

# Foundation of Faith

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*Never Forsaken!*

*Do Not Be Afraid*

*Walking with God*

*Trust Restored at the  
Ends of the Earth*

**"WITH GOD"**

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“WITH GOD”

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## *Editorial*

Dear Reader!

I remember my father renting a store in 1955. The building was built around 1870, and an old shed stood next to the store. One day, while looking through the shed, I found old business letters and documents. Among these documents were several thick ledgers, with just two words in large print on the first page: “With God!”

I had never seen anything like this: for every new year, for every new beginning, in reverence, the owners had dedicated the first page to God and then proceeded to make their entries week after week. “With God!”—wouldn’t that imply that everything would be recorded correctly and truthfully?

Dear Reader, shouldn’t we all start each new year with this motto, positioning God first in our lives, and giving Him first place?

We also find devout, God-fearing people in God’s Word. We read about a man named Enoch in the very first pages of the Old Testament: “And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him” (Genesis 5: 24). This tells us that Enoch had close fellowship with God.

In the New Testament, we read that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, chose disciples who remained with Him for more than three years. They walked with Him and had fellowship with Him. They were with Jesus, were taught by Him, and followed Him step by step.

After Jesus’ crucifixion, two disciples journeyed from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were talking about events they could not understand. We read that “while they conversed and reasoned, . . . Jesus Himself drew near and went with them.” Oh, what a glorious walk! (Please read Luke 24: 13–35.)

Let us also resolve for this new year: “With God!” Let us begin each new day with God and end it with God. He, the Faithful and Unchanging, will not forsake us nor fail us!

H. D. Nimz

# The Focal Point

Samuel Keller once recounted the following story: Several years ago, an extraordinary incident occurred in Crimea. There, railroad tracks ran beneath enormous, overhanging rock formations, which over time developed cracks and posed a serious threat to train traffic. The engineers calculated the cost of blasting these massive rocks, estimating that it would be at least 16,000 rubles. However, this amount seemed too high to the government. Thus, a special commission was tasked with examining the problem in more detail. Their conclusion: the blasting could also be accomplished for 8,000 rubles.

Just as they were about to finalize a contract with a contractor, a simple worker stepped forward and said: “Give a poor man the chance to earn something. I’ll get the job done in a day—and for only 25 rubles, if you give me five pounds of blasting powder.” The people present were astonished and began to laugh at what they considered the man’s foolishness. But he remained calm and added, “Try it. If the stones aren’t down here by tomorrow evening, you won’t owe me another ruble.”

The proposal was accepted. The next day, the company leaders were surprised to see that the worker

did not start at the top where the cracks were clearly visible, as expected. Instead, he set to work midway up the mountain at a small, solid rock ledge. Undeterred, he drilled his holes there, filled them with blasting powder, and prepared the fuse—unfazed by the mocking laughter of the gentlemen observing his work.

“Now get out of the way!” he shouted, and the group ran off. The next moment, there was a loud explosion—the small rock ledge was blown to pieces. Initially, they wanted to laugh at the worker again, but then the mountain began to groan and crack. The cracks expanded further, and eventually, the massive boulders thundered down into the valley. The man’s instincts were correct: he had seen that the entire rock formation rested on this one focal point. Once that was removed, everything had to collapse.

The entire well-being and salvation of a Christian are founded on faith in the living God. If this focal point is destroyed, everything falls apart. That is why the enemy targets this exact point: faith!

Let us, therefore, place our trust wholly in the Lord; He will never disappoint us. For what He promises, He will surely fulfill! “For the word of the LORD *is* right, and all His work *is done* in truth” (Psalm 33: 4). ■

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## Never Forsaken!

*“For He Himself has said: ‘I will never leave you nor forsake you.’” (Hebrews 13: 5)*

A pastor often spoke of God’s faithfulness and care. Once, while preaching in the country, he had a good opportunity to examine his own faith. During the trip, he discovered that he had lost his ticket.

The only other passenger in the compartment noticed him searching his pockets and said, “I hope you haven’t lost anything?” The pastor explained that he couldn’t find his ticket and, unfortunately, had no more money with him.

“However, this doesn’t upset me,” said the pastor. “I work for my Lord and have so often experienced His intervention in my life. I’m sure He will help me now as well.”

Shortly afterwards, the conductor entered the compartment. He greeted the pastor’s traveling companion, who whispered something to him. The officer then left the compartment.

“Strange,” said the pastor, “that the conductor didn’t want to see my ticket.”

“No,” replied the gentleman, “it only illustrates what you told me about God’s intervention which keeps watch over you even in the little things. I am the general manager of the railway company. Surely God arranged for me to travel with you so I could be of assistance.” Again, God rewarded his faith.

Someone once said, with regard to the Bible verse in Hebrews 13:5, that it would be difficult to translate

the sequence of words exactly as they appear in the original Greek text. One sentence contains five negations. Literally translated, it would say: “No, I will not leave thee; no, neither will I not utterly forsake thee” [Adam Clarke].

God will not, under any circumstances, forsake us. No, five times no! Believe in His faithfulness and gain new courage! ■

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## This Hand Has Never Let Anyone Go

**A** traveler visiting the Alps followed his guide and could not get enough of all the splendor and beauty that presented itself to his eyes. The sun shone brilliantly on the dazzling white snow—it was a wonderfully beautiful sight.

The traveler trustingly allowed himself to be led by his guide and followed his instructions and footsteps without fear, even though he knew nothing of the path he was being led on.

Suddenly, however, he stopped and hesitated to go on, because his guide carefully crossed a narrow but very deep and dark crevice, then stretched out his strong hand and asked the traveler to give him his

hand. Still hesitating, he looked down into the depths at his feet.

The guide calmed him down and said emphatically: “Just grasp my hand firmly; this hand has never yet let go of someone.” Now the stranger grabbed the hand offered to him by the guide, and the abyss was happily crossed.

Thank the Lord! We too have a Leader whose strong hand has never let go of one who has trusted and obeyed Him. Grasp the hand of your Savior firmly, for this hand is strong enough to bring everyone through.

Have you placed your weak hand in the strong hand of the Savior, my dear child? ■



# God Is Unchanging— *Even this Year?*

**O**ur spiritual forefathers, the great heroes of the faith that came before us, lived with a deep conviction: God does not change. They trusted the divine promises, submitted to the Holy Word of God in all things, and experienced the abundance of divine blessings. God revealed deep mysteries to them; they followed the path of this knowledge and conquered the vastness of the spiritual Canaan. They lived holy lives, and God manifested Himself powerfully among them.

Has our God changed in the last 100 or maybe even in the last 50 years? What does the Word of God tell us? Malachi 3:6 says, “For I *am* the LORD, I do not change.” James testifies of God: “with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). Everything visible becomes obsolete and passes away, but God never changes. There is no power, in heaven or on earth, that can cause God to change. Do you believe that?

Hebrews 13:8 says, “Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today and forever.” And of His Word, Christ says, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35). This statement is so important that it is repeated in three gospels. In Psalm 89:34, we read: “My covenant I will not break, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips.” The triune holy God, who is the Truth, testifies to us of His immutability and the eternal validity of His Word. Do you truly believe Him?

We live in terrible times today. Sin is as prevalent in our society as it was in Sodom and the surrounding areas during Abraham’s time. Could sin stop God from revealing Himself so wonderfully in Abraham’s life and having a close relationship with him?

The sin of the Canaanites cried out to heaven, and God purposely led His people directly into this very area. He ordered them to fight against everything unholy and pagan, forbidding them any association or tolerance. As long as they walked the path of truth with all their hearts, God gave them victory. Why then

did God hide Himself from them? Was it because of the ungodliness of the Philistines and Canaanites, or was it because of an idolatrous king and the people who burned incense to Balaam with him? But could this sin and unfaithfulness prevent God from revealing Himself powerfully on Mount Carmel through the man of God Elijah?

Yes, the spirits of paganism are unleashed today and spreading their deadly influence for all to see. Do we see the similarities to the seething cauldron of pagan idolatry that Paul encountered in Ephesus? The superstition of that time was an important industry. People were enslaved by the wild lust of the flesh, went astray in the philosophy of the Greeks, and lived in the dull blindness of their hearts (see Ephesians 4:17–19). And yet Paul was able to write triumphantly to the brothers in Corinth that God had opened to him a great door bearing much fruit (1 Corinthians 16:8–9).

Do we believe that God cannot manifest Himself as in days of old? Has God changed? Can sin today triumph over and subdue the power of God? Are we convinced of the immutability of God, and do we believe in eternal victory over all the powers of sin and hell?

Praise the Lord! He is still the same today! His power is unbroken, His triumph unchanged. He still redeems sinners and sanctifies His children. He gives victory and fills life with joy. His Spirit leads into hidden truths. He hears us when we call on Him and helps us. There is not a single promise of God that He does not fulfill. No one can be harmed today who trusts completely in this Almighty Father.

What indescribable love God has shown us so far. With great patience, He has carried you and me thus far. How gentle is His voice, how gentle is His fatherly hand when He chastises us. It is only the Spirit of God who works and keeps awake in us the desire for a deeper experience with God.

It is the unchanging will of God to show Himself mightily in the lives of His children. Therefore, with the courage of faith, we can give up all human crutch-





es and our own strength and give space to the power of God in our lives. What glories God will lead us to when He has complete freedom to shape our lives according to His will!

We get to live with Him every day and ask Him for help and advice, even in the smallest things. By walk-

ing with the Savior, every day becomes a feast for our souls, even when our tears are falling and our feelings are hurt. In Him is fullness of joy. Those who came before us witnessed and experienced this. Thank God we too can stand in this grace today!

*Hermann Vogt*

# Do Not Be Afraid

The Christmas season has just ended, in which we once again heard the message of the angels proclaimed to the shepherds in the fields of Bethlehem: “Do not be afraid.”

The Christmas decorations have been cleared away, and the drab monotony of everyday life is back. Has the message of the Savior also been put away? Did it only apply to the festive season? That would be disastrous! After all, this message should be a source of strength for us in our everyday lives. Especially at the beginning of the year, it wants to encourage us as we step into the dark future.

## Dark future

Yes, of course! The media will continue to bring sad news in the new year: strikes, conspiracies, revolutions among the people, and natural disasters. The fear that the mighty nuclear powers could collide unexpectedly and cause widespread devastation and loss of life weighs heavily on humanity. All the more reason for us to be grateful for the divine call:

## Do not be afraid

The deepest underlying cause of our fear is actually unatoned guilt. Under its spell, we feel how completely lost and helpless we are in all the unraveling of this world. Where could we flee to when our earthly life is threatened, when we realize that we cannot stand before the holy God because of our sin?

But, reconciled with the eternal God, the darkness of the future loses its horror for you. You still remain in this menacing world. But even if everything

falls apart, you have a solid hold on the rock of Jesus Christ.

Yes, you no longer need to be afraid, because Jesus’ birth is irrefutable proof: God loves you. He came to atone for your guilt by His sacrifice on the cross. Can you believe it? The merciful God wants to forgive you everything, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,” so that you can become His child! What He expects of you is that you give up all efforts at redeeming yourself and in repentance come to the cross with your burdens. He wants you to thank Him for His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross, to trust Him completely and place your life in His hands, and to follow Him.

You can agree with the Psalmist: “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). And the Lord will respond to you: “Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called *you* by your name; you *are* Mine” (Isaiah 43:1).

A pastor was once talking to an old, experienced Christian about the prospects for the new year. Full of confidence, he replied: “We don’t know what the new year will bring. But what we do know is that it will also be a year of the Lord.”

That is sufficient! In the new year, God will guide both your personal life and the destiny of the whole world. If only you are certain of His forgiveness and remain firmly and trustingly in His hand, then God’s promise is valid for you: “Fear not, for I *am* with you; be not dismayed, for I *am* your God.” ■





# Walking With God

In the book of Genesis, we find a wonderful biography. It is very brief, yet it contains for all future generations much more than many of the most comprehensive volumes that have been written. No more glorious or noble biography has been written than that of the patriarch Enoch: “Enoch lived sixty-five years, and begot Methuselah. After he begot Methuselah, Enoch walked with God three hundred years . . . And Enoch walked with God; and he *was* not, for God took him” (Genesis 5:21–24).

“Enoch walked with God.” When we read these words, we desire to know more about this man. But nothing more is shared, except in the biblical “Hall of Faith” in Hebrews 11, and in the letter of Jude, where a prophecy is attributed to him.

Why should the divinely-inspired Word tell us more about him? It reports an incredibly great and important fact about him, namely that he walked with God and God took him away so he did not need to experience death. Everything else that could be told about him is of little importance compared to these two significant facts: he lived a godly life, and God took him away!

The first 65 years of his life are totally ignored. We are not told how he lived during that time. But we may reasonably assume that he faithfully walked in the fear of the Lord, with God on his mind and in his heart. The 300 years of communion with God after the birth of Methuselah were just a continuation of the wise path of life he had chosen.

What can we learn from this brief and meaningful biography? Enoch achieved the highest goal a person can reach. His accomplishment is more glorious than that of any statesman, inventor, or any of

the so-called “greats” of this world.

Enoch walked with God and led a godly life. He did not walk with God intermittently but consistently. He was not hindered by anything, and nothing and no one could hold him back. God had first place in his heart and life. He had made the decision once and for all to live for God alone. He had given up everything that could have impeded fellowship between him and the Heavenly Father. And for that reason, God could walk with him and always be close to him.

God greatly valued this complete surrender, this intimate walk with Him, and therefore He took him directly to heaven from this world, sparing him the experience of death. The reward for his faithfulness was eternal life.

We also have the privilege to walk with God as Enoch did. If Enoch was able to walk with God back then, how much more is it possible for us today, since Jesus Christ came to this earth to pave the way to the Father’s heart. But are we prepared to meet the requirements? If we want to walk with God, we must be dead to the world. It is sin that blocks our fellowship with God. We must be saved from sin and leave our sinful life behind. Everything that interferes with and hinders our relationship with God must be removed without compromise, and we must wholly surrender ourselves to God and live for Him.

Do you desire to walk with God? It is possible if you truly want to. But are you willing to pay the price? If we fully surrender ourselves to God, our walk with Him can be as intimate as Enoch’s walk. We can enjoy the uninterrupted closeness of God and one day meet Him joyfully, face to face. ■



## From the Hand of God

In the faithful church in Philadelphia (“brotherly love”—Strong’s) according to Revelation 3:9, some people came from what Jesus called the “synagogue of Satan.” What would these people have learned from their master? The devil, diabolos, is the one who slanders. The greek word diabolos means “false accuser, devil, slanderer” (Strong’s). He causes confusion, discord, and chaos wherever he gains access. This his students would have learned from him. We pity the church in Philadelphia which had “those of the synagogue of Satan.” How did they deal with the situation?

Haven’t you also at some point in your life had to deal with the “devil’s disciples”? With people who made your life difficult? People who caused you grief and made you sigh? You can probably name several such troublemakers.

How did you deal with the situation? You probably got annoyed and so upset that you couldn’t sleep at night. They caused you a lot of trouble.

I have also experienced this. How these “students of Satan” made my life difficult! Yet God used Revelation 3:9 to help me gain the right attitude towards them, to not let them get me down, but to stand above the situation and no longer get worked up about them.

What does this verse say? “Behold, I will make those of the synagogue of Satan who say that they are Jews and are not, but lie—behold, I will make them come and bow down before your feet, and they will learn that I have loved you” (ESV).

The Lord begins with a “behold.” What does that mean? At school, when we were busy writing or doing our work and our teacher wanted the class’s attention and wanted us to look at him, I still remember what he did. He tapped loudly on his desk a few times. That meant, “Look here!” Now all eyes were on him.

“Behold” from the mouth of Jesus also means “look here!” We made the mistake of looking at the “devil’s

disciples.” We couldn’t take our eyes off them. We always had to deal with them—and get annoyed with them. So now the Lord is saying to us, “Behold! You don’t have to look at the ‘devil’s disciples,’ but look at Me! I will give you advice on what to do with them!”

The words that come after “behold” are “I will make.” So who will make? Who has control of these disciples of Satan? The Lord does. He has allowed them to be there. What the Lord does is good. So even they must be good for you. They must be doing us a service in the name of God.

But what can the Lord achieve with these people? The answer is given to us in Romans 8:28–29, where the apostle writes: “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son.” But what is this image of His Son?

Again and again, the Son of God is depicted as the Lamb in both the Old and New Testaments. Isaiah says: “He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). John the Baptist calls Him “the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29). Peter describes Him as “a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). In heaven, the song of the Lamb is sung. It resounds through the heavens: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Revelation 5:12).

We are to be transformed into the image of this Lamb. And to do that, the Lord lets “all things work together” and even uses “devil’s disciples.”

If everyone were kind and friendly to us, we would never be transformed into the image of the Lamb. The Lord needs precisely these troublemakers, the unpleasant superior, the difficult colleague, the lazy

subordinates, the evil neighbor, and whoever else it may be.

I love Tersteegen's verses:

*What do I care what others do—  
How they behave toward me?  
As long as I am right, and I am true.  
Let me be humbled and spilled out,  
Let others chafe and make me small.  
God gives, God lives;  
I love them all.*

Years ago, I had a visit from a teacher who complained about her principal. He seemed to be a very difficult man. He expected everyone to submit to his will. He didn't allow any other will to prevail. It was impossible to please him. No matter how hard the teachers worked, he always had something to find fault with and to nag about.

As this teacher complained about her principal, I listened to her patiently. When she finally finished, she expected me to console her for having to work with such a man. Instead, I surprised her by saying: "Have you thanked God for your principal?" Had she thanked God for the situation she found herself in?

She felt she couldn't possibly give thanks for someone like that! I replied, "But it's in the Bible!" "Where does it say that?" she asked. I said, "In Ephesians 5: 20: 'Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.' And again in 1 Thessalonians 5:18: 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.' Isn't that in the Bible?" "Yes, it is!" "And you have never acted on it?" "No, I must admit that it never occurred to me." She had been a Christian for quite some time and had never taken what the Word of God said about this seriously. She was uncomfortable with the principal

imposing his own will because she wanted her will to count. She wanted to be considered to be one of the best teachers in the school. I told her that there was still sensitivity and ambition in her life that was due to carnality and that God wanted her to focus on Him and not on the situation. I said, "This principal is your educator, your benefactor. You made the mistake of looking at him instead of looking up to the Lord, who placed this man in your life to educate you in order to transform you into the image of the Lamb. You should be grateful for that!" She was silent for a while. But God gave her grace. Instead of being annoyed at the principal, she learned to look to the Lord and to thank Him always and for everything.

Some time later, I received a letter from her in which she wrote, "And guess what, I have a new principal." It was still the same man, and he hadn't changed his attitude at all. But during the holidays, she had developed a different perspective. She no longer focused on the principal; she looked to the Lord. And she took the man who was so difficult for her with thanks out of God's hand.

Let us remember that when we begin to give thanks for difficulties, we stop being annoyed and upset because of them. Always giving thanks for everything is a recipe for staying calm. Try it! I tried it and found it to be effective. That is why I have written in the margin of my Bible next to Revelation 3: 9: "From the hand of God." You can do the same. But what is most important is not writing it in the margin but actually learning to take difficult people and adverse circumstances from God's hand and thanking Him for them. Then you are no longer subjected to and overcome by them. You no longer need to suffer and complain. When you have learned to give thanks for them, you stand above them.

*E. Modersohn*



# *He Will Feed His Flock Like a Shepherd*

One of the best-known psalms in the Bible is Psalm 23, the so-called Shepherd's Psalm. At the very beginning, it says: "The LORD *is* my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters." That which filled David with deep gratitude and what he personally recognized as valid and true is what the prophet Isaiah later spoke of to comfort God's people. With regard to Christ, he proclaimed: "He will feed His flock like a shepherd; He will gather the lambs with His arm, and carry *them* in His bosom, *and* gently lead those who are with young" (Isaiah 40:11).

## **His flock**

A reader familiar with the Bible will quickly realize that Isaiah could not have meant anyone else by the flock than the church of God. In other words, the sum of all those born-again. And the shepherd is none other than Jesus Christ Himself. This is consistent with Jesus' self-testimony when He says, "I am the good shepherd; and I know *My sheep*, and am known by *My own*" (John 10:14).

In order to make the nature of God's church more tangible for us humans, the Bible—and therefore God Himself—uses an image that we can easily understand and perhaps even know from personal experience. If we look into it a little, it reveals a wonderful blessing from God. For a better understanding, it is helpful to open the Bible passage in John 10:1–18 and read it in context.

## **How does one become part of the flock?**

Jesus answers this question in no uncertain terms. Verse 9a says: "I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved." In other words: you only become part of this flock through Jesus Christ! He died on the cross for us. Jesus Himself said: "I lay down *My life* for the sheep" (verse 15b). This is precisely how He became the door for us, through which we can enter in faith and thus—metaphorically speaking—join the flock.

Without forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ, no human being can be part of God's church. When

we confess our guilt to Him, ask for forgiveness, and accept it in faith, the miracle of rebirth takes place. We become part of "the flock."

It is deeply touching that Jesus not only gave Himself as a sacrifice for us, but that He also wants to lead every one to His church. This is the only way to interpret Jesus' words in verse 16: "And other sheep I have which are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they will hear *My voice*; and there will be one flock *and* one shepherd." Jesus Himself is building His church.

## **His sheep follow Him**

A light must have dawned on some of Jesus' listeners when He told them: "He [the shepherd] calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the sheep follow him" (verses 3b–4). Up to the present day in Palestine, a shepherd calls his sheep by name. He does this in order to gather them and then lead them to suitable pastures. He goes ahead of them, and they follow him.

The fact that we are called by name shows that Jesus has the individuals of His church in mind, and that this personal relationship with Him is not only desired but also crucial for our discipleship. Oh, how Jesus wants His church to follow Him, and only Him! Yes, He wants the church to stay at the source to which He leads it, that it gains its direction and spiritual maturity through His Word and clear proclamation.

He not only desires it but also expects it. The epistles to the churches in Asia Minor (Revelation 2–3) show us that God measures a church by this expectation. As a local congregation, we also bear responsibility for this today. Prayer warriors are needed in the church who have this in mind. Leadership in the local congregation needs to be aware of this responsibility and align itself accordingly.

By going before the flock as a shepherd, Jesus not only shows them the way but also paves the way for them. This means that it is possible for a church to fulfill this expectation. But not only that: It also means that it is Jesus' intention to lead His church to "green



pastures” and “still waters.” He wants to ensure that His church is doing well.

### **They follow Him, for they know His voice**

So simple. So obvious. And yet it sometimes seems so complicated. Why is that? The main problem is probably that there is not only this one voice. The Bible itself tells us that there will be many voices in the end times that sound similar to that of the one Shepherd and yet are different (Matthew 24: 23–24). It seems that this sign of the end times is being fulfilled more and more because we have many religious deceptions and seductions.

In addition, we all to some extent have different needs. We have free will, and we make decisions. And that is good and God-given. However, we live in a time and in a world in which a person’s attention is equivalent to a monetary value. Consequently, efforts are made to gain this attention by all appropriate means. And we make decisions about who our attention belongs to. We do this constantly, day after day, hour after hour, and, yes, minute after minute.

With this in mind, it is so incredibly important that we know His voice! To do this, we need to engage with it. We need this quiet time again and again—truly, over and over—in which we consciously concentrate on the voice of the Shepherd and get to know it better and better. The better we know His voice, the easier it will be for us to distinguish it from that of a stranger.

And then what Jesus says in verse 5 will happen: “Yet they will by no means follow a stranger, but will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers.” (Note: Jesus speaks of strangers in the plural!)

### **The sheep know the Shepherd**

Those who belong to His flock obviously not only know His voice but also the Shepherd Himself (verse 14). This is obvious because we have already seen that He is the door through which we enter the flock. However, Jesus expresses even more than this. This knowledge of the Shepherd includes a deep trust. Precisely because we have come to know the Good Shepherd, we should trust Him unconditionally. This is easy to write down, easy to read, and yet sometimes difficult to put into practice.

As a congregation, we experience and live through a wide variety of times. Sometimes we are filled with gratitude when we think of the congregation. Other times, we observe developments with concern. We experience disappointments or see signs of hope, etc. In every situation, our gaze should be focused solely on Christ, the Good Shepherd—because we know Him and should get to know Him better and better. His intention is and remains that His church should prosper, for He has come so that we may have life and life more abundantly. As the Good Shepherd, He will feed His flock.

*Niko Ernst*



## Don't be Afraid! Trust Jesus!

Laura is six years old, and her mom says she is already a big girl. She has invited Jesus into her heart and follows Him. But she has a problem: when she lies in her bed at night in the dark, she is afraid. She would like the light to be left on in the hallway, the door left open, or Mom to stay with her until she goes to sleep. But her parents have said that is not possible.

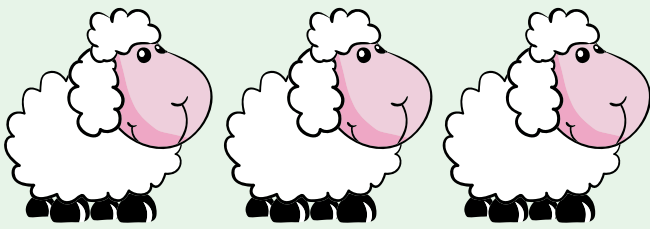
This evening, the family read the Bible and prayed together as usual. Afterward, Mom put Laura to bed, tucked her in warmly, and kissed her goodnight. When Mom wanted to leave the room, Laura held on tight and said: "Please, stay here. I'm scared of the dark." Mom was surprised and asked what Laura feared because she would be in the room next door with the baby.

Laura didn't know exactly what to say. She was afraid because she couldn't see what surrounded her in the dark. She imagined that there might be a big

spider in the room. Mom hugged her tightly and said: "Oh, Laura! You don't need to be afraid. I'll leave the night lamp on until you fall asleep. We're all here; that should help you. But more importantly, trust Jesus, our good Shepherd! He always looks after you, day and night, and never leaves you alone. Just like the shepherd with his flock of sheep that we saw in the meadow." Then Mom switched on the lamp, wished Laura a good night, and left the room.

The little night light glowed softly, and Laura thought of the shepherd with his dog guarding the sheep. The shepherd took particularly good care of the newborn lambs. He carried them where they could be warm and well cared for. Laura thought: "This shepherd took really good care of the little lambs. And Jesus, my good Shepherd, takes even better care of me. He loves me so much that He even gave His life for me!" Laura folded her hands and said quietly: "Thank you, Jesus!" Then she fell asleep contentedly. ■





## CHILDREN'S CORNER

### The Good Shepherd

**D**o you know the shepherds from the Bible? Abel, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and David were shepherds in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, we read about the shepherds in Bethlehem and Jesus Christ, the Good Shepherd.

Being a shepherd was always difficult. A shepherd was with his sheep day and night, whether the sun was blazing hot or whether it was raining or snowing. He made sure that the sheep had good food and fresh water, even if it was very tiring for him. He led the sheep, faced dangers, and protected them, often risking his own life.



David, one of the most famous shepherds in the Bible, fought against bears and lions as a youth to save his sheep. God helped him, and David defeated the predators (read 1 Samuel 17: 34–37). In one of his psalms, David sang: “The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want” (Psalm 23: 1).

Even today, it is not easy to be a shepherd. A shepherd looks after his flock, which may have 300 to 400 sheep, all year round. He makes sure the animals always get enough healthy food, regardless of the seasons. In spring, when the lambs are born, they need special care. The shepherd protects his sheep from wolves and other dangers. He knows every one of his animals and does a lot of work for them. But they trust him and listen to his voice. There is a close relationship between the shepherd and his sheep.

It is similar to Jesus, the good Shepherd of mankind. He died out of love for us on the cross and defeated the devil. He knows us very well and provides us with everything we need to live. He hears our prayers and comforts us with His words from the Bible. When we

ask Him, He takes away our fears and worries. When we are ill, He is happy to heal and help us. He constantly protects us and never leaves us alone. Every danger we encounter must first go through Jesus. It is important that we let Him lead the way and follow Him obediently. Dear Child, Jesus loves you so much! Is He also your good Shepherd?

*Helene Rotfuss*



*“Fear not, for I have redeemed you;  
I have called you by your name;  
You are Mine.”  
(Isaiah 43: 1)*





# Your Life is Precious

## TAKE CARE OF IT!

If you are reading this, you are among those able to experience the start of the year 2025. The reason for this is simple: you are alive. Your heart beats and ensures that all your organs can maintain their function. What seems so self-evident is not, on closer inspection. We all know that life is finite on the one hand and unique on the other, and that's what makes it so precious. In a representative survey, 1002 Germans were asked whether they would be prepared to die a year earlier for one million Euros. One in five answered "yes!" However, the older you get, the less willing you are to make this trade. Why is that? You know the answer: life is precious. You don't just give away a year, not even for a million Euros.

This also applies to your life. It has so much value to God, the Creator, that He gave His Son to die on the cross for it. It is difficult to grasp the full depth of this love. Only when we have claimed this sacrifice of Jesus for ourselves do we get a glimpse of how significant it really is. Paul lets us know that once we are in Christ, we are "a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5: 17).

This new life has a special significance in God's eyes. Throughout the Bible, He urges us to take care of this new life because we can lose it. God forbid that it would happen! One such Bible verse, for example, is Ephesians 4: 27, which is worth memorizing and is easy to remember: "Do not . . . give place to the devil." This verse teaches us at least four truths:

### **1. The devil is real—and inferior!**

This needs no theological deduction. A look at our surroundings shows this very clearly. Have you ever heard of someone going through "hell on earth"? The causes can be quite diverse. However, there is no type of injustice that is not found among humanity: malice, greed, meanness. A life full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and backstabbing. People talk dispar-

agingly about their fellow human beings and slander them. People despise God, are violent, arrogant, and boastful. They are inventive when it comes to doing evil. Among other things, they are “disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful” and more. This list comes from the pen of Paul, written long ago, and yet it is so applicable to our time (see the entire list in Romans 1: 29–31).

Christian Bale, one of the most famous actors in Hollywood today, was honored with a Golden Globes award in 2019 for portraying former U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney. In his acceptance speech, he said: “Thank you to Satan for giving me inspiration on how to play this role.” This is a quote from a newspaper. The devil is real. And he wants to destroy you and your relationship with Jesus Christ. *But*, he is defeated. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. Hallelujah! And that’s why Paul’s exhortation makes so much sense: “Do not give the devil a foothold.”

## 2. Our life offers us freedom

God has entrusted us with our lives. He has given us a first and a last day. We are free to decide everything that happens in between. We humans have *free will*. Especially as a young person, we make a whole series of decisions that have an enormous influence on our later life. Each of us is free to make these decisions. Each of us has 24 hours each day at our disposal. We control this *time* as we wish, deciding how we fill and utilize it. Another area of freedom is *love*. We humans are endowed by God with this wonderful gift of being able to love. We decide for ourselves who or what we love. The same applies to how we manage our *money* and what we spend it on or for what we save it. One last area of freedom: our *emotions*. This point may surprise you, because ultimately, they are essentially dependent on our temperament, aren’t they? That is so. But one of the basic human emotions, for exam-

ple, is fear. The Bible shows us that we certainly have room for maneuvering in this regard.

This list is far from complete. There are quite a few more. God’s idea is that we shape our freedom. He uses His Word, the Bible, to help us recognize and understand His ideas.

## 3. The devil wants a foothold in our lives

It is precisely the previously mentioned point that motivates the devil to draw our attention to himself. He is the enemy of God and therefore also the enemy of the one born again. He does everything he can to gain a foothold in our lives. His armory of weapons is inexhaustible, and he sometimes behaves like an angel of light and at other times like a roaring lion.

What does it mean to give him a foothold? Jesus set an example of how crucial it is to do the will of the Father. Giving the devil room means ignoring God’s will in a certain matter. Sometimes this is universally valid: God does not want anyone to be lost. The devil wants exactly the opposite. Other times it is about God’s specific will for your life that you have recognized. The devil wants you to ignore it.

What about time? Don’t most of us know the problem of lack of time? God wants us to be wise and careful about how we live, making effective use of time (Ephesians 5: 15–16). The devil wants to prevent us from doing this and wants us to waste our time and be careless with it. YouTube, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat . . . the list of time-wasting opportunities is endless!

When we talk about love, the greatest of all commandments is that we should love God with all our heart and our neighbor as ourselves. The devil wants us to love pleasure more than God (2 Timothy 3: 4). Isn’t the hedonistic, self-indulgent lifestyle of the western world a remarkable example of this? In this context, consider Luke 8: 14, a remarkable statement by Jesus: “Now the ones *that* fell among thorns ►



are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity.”

Does God have a problem with possessions and wealth? Certainly not. But He does have a problem with it if you see it as your security; if you are out to get rich. The devil, on the other hand, would be incredibly happy if he could gain a foothold in your life in this area. He knows that the love of money is a root of all evil and that people have already strayed from the faith because of it (1 Timothy 6: 6–10). Perhaps it is worth his while to try you in this way?

What about our emotions, the fear in our lives? Jesus is out on the lake with the disciples, and there is a terrible storm. They are in danger of drowning in the storm. Jesus is asleep. They wake Him up, and He performs a miracle: the storm subsides immediately. Then Jesus asks His disciples: “Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?” In other words: “You don’t have to be! I am with you.”

Let’s be honest: don’t you also know that feeling of fear that sometimes rises up in you? The devil wants you to be afraid. He wants you to break down over your worries, to doubt, to give up. I read the words “Pray more, worry less” in the homes of friends. Pray

more and worry less. That is God’s idea of how to deal with this sphere. Therefore:

#### **4. You don’t need to give the devil any room—so don’t!**

Yes, you read that right. You are not forced to give him any room. In 1 Corinthians 10: 13, it says, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God *is* faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear *it*.”

This word encourages me just as much as our memory verse at the beginning. We can defend our freedom. The Lord gives us the tools to do so (Ephesians 6: 10–18). I would like to draw your attention to one more thing: Every one of our actions begins with a thought. The world of thoughts is therefore a popular gateway for the devil. Paul shows us how to deal with this in Philippians 4: 8. It would be great to memorize this verse this year as well. While you are at it, take a look at Ephesians 4: 13. Take your time, because your life is precious. Take care of it!

*Niko Ernst*



## Turning Over a New Leaf

It is customary to do a “year-end review” at the turn of the year. Many people, organizations, and businesses do this. We review what didn’t work well in the past year and at the same time look ahead to find ways to improve. There is a common aphorism which goes like this: “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.” Simply stated, this means: if we want different results, something must change.

When applying this thought to the family, the logical question arises: What do I expect from my family at the end of this year? How do I envision our year as a family? Do I wish for a better relationship with my spouse? A more harmonious coexistence among all family members? And what about the spiritual foundation of the family? Would it be beneficial if the family became more involved in church life? This list can be further expanded.

Would you take a few minutes to write down your thoughts? It would be even better to make this project a family endeavor: Each member individually, and as a group, meet to reflect on the results and develop a plan for practical implementation.

I can imagine that a lot of positive things could emerge if there is a willingness to change. The whole family would become more functional. The daily interactions would improve significantly, and the spiritual depth of the family could continue to grow. The

church could benefit from more committed volunteers, and, finally, this could have a positive, blessed effect on the surrounding community.

The willingness to change is the first step in the right direction. Perhaps you are asking yourself whether changes in your family are even possible. The family has settled into a certain code of conduct over the years, and everything flows as it always has. Can we get off this beaten path? Of course, some things would need to change, but that’s precisely the point.

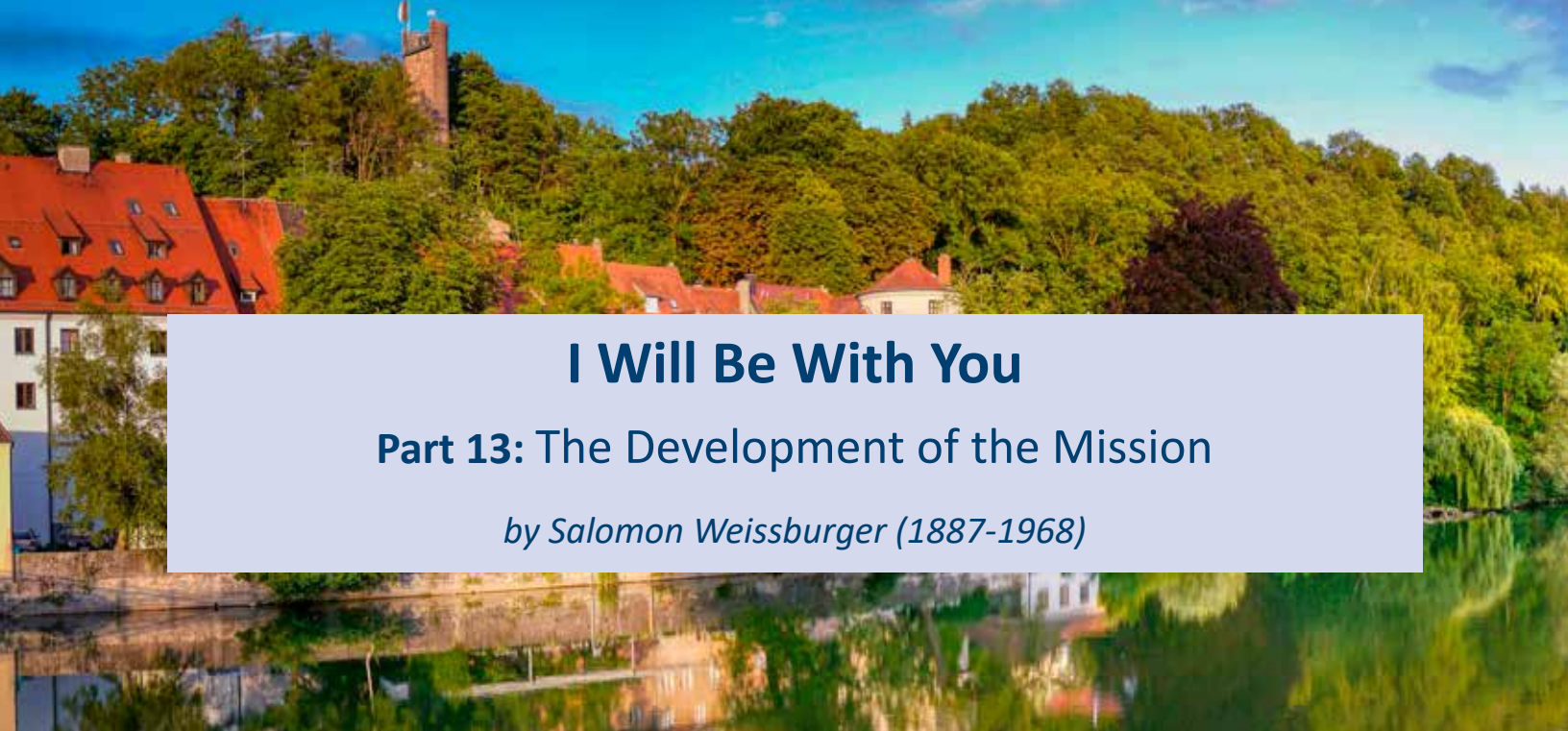
Where do we begin? And who will take the first step? Many questions may arise that initially threaten to make the exercise seem impossible. This is understandable. Our adversary, the devil, will do everything in his power to discourage a family that is trying to live according to godly principles. He prefers it when we live alongside each other rather than coming together in prayer. He likes it when we pursue our own interests instead of engaging in the building of God’s kingdom.

What changes would be necessary in your family to improve life? Is there willingness to undertake these changes?

A fitting quote sums up the necessity for change: “Hoping for change without doing anything about it, is like standing at the train station, waiting for a ship to come in.”

*Harry Semenjuk*





# I Will Be With You

## Part 13: The Development of the Mission

*by Salomon Weissburger (1887-1968)*

**A**t that time, we conducted regular visits to the congregations in Poland (Volhynia). Initially, this duty mainly fell to Brother Zuber from Switzerland, but eventually, Brother Rose, Brother Girke, and I made the journey repeatedly as well. It was very difficult to get an entry permit, which would only be good for a few weeks in any case, but the Lord awakened capable men local to those areas to lead the work from there. The most prominent of these were Gustav Sonnenberg and August Krebs, but other brothers also served in those congregations.

I myself visited Volhynia in 1929, serving at three camp meetings in the districts of Rivne and Lutsk. On that trip, I also spent a week in the former West Prussia before I had to leave since my visa was only valid for three weeks. I was later granted another week's extension, which I used to visit my old ambit of Wiączemink, Vistula Territory, together with Brother Sonnenberg. It was not easy to conduct these three camp meetings nearly on my own, especially since I also had to participate in preachers' conferences in all three locations while still making time for the trips in between.

### **The start of the Bible school**

The need for biblical instruction became increasingly apparent, so we launched a three-month Bible course that developed into a two-year Bible school. Brother

August Borbe taught the course and, together with Brother Fritz Harland, taught the two-year program at the Bible school as well.


The school became a great blessing. Attendees of the three-month course included Brother Sonnenberg and Sister Tarutis; the two-year course was attended by brothers including Berzins, Boiadjeff, Killisch, Klambunde, Malzon, and H. Weissburger. After graduating from Bible school, most future preachers came to me in Essen, where they served as assistant preachers to gain practical experience in pastoral care. The first of these was Brother Ernst Kersten, who went on to serve the congregation in Dinslaken.

Through the Lord's grace, the newly-founded congregations instituted and maintained a biblical financial system with voluntary tithing, making it possible to regularly provide for the young preachers in accordance with the Word of God.

### **Humility and trust**

"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." I have often experienced this truth in my own life. The Lord led me through the valley of humiliation, as previously detailed, but God gave me grace to be satisfied and, in consequence, to gain the trust of the preachers, my spiritual fathers, and the congregation of Essen in particular. We lived in Essen for around five years.





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

The preachers at the time encouraged me to bring the Word and, during a period in 1910 when none of the older brothers were present, trusted my wife and me to temporarily manage the mission house in Essen. We were 22 and 23 years old.

During the three months of our leadership, they put everything in my name: the house, the treasury, the bookkeeping, the correspondence, and the organization as a whole. The work was not yet registered as an association, so everything was legally owned by the preacher entrusted with its leadership. These were naturally brothers who held the general confidence of the congregation, in this case Georg Vielguth, Karl Arbeiter, and Otto H. Doebert. During World War I, the mission house was transferred to Sister Helene Wehking; afterwards, we took over the management of the mission house and the work overall. For several years, I served in this capacity while also fulfilling my responsibilities to the Essen congregation.

### **Handover of responsibility**

I eventually gained the impression that the spiritual work would advance better if I were to hand matters of business over to someone else, so I freely and voluntarily relinquished control of business affairs to Brother Ferdinand Huber, who moved from Switzerland to Germany with his wife to assume these responsibilities.

Under the direction of Brother and Sister Huber, the headquarters were moved to a purpose-built house in Kassel-Kirchditmold. This step proved to be a great blessing, both for the ministry in and around Essen, as well as for me personally. Since I was now able to dedicate myself entirely to delivering sermons and pastoral care, we were able to establish new congregations.

Over time, Brother August Borbe’s skills developed to the point where I could hand the editorial responsibilities for the *Evangeliums Posaune* [the German-language edition of the *Foundation of Faith*] off to him, and he turned out to be highly capable in this position as well.

### **Retreat under difficult circumstances**

By 1933, political circumstances in Hitler’s Germany had deteriorated to the extent that I feared my Jewish ancestry could be weaponized against the work. I therefore voluntarily resigned as preacher of the Essen congregation, officially asking Brother Walter Waurich to take my place while I would serve as his deputy. As much as I liked the growing responsibilities entrusted to me, I now gave them up out of love for the Lord, without the brothers pressuring me. Jesus and His church held a central place in my heart, and I wanted to spare the work from harm, even to my personal detriment.

# Judas Lebbaeus–Thaddaeus

*Text: Luke 6: 16*

The last faithful disciple of Jesus was also called Judas. However, he is clearly distinguished from Judas Iscariot. Luke writes: “Judas *the son of James*” (Luke 6: 16). Matthew writes: “Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus” (Matthew 10: 3).

## **The names**

This Judas obviously had two surnames. The name Judas was probably given to him at birth. Lebbaeus and Thaddaeus were actually nicknames. At the time of Jesus, it was common for people to be given nicknames—something to distinguish them from others. Simon had the nickname Peter, James and John were called the “Sons of Thunder” by Jesus, Thomas the twin, Matthew the tax collector, James the little one, Simon the Zealot, and Judas with even two nicknames—Lebbaeus and Thaddaeus.

One writer explains:

Thaddaeus means “breast-child” and makes one think of a nursing baby. Perhaps he was the youngest in his family and therefore the child whom his mother cared for particularly lovingly.

Lebbaeus has a similar meaning and is derived from the Hebrew root for heart. It literally means “heart-child.”

Such nicknames are no coincidence and give us insight into his disposition. He probably had a sensitive, kind heart. He was probably a soft, mild, and kind-hearted person.

Again we see the stark contrasts: Simon the Zealot was zealous, passionate, courageous. Judas, on the other hand, was a child of the heart, with a mild, tender soul that would not harm a fly. Both were chosen to be apostles, and both were to take the gospel to the whole world. What a colorful group of people.

## **A gentle nature**

Like the two disciples before him, Judas remains almost completely hidden from us. There is only one passage where he asks Jesus a question at the Last Supper (John 14: 21–23). Jesus said: “He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”

This was not entirely clear to Judas. He marveled at the grace of God that he and the other disciples were allowed to experience, and so he asked: “Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?” Here we also see the humble and gentle nature that Judas had. There is no pride or pushiness in his question. He did not rebuke Jesus, as Peter once did. His question sounds meek and somewhat astonished: “Lord, how is it . . . ?”

He could not understand Jesus. Jesus’ message was so wonderful and His love so rich. He could change people. Why should only the disciples have this experience, and not the whole world? Why did Jesus only want to reveal Himself to them?

In the next verse, Jesus explained it to him. He said that He can only reveal Himself to those who really love Him and are prepared to keep His word. He will come to such a person with His Father and make His home with him. Jesus was not saying that the good news should not be proclaimed to others. No, He was speaking of the change of heart that can only happen if you believe His word and accept it. For then the Father and the Son come and fill the heart of man to dwell in it. What a glorious truth—Christ dwells in us!

Judas was a God-fearing and kind-hearted disciple. He loved Jesus and is said to have brought the gospel to Edessa, a city in Mesopotamia (modern-day Turkey). There are reports that a king named Abgar was healed there through his ministry. Apparently, like the other apostles, he worked not only in words but also in power and through signs and wonders.

There is a traditional apostolic symbol for Judas-Lebbaeus-Thaddaeus, namely a club. Tradition says that he was slain for his faith. That is what this symbol stands for. Although he was a gentle and soft-hearted man, like the other disciples, he was willing to follow his Lord to the point of death.

### **What matters**

The apostles were twelve ordinary people. But they had one thing in common: they loved Jesus Christ with all their hearts! Nothing could separate them from their Savior, not even martyrdom. They were completely devoted to Him and overcame much through the One who first loved them.

Each of the apostles served God with their gifts and abilities and with the equipping of the Holy Spirit. Some became better known; others remained in the background. However, they all served and bore fruit, one 30-fold, the other 60-fold, the third 100-fold—each according to the gift God gave him.

It is not important whether we seem to have great or small gifts. What is important is faithful service and pure love for the One who first loved us—Jesus Christ!

*Eduard Albrecht  
Eppingen, Germany*





## Trust Restored at the Ends of the Earth

For years, I'd thought Timbuktu was just a made-up name for "the ends of the earth." When I found out it was a real place in Africa, I developed an inexplicable fascination for it. It was in 1986 on a fact-finding trip to West Africa for Missionary Aviation Fellowship that this fascination became an irresistible urge.

Timbuktu wasn't on my itinerary, but I knew I had to go there. Once I arrived, I discovered I was in trouble. I'd hitched a ride from Bamako, Mali, 500 miles away, on the only seat left on a Navajo six-seater airplane chartered by UNICEF.

Two of their doctors were in Timbuktu and might fly back on the return flight, which meant I'd be bumped, but I decided to take the chance. Now here I was, standing by the plane on the windswept outskirts of the famous Berber outpost.

There was not a spot of true green anywhere in the desolate brown Saharan landscape. Dust blew across the sky, blotting out the sun as I squinted in the 110-degree heat, trying to make out the mud-walled buildings of the village of 2,000. The pilot approached me as I started for town. He reported that the doctors were on their way, and I'd have to find another ride to Bamako.

"Try the marketplace. Someone there might have a truck. But be careful," he said. "Westerners don't last long in the desert if the truck breaks down, which often happens."

I didn't relish the thought of being stranded, but perhaps it was fitting that I should wind up like this, surrounded by the Sahara. Since I arrived in Africa, the strain of the harsh environment and severe suffering of the starving peoples had left me feeling lost in a spiritual and emotional desert.

The open-air marketplace in the center of town was crowded. Men and women wore flowing robes and turbans as protection against the sun. Most of the Berbers' robes were dark blue, with 30 feet of material in their turbans alone. The men were well armed with scimitars and knives. I felt eyes were watching me suspiciously. Suspicion was understandable in Timbuktu.

Nothing could be trusted here. These people had once been prosperous and self-sufficient. Now even their land had turned against them. Drought had turned rich grasslands to desert. Unrelenting sun and windstorms had nearly annihilated all animal life. People were dying by the thousands.

I went from person to person trying to find someone who spoke English, until I finally came across a local policeman who understood my broken French. "I need a truck," I said. "I need to go to Bamako."

Eyes widened in his shaded face. "No truck," he shrugged. Then he added, "No road. Only sand."

By now, my presence was causing a sensation in the marketplace. I was surrounded by



at least a dozen small children, jumping and dancing, begging for coins and souvenirs. The situation was extreme, I knew. I tried to think calmly. What am I to do?

Suddenly, I had a powerful desire to talk to my father. Certainly he had known what it was like to be a foreigner in a strange land. But my father, Nate Saint, was dead. He was one of five missionary men killed by Auca Indians in the jungles of Ecuador in 1956. I was a month shy of my fifth birthday at the time, and my memories of him were almost like movie clips: a lanky, intense man with a serious goal and a quick wit. He was a dedicated jungle pilot, flying missionaries and medical personnel in his Piper Family Cruiser.

Even after his death, he was a presence in my life. I had felt the need to talk with my father before, especially since I'd married and become a father myself. But in recent weeks, this need had become urgent. For one thing, I was new to relief work. But it was more than that. I needed Dad to help answer my new ques-

tions of faith. In Mali, for the first time in my life, I was surrounded by people who didn't share my faith, who were, in fact, hostile to the Christian faith, locals and Western relief workers alike.

In a way, it was a parallel to the situation Dad had faced in Ecuador. How often I'd said the same thing Dad would have said among the Indians who killed him: "My God is real. He's a personal God who lives inside me, with whom I have a very special, one-on-one relationship."

And yet the question lingered in my mind: Did my father have to die? All my life, people had spoken of Dad with respect; he was a man willing to die for his faith. But at the same time, I couldn't help but think the murders were capricious, an accident of bad timing.

Dad and his colleagues landed just as a small band of Auca men were in a bad mood for reasons that had nothing to do with faith or Americans. If Dad's plane had landed one day later, the massacre may not have

happened. Couldn't there have been another way? It made little impact on the Aucas that I could see. To them, it was just one more killing in a history of killings.

Thirty years later, it still had an impact on me. And now, for the first time, I felt threatened because of who I was and what I believed. "God," I found myself praying as I looked around the marketplace, "I'm in trouble here. Please keep me safe and show me a way to get back. Please reveal Yourself and Your love to me the way You did to my father."

No bolt of lightning came from the blue. But a new thought did come to mind. I could wire Bamako to send another plane. "Where's the telecommunications office?" I asked another policeman. He said, "Telegraph transmits only if station in Bamako has machine on, message goes through. If not," he shrugged, "no answer ever comes."

Now what? The sun was crossing toward the horizon. If I didn't have arrangements made by nightfall, what would happen to me? This was truly the last outpost of the world. More than a few Westerners had disappeared in the desert without a trace.

Then I remembered that just before I'd started for Timbuktu, a fellow worker had said, "There's a famous mosque in Timbuktu. Many Islamic pilgrims visit it every year. But there's also a tiny Christian church, which virtually no one visits. Look it up if you get a chance."

I asked the children, "Where is Eglise Evangelique Chretienne?"

The youngsters were willing to help, though they were obviously confused about what I was looking for. Several times, elderly men and women scolded them harshly as we passed, but they persisted. Finally, we arrived, not at the church, but at the open doorway of a tiny mud-brick house.

No one was home, but on the wall opposite the door was a poster showing a cross covered by wounded ►

*Seeing God's intervention,  
the family and the town's  
people were afraid to  
make further attempts on  
his life but condemned  
him as an outcast.*

hands. The French subscript said, “And by His stripes we are healed.”

Within minutes, my army of waifs pointed out a young man approaching us in the dirt alleyway. Then the children melted back into the labyrinth of the walled alleys and compounds of Timbuktu. The young man was handsome, with dark skin and flowing robes. But there was something inexplicably different about him. His name was Nouh Af Infa Yatara; that much I understood.

Nouh signaled he knew someone who could translate for us. He led me to a compound on the edge of town where an American missionary lived. I was glad to meet the missionary, but from the moment I’d seen Nouh, I’d had the feeling that we shared something in common.

“How did you come to have faith?” I asked him. The missionary translated as Nouh answered: “This compound has always had a beautiful garden. One day when I was a small boy, a friend and I decided to steal some carrots. It was a dangerous task. We’d been told that Toubabs (white men) eat nomadic children. Despite our agility and considerable experience, I was caught by the former missionary here. Mr. Marshall didn’t eat me; instead, he gave me the carrots and some cards that had God’s promises from the Bible written on them. He told me if I learned them, he’d give me an ink pen!”

“You learned them?” I asked.

“Oh, yes!” he exclaimed. “Only government men and the headmaster of the school had a Bic pen! But when I showed off my pen at school, the teacher knew I must have spoken with a Toubab, which is strictly forbidden. He beat me severely.”

When Nouh’s parents found out he had portions of such a despised book defiling their house, they threw him out and forbade anyone to take him in, nor was he allowed in school.

But something had happened: Nouh had come to believe that what the Bible said was true. Nouh’s mother became desperate. Her own standing, as well as her family’s, was in jeopardy. Finally, she decided to kill her son. She obtained poison from a sorcerer and poisoned Nouh’s food at a family feast. Nouh ate the food and wasn’t affected.

His brother, who unwittingly stole a morsel of meat from the deadly dish, became violently ill and remains partially paralyzed. Seeing God’s intervention,

the family and the town’s people were afraid to make further attempts on his life but condemned him as an outcast.

After sitting a moment, I asked Nouh the question that only hours earlier I’d wanted to ask my father: “Why is your faith so important to you that you’re willing to give up everything, perhaps even your life?”

“I know God loves me and I’ll live with Him forever,” he replied. “I know it! Now I have peace where I used to be full of fear and uncertainty. Who wouldn’t want to give up everything for this peace and security?”

“It couldn’t have been easy for you as a teenager to take a stand that made you despised by the whole community,” I said. “Where did your courage come from?”

“Mr. Marshall couldn’t take me in without putting my life in jeopardy. So he gave me some books about other Christians who’d suffered for their faith. My favorite was about five young men who willingly risked their lives to take God’s good news to stone-age Indians in the jungles of South America.” His eyes widened as he continued. “I’ve lived all my life in the desert. How frightening the jungle must be! The book said these men let themselves be speared to death, even though they had guns and could have killed their attackers!”

The missionary translator said, “I remember the story. As a matter of fact, one of those men had your last name.”

“Yes,” I said quietly, “the pilot was my father.”

“Your father?” Nouh cried, “The story is true?”

“Yes,” I said, “it’s true.”

The missionary and Nouh and I talked through the afternoon. When they accompanied me back to the airfield that night, we found that the doctors weren’t able to leave Timbuktu after all, and there was room for me on the UNICEF plane.

As Nouh and I hugged each other, it seemed incredible that God loved us so much that He’d arranged for us to meet at the ends of earth. Nouh and I had gifts for each other that no one else could give. I gave him the assurance that the story that had given him courage was true. He, in turn, gave me the assurance that God had used Dad’s death for good.

Dad, by dying, had helped give Nouh a faith worth dying for. And Nouh, in return, had helped give Dad’s faith back to me.

*Steve Saint, from “The Beautiful Way”*

# Under God's Protection

**O**n his missionary journey in Africa, the missionary Eugen Walfred experienced God's protective hand in an impressive way. After a long day, he, his wife, and his daughter finally found shelter in a hut that had been made available to them for the night by the very suspicious natives.

Throughout the night, it sounded like a raucous feast was being celebrated outside the hut. The next morning, when Walfred emerged into the daylight, he was approached by some of the village elders, who asked, "White Man, who is the other white man?"

"What other white man?" Walfred responded, thinking they meant one of the Belgian officers he intended to meet in the nearby fort.

"The white man who defended your hut," they answered.

"What do you mean?" Walfred inquired, puzzled. "I'm the only white man in the hut."

They shook their heads, explaining, "White Man, we lost a battle, and our chief was captured. We wanted to make a sacrifice last night and needed a virgin to do it, so when the women told us you had a white virgin in your hut, we decided to kill you and take the girl for the sacrifice. However, everytime we approached your hut, a white man stood in front of it and scared us away. Who is this great white man?"

"The great white man you saw," realized Walfred, "was the great white spirit that is our God, who protects us wherever we go!"

What an incredible experience that shows us that even today the Lord can protect His messengers!

*W. J. Smart*





# I Need Thee!

*I need Thee, Lord, to travel onwards  
Upon my way in the new year.  
Help me each day as I go forward;  
Be at my side, be very near.*

*I need Thee, Lord, oh give me power;  
I am too weak to go alone.  
In vicious storms with wind and showers,  
Please be my strength and cornerstone.*

*I am a pilgrim on life's journey;  
Protect Your child upon the way.  
Where sin and foes wish to ensnare me,  
I need Your guidance ev'ry day.*

*Into Your hands I lay my future;  
Lord, keep me safe both night and day.  
Oh, be my guide and be my teacher  
That I may never go astray.*

*I need Your light upon my pathway;  
Let Your grace shine and make things bright.  
When skies grow dark, let me not dismay;  
I know I am a child of light.*

*I need discernment, godly wisdom,  
To understand Your will, oh Lord.  
Oh, let it be in each decision  
That I obey Your precious Word.*

*I need Your blessing. I need Your grace.  
And if I follow Your Word by night and day,  
In all I do in every place,  
I'll go with joy upon my way.*