waterloo.*

*In 2023, a student came quite regularly on Sundays and also to the prayer meetings. We invited her for a meal after the service one Sunday. Then she introduced me via her cell phone to her pastor in India, Brother Raxana Anand. He asked me to tell him a few things about my life and spiritual work.*

*Later, Brother Jake Wiebe (pastor of the congregation in Kitchener-Waterloo) got in touch with him. They are still in contact quite regularly via WhatsApp, talking about spiritual topics and praying together. We also regularly send the brother the Foundation of Faith publication.*

*Here is his testimony of how he miraculously found Jesus Christ and how he is serving Him in India.*

*H. D. Nimz*

## **Family background**

Greetings to you all in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I'm so happy and very much delighted to bring my testimony to Christians. I, Laxman (Raxana Anand), from India, was born and brought up in a fanatic Hindu family. I am the youngest of four brothers and one sister.

During my childhood, my parents never allowed me to indulge in any other religious activities except the Hindu way of life. I was a strict devotee of so many gods and goddesses of Hinduism. I used to worship Hindu gods and goddesses to the highest degree, and I hated Christians the most and all others as well. I used to get angry whenever I saw any activities happening in Christian churches around me. I was full of unbelief, and my eyes were blind. I was not open to listen to anyone regarding the gospel. Instead, I used to argue with believers about their faith, and many times I was even close to beating Christians and pastors as well. I was fully preoccupied by the Hindu beliefs and traditions. I was influenced by and fully indoctrinated in the Hindu way of life.

## **Salvation experience**

As part of my education, my parents applied for me to join the 8th Standard (8th Grade) at one of the government boarding schools. There I met a Christian named Gangulu, and I decided to become friends

with him. We were both very close, and our friendship became stronger day by day. As time passed and I closely observed the behavior of my friend, his lifestyle really influenced me a lot. Whenever I saw him, I saw Jesus in him. Jesus was very visible through his behavior and attitude. He was an influential role model to me. The entire student body and the heads of the institution respected him.

I asked my friend the reason for his good conduct, attitude, and decent ethical behavior. He smiled at me and said, "There is a Person living in me. If that Person comes and lives in you, you too will be a better person." I was very eager to know who that Person was, and I was curious to know the name of that Person. Then my friend said to me, "That Person is none other than Jesus Christ." The moment I heard the name Jesus, I was very furious and miserable and got so angry at my friend that I felt like beating him. No matter how angry I got at him, he in return would smile at me and tell me one thing: "Brother, I know you are very angry at me, and if you want to beat me, you can beat me, but let me tell you one thing. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. You can never become like me unless you accept Jesus into your life." I told my friend, "We have so many gods and goddesses in Hinduism. Do you think we are all fools to believe in just one Jesus?" Then I continued to talk and told him plainly in anger that I didn't want to be like him nor accept



Jesus, and I said Goodbye. Despite this, our friendship continued, but our lives carried on according to our own faiths.

After some days, while my friend and I were walking together, a local pastor met us on our way. That pastor talked to my friend and inquired about me, and my friend introduced me to him. Then that pastor started sharing the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ, which was the second time I heard it. He started sharing his own testimony that he too was once a Hindu but understood the truth and became a Christian. He kept on talking more about heaven and hell and the pure gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. The moment I heard about heaven and hell, I was eager to know if there would be a hell and heaven. As my friend and I went back to the boarding school, a great longing came over me, and I asked my friend to tell me more about Jesus. While my friend was sharing the good news of the Lord Jesus Christ and His crucifixion, my legs automatically bent down, and I began to cry. I told my friend that if that was so, then I wanted that Jesus. My friend earnestly prayed for me, and I accepted Jesus in my life as my personal Savior.

### **Salvation of family through a miraculous healing**

For many years, I was a secret Christian out of fear of my parents. While I was at the boarding school, I went to a Christian church, and my friend helped me a lot and taught me more about the Christian faith, which helped me to grow spiritually. Nevertheless, whenever I went to my hometown, I never dared to attend a church, although I would have loved to go, for fear of my parents. They were very fanatical. If they would have seen a Bible in my hands, they may have torn it and burned it. Not only that, but they would also sure-

ly have beaten me. But I prayed to God for the salvation of my family. I spent many hours in prayer for my family's salvation.

One day, all of a sudden, my dad suffered from stomach pain and severe pain all throughout his body. He wasn't able to get the pain under control. It lasted for many months, even years. My mom took my dad to many places and hospitals and used many medicines, but there was no use. Day by day, his body became very feeble. Finally, my mom took my dad to one of the very big hospitals near the town. The doctor finally diagnosed him with liver cancer and said that it had reached the final stage. The doctor kept on saying that my dad would die within 3 months. Doctors told us there was no use to keep him in the hospital anymore. It was a big shock to my entire family, and everyone started crying. My dad and mom cried even more. Many others who were near us in the hospital showed us their compassion. We took our dad back home with no hope.

As some days passed by, my mom started thinking, "Why did this happen even though I'm a strict devotee of Hinduism?" She prayed to her faith but to no use. Day by day, Dad's condition became worse. His entire body became black, his belly bulged, and he had swelling throughout his body, his legs and hands as well. He almost died. There was only a very small breath in his throat. We took our dad outside the home, and it was confirmed by the villagers that he was no more, but yet there was a small breath.

At that moment, my mom made a decision within her and said, "I heard that Jesus Christ is the real God and that He can heal any disease." With that great faith in Jesus, she called the local church to pray for my dad. "If Jesus heals, our entire family will accept ►

Jesus as our God and Savior. If not, we will stick to Jesus on our own.” That was my mom’s decision. The local believers began to pray with tears. As they were praying, the other villagers mocked them and said, “Can Jesus raise a dying person? Let us take him to a graveyard because he is no more.” In the midst of such challenges, the local church came regularly to pray for my dad. The doctors had said that he would die within 3 months. But God heard the cry of His people. Within those 3 months, my dad was healed completely. His belly returned to normal, swelling disappeared, and the pain was gone. He had previously been unable to move his feet, but now he was out of his bed and jumping like a deer.

Miraculously, Jesus healed my dad. This miracle was seen by the villagers, and they were all astonished and said “How did it happen? In front of our very own eyes, this man died, but now he is alive.” Village people testified that Jesus Christ is the real God. There was great lightning in the sky while my father got healed, and it was seen by the village people, and many of them even believed in Jesus after this miracle. My entire family got saved, and I was very happy because God heard my prayers.

### **My dedication to the Lord’s ministry**

After my entire family was saved, I continued at boarding school in the 10th Standard. I had just written my examinations and was waiting for the results. I came back to my village, and I continued in prayer. In one of the prayer meetings in the church, I heard a testimony from one of the guest speakers. That testimony inspired me a lot. I made a decision to give my life to serve the Almighty God, and decided that at the age of 15, I would go to Bible College. I got good examination results, by the grace of God. Dad and all others encouraged me to study further. So, I joined in the Plus Two/Intermediate studies (two years of higher secondary education past Grade 10). After my Plus Two studies, I passed the examinations. My friends and family encouraged me to go for Graduate studies, so I did. After my graduation, somehow I felt a strong impression to go to Bible College, and God helped me to attend. I did not even have enough money for my trip to reach the Bible College, which is very far away from my native village, almost 2000 kilometers [1243 mi] away, but somehow God enabled me to get there.

### **Struggles at Bible College**

When I went to Bible College, I didn’t even have sandals for my feet. One of the Bible College students showed mercy to me and gave me a pair of old sandals which lasted for just two months. I knew neither English nor Hindi. I knew only the Telugu language, which is my mother tongue. When I tried speaking English, my friends used to mock my English and would say, “Why did you come this far? You cannot continue your studies here because you don’t know anything.” But I was not discouraged. I took it positively and challenged myself. I’d go to the upstairs classrooms at night while all my friends slept in their dormitory rooms. I’d spend hours of time, far into the night, comparing the Telugu and English Bibles and learning English grammar. By the grace of God, in just 3 months from my initial days at my Bible College, I could share my testimony in English.

I did not have enough money for my daily basic needs. I even struggled to have toothpaste, and many times I brushed my teeth without toothpaste, but I was very careful that no one noticed me. I hardly had two pairs of clothes. If I wore one pair, then the other pair would be in the wash. I did not even have laundry soap to wash them. This was my situation. When Saturday came, all my friends washed their clothes with joyful hearts, but I lay on my bed and cried because I did not have soap to wash my clothes. I had no money to buy any. After lunch, when everyone would take their rest in their respective rooms, I would go to the washing rooms and collect the leftover soap pieces so that I could wash my clothes, but sometimes I couldn’t even do that.

### **Present ministry**

Finally, after much struggle, I completed my program at the Bible College and am presently ministering in Andhra Pradesh State, India. By the grace of God, I am overseeing three churches. It would take a long time if I explained all the struggles and trials that I face in the ministry. Nevertheless, in the midst of many challenges, the Lord has been gracious and is my refuge. All glory to our Lord Jesus Christ, who is my God and my all!

*In His service,  
Raxana Anand  
India*



## Divine Promises

**W**hen God's servant Moses died, Joshua became his successor. God Himself appointed him for this task. He was to lead the people into the Promised Land. The Promised Land was a very good and bountiful place, but it also held challenges and hardships for the children of Israel. The people living there were enemies of God. Joshua was aware of the difficulties ahead, but he also knew Whom he trusted and Who had given him the command to lead the people of Israel into the land of Canaan.

He had witnessed God's care for His people throughout the entire journey in the wilderness. He had seen how miraculously God helped the people of Israel when they obeyed Him. The Lord provided manna as food and gave them water from a rock. During the long journey, their clothes did not wear out, nor did their shoes deteriorate.

Joshua had also come to know the Lord as his mighty and faithful protector. Yet, despite all this, he still needed encouragement and strength for the immense and difficult tasks before him. Therefore, the Lord Himself said to him: "No man shall *be able to* stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you. Be strong and of good courage, for to this people you shall divide as an inheritance the land which I swore to their fathers to give them" (Joshua 1:5–6).

How comforting and encouraging these words from God's mouth must have been: "I will not leave you or forsake you." And the Lord didn't say this just once but repeated it, continuing:

"Only be strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day

and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God *is* with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:7–9).

These words apply to all of us who are redeemed children of God. "Be strong and courageous," the Lord calls out to us. The God of all comfort and mercy still encourages us today with these words. Just as Joshua needed God's comfort back then, so do we. Like that servant of God, we have also entered a land where a fierce battle and war are taking place. The invisible forces of darkness assail the children of God. They are surrounded by sin. False teachers seek to lead them astray. Trials of every kind come upon them. At times, fear may threaten to overwhelm us, and against all of this, a child of God must fight.

But thanks be to God who has become such a high priest for us—one who can sympathize with those who are tempted, for He was tempted in every way just as we are. He always grants victory to His own. Even today, the promise applies to all God's children: "The LORD will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace" (Exodus 14:14). And Jesus said: "Lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20).

However, it is of utmost importance that we obey the Word of God and the Spirit of God. If we stand firm in faith and obedience and maintain a close relationship in prayer with God, even the greatest difficulties can be overcome with ease. The closer we are to the Lord, the weaker the enemy's attacks on us will be. But if we follow the Lord from a distance, the enemy can exert far greater power over us. Our safety lies in staying close to the Lord Jesus. Let us put on the full armor of God (see Ephesians 6) and always remain strong and courageous. ■

# Do Not fear—I Am with You!

How comforting that Jesus says:

My child, I am with you.  
You need not fear in any way,  
As long as you stay true.

I shed My precious blood for you,  
Forgave and saved your soul.  
I know your name and love you too;  
I healed and made you whole.

When trouble comes, I'll see you through;  
I'm with you all the time.  
Though storm and waves endanger you,  
Fear not—for you are Mine.

Though fiery trials come your way,  
Yet not a hair shall burn.  
Believe in Me, do not dismay,  
For calmness will return.

You are the treasure of My eye;  
By love you're reconciled.  
Your worth is more than gold can buy;  
You are My precious child!

Yes, you can always trust Me, child;  
You never need to fear.  
Though storm winds blow and seas are wild,  
Be still, for I am near.

*Edeltraut Nimz*