



Foundation of Faith

A LACK OF TRUST
WAIT ON THE LORD
IN THE FATHER'S HANDS
JESUS CHRIST-UNCHANGING
TODAY, I WILL TRUST

Trust



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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Readers,

Another new year stretches out before us. For God, each day is like any other; for us, whose days are limited, the transition from the old year to the new has significance. It may lead us to ask ourselves how many more years we will live to see; we may wonder, "What will this new year bring?"

At their core, these questions reflect a distrust of the unknown. To address them, this issue of the *Foundation of Faith* discusses trust.

A key aspect is that trust grows from a common past. If we say, "That's someone I trust," how did we arrive at that judgment? First, we likely got to know this person as someone of steadfast integrity and reliability. Then, based on this past experience, we gained trust for the future. Trust connects the past with the future—and there is no one with a longer track record than God.

People can sometimes violate or even break our trust, but God never does or can. Every child of God knows that no one is as worthy of trust as is God. He is faithful, never changes, and always stands by His promises and His Word. Without exception, God wants what is best for us, out of love. That's how it was last year, and that's how God will be there for us in this new year. We can choose to just trust Him!

This new year may bring moments in which our trust in God is tested, when events seem overwhelming and God's actions incomprehensible. Nonetheless, one thing will always remain true: We can trust God! The writer of Hebrews encourages us, "Do not throw away this confident trust in the Lord. Remember the great reward it brings you!" (Hebrews 10:35, NLT). This call still goes out to us today. Let's follow it as we head into 2026!

R. Taron

Faith—Without Doubting

According to Hebrews 11:1, faith “is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

A grandmother promised her ten-year-old grandson a stamp album for Christmas. The Christmas celebration came and went—but there was no stamp album, and not a word from the grandmother. Nothing was even said about it until his friends came to look at the presents he had received. The boy’s mother was very surprised to hear her son list all his gifts and add, “And a stamp album from my grandmother.”

After hearing this several times, the mother called her son to her and said, “But George, you didn’t receive a stamp album. Why do you say your Grandma gave you one?” He looked at her as if she had asked a very strange question. “Well, Mom, Grandma said it, and that’s about the same as having it.” No words from his mother could shake his faith.

A month passed, and nothing more was said about the album. Finally the mother said—partly to test George’s faith, and partly because she herself wondered why the album hadn’t come: “George, I think Grandma may have forgotten her promise.”

“Oh no, Mom!” he answered quickly and firmly. His face lit up as he continued, “Do you think I should write Grandma and thank her for the album?”

“I’m not sure . . . but you can try,” the mother replied. A great spiritual truth seemed to kindle in her heart. Shortly afterward the letter was written and mailed. Soon a letter came back from the grandmother:

“My dear George, I have not forgotten my promise. Because I couldn’t find an album here like the one you wanted, I ordered one from New York. It arrived after Christmas but still wasn’t the right one. So I ordered another; it hasn’t arrived yet. Therefore I’m sending you the money so you can buy one for yourself. Your loving Grandma.”

As George read the letter, his face shone like the face of a victor. From his heart that had never doubted he said: “Now, Mom, didn’t I tell you so?”

George had “hoped against hope” (Romans 4:18) that he would receive the album. And while he trusted, his grandmother had been working—and at the right time his faith became sight.

Jesus said to Thomas: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed!” (John 20:29). ■



A Lack of Trust

We often tie the Lord's hands through our lack of trust. When Jesus asked Bartimaeus, the blind man, in Mark 10, "What do you want Me to do for you?", he answered, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight." He did not think it too much to ask the Lord to restore his sight in both eyes at once. In our unbelief, we easily fall into the mistake of thinking we may ask for only a little at a time.

A city comes to mind where God richly blessed the ministry, and the church meeting house was filling up. We were soon hindered from further expansion because of a lack of resources. One evening a gentleman came into my office, introduced himself, and said: "Brother, you don't know me. But I know you and I know the work God has assigned you in this city. Now I see myself as a steward of the earthly goods my Master has entrusted to me, and therefore I ask you to tell me how much money you need."

That sounded very much like Jesus and Bartimaeus: "What do you want me to do for you?" The Lord hears your sighing and crying! Now here was my friend, saying, "Brother, tell me how much you need." Well, how much did I need? I had asked God for help, and here

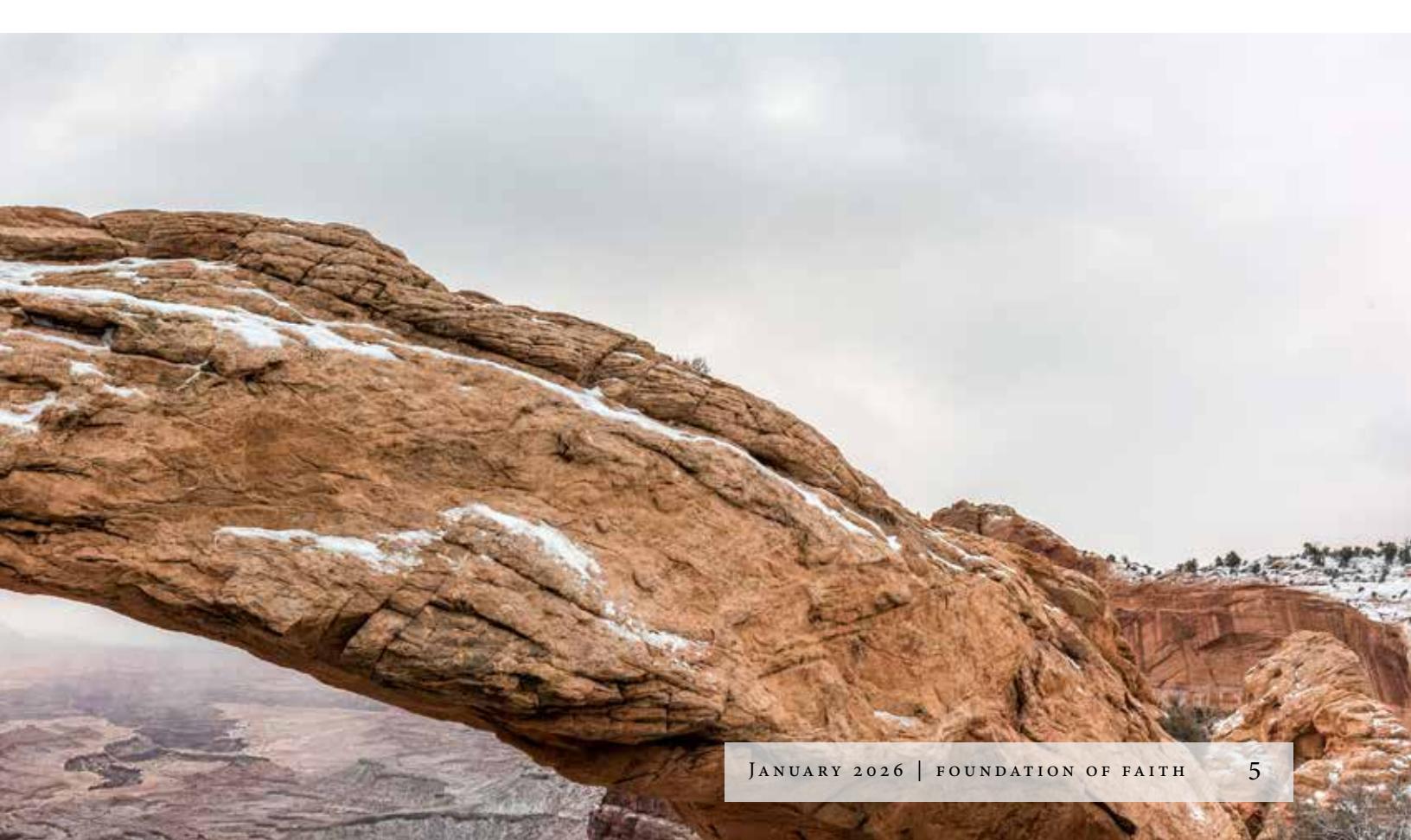
the help had come. But I remained silent. He saw my embarrassment.

I thought to myself: "This is quite something—to say, 'Brother, how much do you need?' I don't know this man or his bank account. If I ask him for what I really need, and it is more than he wants to or can give, then he will be embarrassed. And I would want to sink through the floor."

But my friend did not stop asking. He took out his checkbook and looked me in the eye again. "Brother, trust me; I will consider it an honor." I knew exactly what we needed. I then named part of the sum, and my breath caught in my throat. I received exactly that amount. Later, coming up with the additional funds caused me much effort. I regretted that I had not told him the full amount. I dishonored him by not trusting him.

Dear Reader, don't we often treat the Lord Jesus just as I treated this friend? Let us honor the Lord Jesus with unreserved faith, and the Lord will in turn honor us with a limitless answer! "Ask, ask, and it will be given to you!"

John MacNeil



Learning to Trust Through Nature

Many years ago, pondering the natural world strengthened the faith of a poor seamstress from Stuttgart. She had to vacate her apartment and, not knowing where to go, was overcome with worry. As she walked up an old road, she suddenly saw an empty but beautifully shaped, colorful snail shell at her feet. “Oh,” she thought, “the God who builds little houses for snails can also provide me, His child, with a place to live!” She picked up the snail shell and placed it on her dresser at home. In the evening, she attended Bible study. After the study, an acquaintance came to her and told her the good news: “Helen, I know of a suitable little room for you!”

It was perfect: quiet and sunny, owned by friendly people, and located in the middle of her customer base. The seamstress rented the room the next day and lived happily for many years in this little home that God had given her. But she could never part with the snail shell because it had once reminded her of God’s goodness and wisdom in her time of need, and it would continue to remind her of that.

Jesus also directed people’s attention to nature in order to teach them to trust in God: “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow . . .” (Matthew 6:26, 28). Have you noticed all this and are still worried? Are we not much more than the birds, much more than the lilies, much more than the snails?

God cares for our physical life, which is fleeting and lasts only a short time. But isn’t the soul worth more than the body? If He cares for the lesser, should He not care even more for the greater?

Just as many are plagued by anxiety and worries in their earthly existence, countless others feel tormented in their souls. Uncertainty torments them. They are faced with emptiness. All attempts to appease their conscience fail; the gaping void resurfaces again and again. The thought of death is terrifying.

Is this the care that God has provided for your soul, which exists eternally? Oh no, and again no! “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them” (vs. 26). The mistake lies solely in the fact that you have run away from your heavenly Father, as in Jesus’ parable of the prodigal son. What a miserable life that was. And in the father’s house there was abundance. The truth is, if your soul suffers deprivation, you no longer have a heavenly Father. It is not that the Father sent you away—you left Him of your own accord.

The first woman, Eve, thought it would be good to do what God did not want her to do. She believed that there must be some mysterious wisdom behind it, some hidden pleasure, and that not having it would be a great loss. But God was right. On the day she left Him, that is, the day she disobeyed Him, she was to die. That indeed became the fate of her soul.

A soul that has departed from the Father is dead in sin. Only in Him is preservation or nourishment. Worldly lust kills it. Disobedience to God’s good will kills it, therefore the terrible and hopeless condition of those who have abandoned their connection with the heavenly Father.

The soul will never prosper till one comes to the Father. The Father gives, according to Isaiah 61:3, “beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.” There the misery ends; there one regains youth like the singing birds on green, blossoming branches. The terror of death has vanished; blissful assurance dwells in the heart.

The path thereto is simple—even the uneducated and children can find it. Christ died for everyone. His death is the path to the Father. His blood cleanses from sin. Once we are cleansed of our sins, we are immediately returned to the Father’s house—into that glorious, great family of God. And day by day, we experience the sweet nourishment of the soul with heavenly gifts. “Your heavenly Father feeds them.”



However, only those who are willing will be cleansed of sin. Those who choose to remain in the mire of sin will not experience cleansing. Just as one cannot be washed in the mire, so one cannot be cleansed in sin. Christ came to cleanse us from our sins, and He expects us to allow ourselves to be completely cleansed and rejoice in the experience of such a wonderful deed. Peter speaks of the cleansed person

who becomes defiled again, who regains a love for the world, like a pig that rolls in the mud again after being washed (2 Peter 2:22).

But thank God, you will be constantly nourished and constantly remain in union with God unless you leave again on your own accord like Eve. Nowhere else can your soul find nourishment except with God, as Jesus says: "Your heavenly Father feeds them." ■



How to Wait On God

“Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my salvation; on You I wait all the day.” (Psalm 25:5)

How wonderful when one seeks God. Then they can say with David: “On You I wait all the day.” We probably all remember days when God was especially near to us. But as His children, we must learn to walk with God each and every day of our lives. This means waiting for God every day and being willing to pay heed to His ways.

Expect the grace of God and His mercy each and every day. Moses says in his prayer: “Oh, satisfy us early with Your mercy, that we may rejoice and be glad all our days!” (Psalm 90:14). God’s grace is given to us anew every day. There is no day when God is not the same. The weather changes, people change, circumstances change, and we ourselves change, but God

does not change. He remains as He is, and His years do not cease.

As soon as a new day begins, fix your thoughts on God. Expect the Lord to fill you with His grace and mercy. He knows you and the demands of your day, so He also knows how much strength you need. Even if the day is dark and dreary and you encounter many unpleasant things, trust in Him!

David says in Psalm 23: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me" (verse 4). We know of difficult days, days of trial in the past, and we will not be spared them in the future. So, how good it is when we can say to God: "You are with me, your rod and your staff, they comfort me."

Sometimes everything seems to go wrong. We are interrupted in our work, incidents occur that sadden us; we simply have headwinds and encounter struggles. In such situations, fix your eyes on Jesus, focus on Him. He is able to calm even the worst storm.

David says, "On You I wait all the day." Waiting for God means depending on Him. Just as a child trusts its father in difficult situations, so we rest in God's hand and trust Him. Without Him we can do nothing; every success depends on Him. Those dedicated to God can pray early in the morning, "My God, give me the strength to live for You today!" This also allows one to be grateful in the evening for God's guidance and assistance throughout the day.

When is the right time to hope in God? Every day, no matter if it is a weekday or a Sunday, a quiet or stormy day, a day of joy, sadness, or temptation. God is a God of the young and of the aged, and of everyone in between. God's time for you is today. The past no longer belongs to you, the future does not yet belong to you, but today is yours.

Let us take a closer look at some practical tips for waiting on God:

Our knowledge of God

We know that God's eye watches over us at all times. He knows our thoughts from afar. This knowledge should lead us to always keep Him in our minds and hearts. We also know from Scripture that God will bring all things to judgment. We will even need to give account for every one of our words. Therefore, let God

be your counselor today so that you may stand before Him one day.

Even if the day is dark and dreary and you encounter many unpleasant things, trust in Him!

Our inner attitude

Our attitude is very important for successfully waiting on God. Be sincere and earnest in prayer. It is not how many words you say that matters, but the attitude of

the heart. Let your relationship with God satisfy the need of your heart.

Remember that every day could be your last, and in that way you will best live for eternity and set proper priorities.

Detach yourself from the temporal

Innerly, detach yourself from these things, even if you are in the midst of life. Only then will you reach out with perseverance for the eternal.

We have a responsibility to wait upon God. Remember what you owe your family as a Christian. Did God not entrust our loved ones to us, so we may help lead them to salvation? It is also important for the family to come together before God's throne of grace. Is your home still a dwelling place of God, and are you raising your children in the reverence and admonition of the Lord? Think also of your responsibility to the church. Spiritual brothers and sisters make up God's congregation. How good it is when we fill our place in the church. When we come to worship with a praying heart, we will also encounter God there.

That is why waiting on God daily is so valuable for our personal lives and for the kingdom of God!

Fritz Lenk

For They Shall Be Comforted

This is a very specific promise: “For they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5: 4). Today, no one need stand at a grave not expecting to be comforted—for the Lord Jesus keeps His promise.

Job said to his friends, “Miserable comforters *are* you all!” (Job 16:2). Anyone who has gone through deep suffering has surely had similar experiences.

When we sigh, as the prophet Isaiah did, “I am very anxious for comfort,” and seek comfort from God, who said, “As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you” (Isaiah 66:13), then we too can testify with Isaiah: “But You have lovingly *delivered* my soul from the pit of corruption” (Isaiah 38:17).

Yes, God not only *wants* to comfort us, He *can* comfort us. No human being can comfort in the way He does. But how does God comfort us?

God comforts us by showing us that He understands our pain

Can we imagine what the Father suffered when He allowed His holy, beloved Son to die on the cross for our sake? The Bible says, “Then the sun was darkened” (Luke 23:45). God could not bear to watch His Son suffer on the cross—so He caused the sun to darken. Of course, this is humanly speaking, because for God, even darkness is not dark. Often God speaks in images so we can understand things better.

God also comforts us by showing that even the greatest suffering, in His hands, can lead to a glorious purpose.

The women standing before the cross may have lamented, “O God, how could you allow this to happen?” And the disciples may have sighed, “Why such a terrible end?” But on Easter morning, their eyes were opened, and they realized that it was precisely through the Savior’s terrible suffering and death that forgiveness of sins and eternal life were obtained for all mankind.

If you cannot understand why God has taken away what is most dear to you, try to believe that even through this affliction,

God’s plan for you and your loved ones will be fulfilled.

God comforts us by directing our gaze toward eternity
When He opens our eyes so that we recognize the significance of this short life with all that it contains in comparison to never-ending eternity, then we will be grateful for everything He has given and also for what He has taken from us. For we recognize that God’s giving and taking is governed by a wise plan that always has our best interests and eternal glory as its goal.

Once you begin to believe that it is not “blind fate” or “chance” that determines your life, but God’s goodness and wisdom, even bitter suffering loses its sting. And when you place yourself and all your loved ones in God’s faithful hands and trust Him completely, you will experience that God’s peace is higher than all reason and what Jesus promised is true: “. . . for they shall be comforted.”

In the Father's Hand—*Crossing from the Old Year Into the New*

A long journey lies behind us. Each day, the earth's orbit takes you about 2.5 million kilometers (1.6m mi) with respect to the Sun's center (BBC Science Focus). And we who live on the globe travel this vast distance with it. That is a really long way! How long would it take a modern airplane to cover this distance? When we think about it, we get an idea of the enormous length of the journey and the short time in which we cover it.

Not everyone reached the destination of their long journey last year. Oh, how many have left us along the way. A large crowd of people passed into eternity last year. How many of these deceased looked hopefully into the future on New Year's Eve last year. They joyfully and confidently stepped onto the bridge of time, which they believed would connect them to the following year, but God's eternal counsel had determined otherwise. Some were only allowed to take a few steps on this bridge built by God. Others may have been halfway across. Still others could almost see the end but did not reach it.

Those of us who had the privilege of reaching the end and crossing the new bridge built by God want to look back with grateful hearts and do what the songwriter says:

Now let us come before Him,
With song and prayer adore Him,
Who to our life hath given
All needed strength from Heaven.

Now stand still for a moment and count all the undeserved blessings that the gracious Lord has bestowed upon you. You may have many complaints.

But remember, dear child of God, how in your time of need God spread His wings upon you. How much good has God sown in your life over the past year? But how much was He able to reap when He sought fruit?

A new year lies ahead of us. Shall we make it a successful journey—with God's grace? Whether we can all cross the newly built bridge to the end is in God's hands. However, we should all be inspired by a firm resolution: to live more faithfully for Jesus than ever before! We cannot retrace the path we have already traveled. Therefore, let us fervently ask the Lord to help us walk the path ahead with sure steps.

Come, wander on with joy,
For shorter grows the way,
The hour that frees us from the flesh
Draws nearer day by day.
A little truth and love,
A little courage yet,
More free from earth, more apt to set
Your hopes on things above.

If you do not yet belong to the Lord, you are forced to make the journey alone. How will you walk without a guide? Will you not take God as your companion, who said, "I will not leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5)? Jesus, who died for you, seeks to walk with you through life.

Sometimes the storms of life rage with great power, and the waves of distress crash upon us. It is good if you have found a foothold in the cross of Jesus before such times. He wants to take you by the hand and guide you safely through it all. ■



Our Life Is in God's Hands

"You are my God. My times are in Your hand." (Psalm 31: 14–15)

How comforting to know that our lives are in God's hands. David, who wrote this Psalm, was certainly thinking of his own eventful and turbulent life. God's hand was clearly evident in his life. When he was still a young boy keeping "his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, [he] went out after it and struck it, and delivered the lamb from its mouth" (1. Samuel 17: 34–35). He could hardly have done this on his own, but God strengthened his hands and gave him victory. Later he was in mortal danger again when he fought the giant Goliath. The giant would have relished to kill David, but God's hand protected him. Afterward, when he came to Saul's royal court, his life was in danger almost day and night. He was even pursued like a wild animal in the mountains. He would certainly have fallen into Saul's hands if the Lord had not been his shield.

Then, when he became king, his enemies were even more numerous. Indeed, his own son pursued him and sought his life. Yet through all these dangers, God's hand safely guided him. No wonder he exclaimed, "You are my God. My times are in Your hand" (Psalm 31: 14–15).

So too, our lives are in God's hands, even at this very moment. It may not be as stormy as David's

life; however, it certainly is not always sunshine and without danger.

The hands of humans are so weak and powerless! A small child may lie in the hands of its loving mother, but how powerless she stands when she comes to death's door. No tears nor lamentations can help. Death remains the victor. Yet Jesus says, no one shall "snatch them out of My hand" (John 10: 28). Not even death can lay a hand on one without God's permission. Oh, the safety of believers who are in God's hands!

Joseph's life was in these hands, otherwise he would never have been honored in Egypt. Daniel's life was in these hands, otherwise he would have been prey to the lions. Paul's life was also in these hands, otherwise he would never have seen Rome. Often, we do not recognize the hand that guides us.

Years ago, a man was walking toward the harbor in Europe to board a ship that would take him to America. On the way he saw a plant and picked it. Immediately, a police officer put his hand on his shoulder, because it was illegal to pick flowers or plants in that country. All his excuses didn't help. He was taken to the police station. After paying his fine, he hurried back to the harbor. However, the steamer had already departed. He was very displeased and criticized the police and the country for their laws.

A few days later, he shared his experience at a pub, and once again expressed his displeasure. Then someone handed him the newspaper, and there it was in large letters: "The ship and all on board have sunk." As he read this, he was deeply moved. He asked God for forgiveness. He became a new person, and from that moment on, tried never again to go his own way, but instead followed God's guidance and leadership in all things.

Our lives lie in the hands of love. If God were a tyrant like the gods of the pagans, we would certainly not be envied for being in His hands. It is hard to imagine anything worse than an almighty God who is a tyrant. However, God is a God of love, and our lives are in His hands. These are the hands that bled for us on the cross out of love. These are the hands that will carry us into old age, until we turn gray.

On the memorable evening when the President of the United States, Abraham Lincoln, was shot, a lady held his head in her lap, and her dress was stained by his bleeding wounds. This blood bears witness to the love Lincoln had for black people. In the same way, the nail marks in Jesus' hands testify to His love for humanity. We can confidently place ourselves in these hands, whether in life or death.

We read in Psalm 32:4: "For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was turned into the drought of summer." Nevertheless, it was still the hand of love. When God sends a drought into our lives, it also has its purpose and only serves to make the harvest all the richer and greater later on.

Our lives are also held through God's wisdom. He knows what will serve us best. Some weary pilgrims wait almost impatiently for the moment when the waters of the Jordan will part, and they can cross into the better land. They cannot understand why they must wait. On the other hand, there is the young man who is just preparing for his profession in life, and God calls him home. One must stay, the other must depart. God alone knows why. Our time is in His hands. His hands lead us on the right path. It may not always be the way we would choose, but it is the path that leads upward to God.

Let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God. Our lives can only fulfill their highest mission when they are guided by His hand. Yet how many choose to go their own way! There is only one power in the world that can tear us away from God, and that is sin. Sin leads our lives down the wrong path. If we are to be guided by God, the bond between us and Him must be holy and without sin. ■



Jesus Christ—Unchanging

“The days of signs and wonders are long gone,” contemporary man proclaims. “Oh yes,” we can reply, “but only for unbelievers.” God’s Word tells us quite clearly: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13: 8)

This is also a certain comforting, refreshing, and enlivening assurance for me. What He was and did, then and now, He will be and do for all eternity. This is a secure foundation for our faith that does not waver.

But if you want to know what He is still doing today, just read in Scripture what He has done, and you will have the answer.

Jesus came to redeem mankind. But since the word “redemption” means “to restore to a former state,” in order to understand more correctly what Christ’s atonement has brought to mankind, we must look back and see what that former state was.

The Word of God shows us that man came from the hand of the Creator, holy and pure, healthy in body and soul. Therefore, in order to redeem man, who lost this blessed state through sin, there must be healing power in the blood of our Savior. With a grateful heart, I praise God for His glorious plan of salvation, which is perfect and restores both body and soul to perfection. Reconciliation as such points to God, but its effect, redemption, points to us humans.

We cannot recognize the Christ of Holy Scripture without being convinced of His power and compassion. He Himself says of His power: “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28: 18). And He proved the truth of His words by healing all kinds of sick people, making the lame walk again, cleansing lepers, raising the dead, and forgiving sinners their transgressions. Truly, our Savior is great!

Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He told His disciples that He would go to the glory of His Father, where He had been before the foundation of the world. Did He relinquish His divine power when He went to the Father? Is He less powerful today than He was yesterday? No, thank God! Jesus Christ is still the same today as He was yesterday, and He will remain so for eternity.

There is wonderful power in the name of Jesus. He died to become our mediator, who sits at the right hand of God. And He gave us the right to use His name in His service.

“In My name they will cast out demons . . . they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover” (Mark 16: 17–18). Peter also spoke in Jesus’ name when he said to the beggar at the temple gate, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you:

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3: 6). Did he find help in the name of Jesus? Yes, instantly. He jumped up, was able to walk and stand, and went with them into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God. The name of Jesus has wonderful power.

When Peter and John were teaching the people in the temple and proclaiming the resurrection of our Savior, they were brought before the Sanhedrin. And they asked them, “By what power or by what name have you done this?” But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Let it be known to you and to all the people of Israel that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole” (Acts 4: 1–12).

**We cannot recognize
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In James 5:14–15, we read that the sick should be anointed with oil in the name of the Lord, and “the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up.”

Dear Reader, does His wonderful name still have power today? Yes, most certainly; yesterday, today, and forever! I myself have experienced it firsthand.

Let us look to His mercy. Has He lost it? Does He no longer care about the sick and the poor? Does Jesus no longer care for us? Has He lost His compassion? That is unthinkable, yes, simply impossible. He still has the same love for us, the same compassion and sympathy as He did when He walked on earth. He is the same yesterday, today, and forever. ■

“I Shall Not Want”

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.” (Psalm 23:1)

A young man, who was an acquaintance of mine, desperately wanted a motorcycle. Finally, he was able to buy one.

However, he soon realized that riding a motorcycle in rainy weather was not enjoyable. So, he wished for a car—and one day he actually pulled up in a small car.

Now he undertook long journeys with his car. Yet it annoyed him when larger cars overtook him. “Oh,” he sighed, “if only I had a Mercedes!”—Perhaps he will get one of those in the future. If he does, he will likely realize that he cannot be happy without an airplane.

Such is the human heart. We always seem to be missing something to be genuinely happy. When our life is calm, we long for diversity. When it is stormy, we wish for peace. When we are at home, we are drawn to distant places. When we are

abroad, we are overcome with homesickness. We are always missing something—this is just how many people feel.

Yet in our Psalm, we hear someone say, “I lack nothing”—not only now, but also in the future. This person’s heart has found peace and contentment. He was able to say “yes” to his life. This Psalmist was not an old, wise man who had found serenity through many disappointments. No, he was a young, passionate person.

How did he come to have such a willing and glad heart? The answer is right at the beginning: “The LORD is my shepherd.” We all know this verse, but we often do not really take it seriously. David did. Whoever does so can say “yes” to the guidance he receives from his shepherd and will be content. ■

Wait On the Lord!

“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

What an encouraging promise! How wonderful that God has arranged so we, as His children, can come to Him at any time to have our spiritual strength renewed. He knew that our spiritual strength is truly very small and that we cannot do anything on our own. He knew that if we had to rely on our own strength, we would often fall by the wayside. Knowing our weakness, in His love and mercy He has arranged it so we can go to Him, the great source of spiritual life, and have our strength renewed day by day, as Paul says: “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

But God has promised to renew our strength under certain conditions. We must fulfill these conditions. Otherwise, we cannot expect the promise to be fulfilled for us.

One of these conditions is that we must wait upon the Lord. I believe with all my heart that the reason many souls are overcome in the hour of temptation and some lose victories is that they have not prayed enough. Others allow themselves to be so weighed down by the cares of this life that they do not take time for prayer. Perhaps they only take time for a fleeting, hurried prayer before going out to face the temptations and adversities of the day. Is it any wonder then that they are overcome? God has made sufficient provision whereby we can obtain all the help we need, but we must do our part. The hurried prayer is not the prayer that moves God on His throne and brings the answer.

We are warned in God’s Word not to let the cares of life overwhelm us. If we are not careful, earthly things and worries will crowd out our spiritual life. The dev-

il knows that if we have a true hunger for prayer, we will grow in our spiritual life and be strong in God’s grace. That is why he will do everything in his power to distract us. Therefore, dear ones, let us be diligent and vigilant. Let us take the time to often seek the Lord’s face.

The soul that withdraws from its earthly duties to draw near to the Lord, to discern God’s holy will, will find the windows of heaven opened and will feel God’s presence. God’s rich blessings will be poured out upon it. The enemy must retreat, the dark storm clouds will part, and the glory of the Lord will be poured out upon the soul, as it gains new courage and strength from the Lord.

It is our blessed privilege to cultivate an intimate prayer life in close communion with God. The soul that often approaches the Lord in prayer immediately recognizes that it has received necessary grace and strength. Let us therefore spend sufficient time before God in prayer so that we may be strengthened in our inner being and obtain necessary help from the source of strength in times of trial and temptation. What a privilege it is to talk to the Lord, to be able to tell Him everything that troubles us, and to wait calmly until He gives us His answer.

The more intimate our prayer life is, the more we will love Him. Those who have learned to pray as they should, know the secret of a holy life. Therefore, let us more diligently seek God’s face and spend more time in His presence. We will then become more like Him in our daily lives. May the Lord help us to live before Him in such a way that we may be strong in grace and in the power of His might.

Faith Stewart



Protective Captivity

On a warm summer evening, a father sat outside in front of his house at a table with his wife and children. The workday was over, and the mother was reading aloud from a book.

As it grew darker, they lit a candle. No sooner had the light flickered than a butterfly fluttered over. It circled closer and closer around the flame. The children tried to shoo it away, but it was too late: it got too close to the candle and burned itself. "Oh no, the butterfly is dead!" cried one of the children in alarm.

Shortly afterwards, a second butterfly flew in, also attracted by the light. But before it could begin its dangerous circles, the father took a cup from the table and placed it over the animal. Now it was trapped—and could no longer fly to the candle.

The children looked at their father in amazement. He explained: "If the butterfly could speak now, it would probably say, 'What a mean man! He locks me in this dark prison, takes away my freedom, and won't let me fly anymore. If only he would let me out!' And yet I mean well by him. If I let him go, he would fly back into the light—and perish just like the other one. He must stay under the cup until we extinguish the candle."

And so it happened. When the family later went into the house, the candle was blown out and the cup removed. The butterfly flew away—unharmed. The light that had been the first butterfly's undoing could no longer harm him. His brief "imprisonment" had been his salvation.

Do you understand this story? Could it be that God sometimes leads you into a "prison" too—into suffering, hardship, tribulation, or a path that seems completely incomprehensible to you—and that this is precisely how He protects you? Perhaps you do not even see the greater danger from which He is protecting you: the danger of sin, guilt, or destruction that you would otherwise fall into. And perhaps one day you will thank God for this time of "imprisonment."

Instead of sighing, complaining, or grumbling, wouldn't you rather say to God:

O lead me!
Be it over meadows, over sharp stones,
O lead me!
You lead me rightly, you mean well with me:
I thank You eternally for your guidance! ■



Discussion questions:

- Why does Dad say that the New Year is like a blank sheet of paper? What could we write or draw on it?
- With God's help, what good impressions can we leave on other people's hearts? And what impressions do we definitely not want to leave?

Steps Into a New Year

On New Year's morning, the Werner family woke up early. It was quiet outside, as if the world were holding its breath. Mom pulled back the curtain and marveled, "Look, kids, everything is white!"

Nicholas and Laura jumped out of bed and pressed their noses against the windowpane. The garden, the trees, even the rooftops—everything was covered in a thick, soft blanket of snow.

"Come on, we're going outside!" called Papa Werner. Wrapped up warm in hats, scarves, and gloves, the whole family trudged through the fresh snow. Mama carried little Toby in her arms. He kicked his legs with joy, punched the air with his fists, and shouted a cheerful "Dada!" when he saw the white garden.

The children laughed and marveled at the beauty of the morning. With red cheeks, they ran through the sparkling snow, leaving deep boot prints behind them and drawing patterns in the white surface with their hands. Soon the first snowballs were flying, and cheerful squeals filled the air.

"Look how many tracks we've already made!" Laura exclaimed enthusiastically, spinning around in circles and laughing.

Dad nodded. "Yes, and that's how it is in life. Each of us leaves traces behind—through what we do,

what we say, and how we treat each other."

The children looked thoughtfully at their footprints. "What if the tracks disappear, like here, when new snow falls?" asked Nicholas.

"Then we'll make new ones," Dad replied calmly. "And some of the marks we leave on other people's hearts never fade."

They played for a while longer and built a small snow hill. Finally, they stood close together, breathed in the clear air, and looked out over the glistening white expanse.

"Just as the snow covers everything," said Dad, "the new year lies ahead of us like a blank sheet of paper. We don't know what each day will bring—joy and perhaps some worries. But there is one thing we can always do: trust in God. We need not be afraid."

Mom nodded. "And we can ask God to help us leave good footprints behind." The children snuggled up to their parents. Nicholas whispered, "Yes, ones that will last forever."

And thus a new year began for the Werner family—full of confidence, hope, and many small steps in the snow.

Helene Rotfuss



Free from Fear

Imagine if you weren't afraid. How would your life change? Would you go to school with confidence? Would you calmly confront the naughty boy in your class? Would you feel relaxed about the upcoming math test?

"Do not be afraid."—We read this exhortation in the Bible. But it's not that easy, is it? The problem is that we often consider ourselves too small, not strong enough, not smart enough, not good enough. What lies ahead seems so overwhelming, and that frightens us.

The Gospel of Matthew recounts the following event:

The boat with Jesus' disciples was already in the middle of the lake and was struggling against the waves because a strong headwind had come up. In the last quarter of the night, Jesus went to them. He walked across the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the water, they cried out in terror, "It is a ghost!" Immediately, He called out to them, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid." Then Peter dared to say, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to

You on the water." "Come," said Jesus. So Peter got out of the boat and walked on the water toward Jesus. But when he noticed how strong the wind was, he became afraid. He began to sink and cried out, "Lord, save me!" Immediately Jesus

reached out His hand and held him.

"You of little faith," He said, "why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind died down.

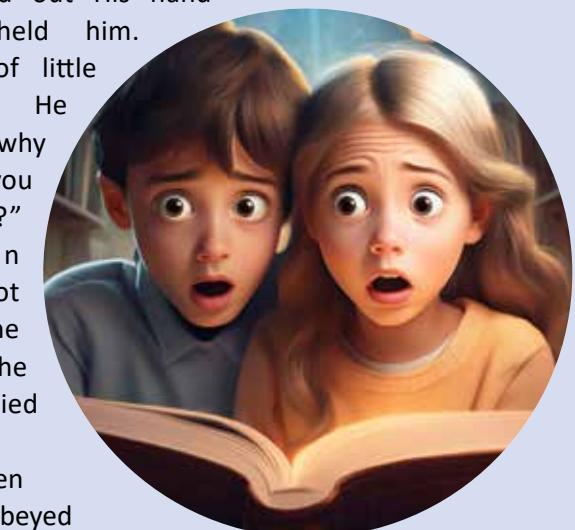
When Peter obeyed Jesus' words and stepped out of the boat onto the water of the lake, he was able to walk safely on the water—as long as he kept his eyes on Jesus. Look to Jesus! You can ask Him every day to protect you, give you courage, and strengthen you.

Here are two Bible verses you can memorize. When you are afraid, you can remember them.

"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).

"In God (I will praise His word), in God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?" (Psalm 56: 4).

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Today I WILL TRUST . . .

2020

Does this sound familiar?

There is something in your life that bothers you a lot, and you wish you could change it immediately. Maybe you want to exercise more, eat healthier, invite people over more often, or simply live a more content life. And now a new year is beginning. You might set some goals that you want to reach in 2026. That could sound like this: “I want to live healthier.” That is certainly a very commendable resolution, but the question is: how long will you be able to stick with it? What if instead you thought about how to integrate this practically into your everyday life—without committing for your entire life, but simply for each individual day? The chances of reaching your goal are much greater when you say things like: “Today I am going to go jogging,” or “Today I will eat a salad.” If you implement a small part every day, you will end up living a healthier life overall.

In a similar vein, some time ago, I was confronted with the following thought. I was asked to consider how my day would be affected if I told myself in the morning: “Today I trust in myself.” At first, I didn’t know what to do with that idea, but after thinking about it, a few points came to mind. Keywords like “self-confidence,” “taking risks,” “gut feeling,” “openness,” and “hope” shaped my response. As I pondered further, I realized that these are not bad qualities in themselves. But from a Christian perspective, I don’t stop there. Through Jesus and His work on the cross for me, I have the privilege of having a mighty and living God as my Father by my side. He is so much more faithful and reliable than I am, and He will never disappoint me. So I asked myself how my day would change if every morning I said: “Today I will trust in God.” What thoughts would I have that day, and which ones would not even arise? How would I treat the people around me? What would change in my prayer life? Which lies of the devil would be exposed—lies that I usually fell for?

1. Self-awareness is transformed into an awareness of who God is, and that He is with me.

With Him I can accomplish anything. My identity is rooted in Christ, and that gives me worth.

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4: 13).

“But there the majestic LORD *will be* for us, a place of broad rivers *and streams*, in which no galley with oars will sail, nor majestic ships pass by. (For the LORD *is* our Judge, the LORD *is* our Lawgiver, the LORD *is* our King; He will save us)” (Isaiah 33: 21–22).

2. “Taking risks” is more than just a nice adventure—it opens up entirely new possibilities when God is at my side.

God’s possibilities are beyond my comprehension. He does not think in three dimensions like we humans do. What is unknown to me is known to Him, and so I may face anything that stands before me as if it were a mountain. He gives courage and takes away all fear and worry.

“For by You I can run against a troop, By my God I can leap over a wall” (Psalm 18: 29).

“But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, They shall walk and not faint” (Isaiah 40: 31).

3. My “gut feeling” is not what matters, but what God thinks about the situation.

How unreliable my “gut feeling” is. It is based on past experiences and perhaps on other people’s advice. Both can change overnight. God, however, is constant. He knows what is best for me, and if I cling to Him and His principles, I will make the right decisions. He wants to guide me personally.

“The heart *is* deceitful above all *things*, and desperately wicked; who can know it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind. Even to give every man

according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 17: 9–10).

“Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxieties; and see if *there is any* wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139: 23–24).

“For My thoughts *are* not your thoughts, nor *are* your ways My ways, says the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55: 8–9).

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will guide you with My eye” (Psalm 32: 8).

4. Because I know that everything must pass by God first, I can go through my day with confidence and hope.

I know that God has everything under control, and every person and every situation I encounter today has a purpose. This enables me to meet those around me with love and openness. I see the worth of their souls, and it becomes my desire to direct them to God. They cannot harm me, because God is for me. This frees me from the fear of people. And even when I feel overwhelmed, I find my refuge in God, who holds my life in His hands.

“The LORD *is* on my side; I will not fear. What can man do to me? The LORD *is* for me among those who help me; Therefore I shall see *my desire* on those who hate me. *It is* better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. . . . This *is* the day the LORD has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118: 6–8, 24). (*Take time to read all of Psalm 118—it is very encouraging!*)

“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Proverbs 3: 5–6).

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He Was Faithful—He Remains Faithful

I recently came across an interesting statement. It keeps coming to mind. Here it is:

“The older we get, the more we long for a chapter of life that no longer exists.”

Did you have to read that sentence twice as well? What do you think—was the person who came up with this right?

Don’t we sometimes catch ourselves thinking in a similar way? Maybe we don’t use the same words, but our thoughts go in the same direction. We long for a past reality—for moments, people, and times that were familiar to us. We would like to continue living the way things once were—in a time that felt familiar and safe. But that time no longer exists. It has long since passed. What once was, now lives only in our memory.

The start of a New Year often reminds us of this. We look back at what has been. How beautiful it was in the past! Life felt so comfortable and constant.

But the more we occupy ourselves with the past, the more difficult the present seems at times. We struggle to think about the future—it seems uncertain, unpredictable, perhaps even frightening. And so we catch ourselves thinking: Why couldn’t everything stay the way it was? Why does everything have to change?

If we persist in this train of thought, it’s easy to feel down and become depressed. Joy fades, and we become a burden to ourselves and to others. But God does not want us to remain stuck in melancholy. He reminds us that every phase of life has its own beauty and its own value.

We may treasure the past and thank God for everything He has given us. We feel much like John, who writes that from Christ’s fullness we have received “grace upon grace” (John 1:16). We recall the years of service, the times when we were actively involved—in the church, in ministry, in the family. We participated

eagerly, giving our time, our strength, and often our money for God’s work. Those were good and blessed years. But they are history, and things are no longer as they once were.

A glance in the mirror is enough to remind us: We are no longer who we once were. And yet we may say: To everything there is a season. Today, others fill the positions we once held. We may watch from the sidelines, and sometimes we even feel we have been “shelved.” And then the longing for the past creeps in again—longing for a time that no longer exists.

But perhaps God wants to use this yearning to teach us something. It does not signify a flaw in our

hearts, but rather has a deeper meaning. God has placed a longing for eternity in every heart. And sometimes, when we sense a loss of what once was, God calls us through that very longing to look up—not to look back, but to look ahead.

Our true home is not here on this earth, but with Him. There, nothing will ever pass away, and everything we long for will be perfectly fulfilled in His presence. Perhaps God wants to remind us through this longing that everything on earth is temporary, but He remains the same.

When a lot changes, when familiar things disappear, when people, tasks, or circumstances shift—then we can know: God does not change.

The Bible emphasizes this truth clearly. In Psalm 102:25–27 we read:

“Of old You laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; yes, they will all grow old like a garment; like a cloak You will change them, and they will be changed. But You are the same, and Your years will have no end.”

And in Malachi 3:6 God Himself says: “For I am the LORD, I do not change.”

A glance in the mirror is enough to remind us: We are no longer who we once were.



These words are an anchor for our souls. In a world where everything is in flux, God stands firm. His love is unchanging, His faithfulness endures. He was faithful—and He remains faithful!

This truth changes our perspective. When we understand that God reigns over all times, that He is subject to no change, even our memories take on new meaning. The God who carried us in the past is the same God who holds us today and will lead us tomorrow.

His faithfulness is evident in many small details in daily life—in a new morning, in a prayer that is answered, in an encounter that becomes an encouragement. And even when we grow weak, when our strength and endurance fade, He remains the same strong and gracious God. His promise stands:

“Even to your old age, I am He, and even to gray hairs I will carry you! I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you” (Isaiah 46:4).

What a promise! God carries us—not only in the young, vigorous years, but also when we become old and tired. He does not let us go.

Therefore, we should not see our longing for past times as something to be sad about. Rather, it is God's gentle call to us—a reminder that we do not have a lasting city here (Hebrews 13:14). Our true home is with Him, where nothing fades, where no tears are shed, and where time has no control.

This perspective changes our thinking. It turns our focus from the past toward the future—toward what God has in store for us. For with Him, the story does not end in loss, but in fulfillment.

Our hearts find rest when we learn not to cling to the past, but to commit ourselves into God's hands. He has guided our lives—and He will complete what He has begun. Whoever trusts in Him loses nothing; on the contrary—he gains stability, hope, and a home.

Therefore, we can say in the end: He was faithful—and He remains faithful.

He was with us yesterday, He is with us today, and He will be with us for eternity.

*Harry Semenjuk
Wetaskiwin, AB*

The Secret of the Singing Heart

C. W. Naylor

Introduction

For forty-one years, C. W. Naylor was confined to his bed—a constant sufferer. It was in this school of isolation and suffering that he learned the Secret of the Singing Heart.

If a man can learn to sing the song of joy under such circumstances, we are safe in affirming that anyone in any circumstances can learn it, if he has the secret the author possesses. This man of God was a minister of the gospel for thirteen years prior to the internal injury as a result of an accident,

which wholly incapacitated him for the active work of the ministry. He faced the future with no prospect but helpless invalidism and with no means of earning a livelihood. He sought out a solution of the tremendous problems before him, and with the help of his Lord, not only learned the Secret of the Singing Heart for himself, but through him, multitudes of others have been caused to rejoice and be glad. It is our prayer that the insights gained by Bro. Naylor will be a help and a blessing to all our readers.

The Fountain of Song

“The whole earth is at rest and quiet; they break forth into singing.” (Isaiah 14:7)

Nature is joyful. There is something that wells up in the heart of things which breaks forth in song. There is a harmony which makes itself heard above discord. This world is not a place of melancholy. Its drab colors when properly blended become beauteous. Its discords may be merged into harmonies.

Happiness is the normal state of all life. Our tears are meant to be only the cleansing grain which refreshes and beautifies life. There is an echo of far-off music in all the sounds of nature. Rejoicing is everywhere. Happiness is God's will for all His creation. “Sing, O heavens . . . ! Shout, you lower parts of the earth; break forth into singing, you mountains, O forest, and every tree in it!” (Isaiah 44:23).

This universal joyfulness is also thus expressed, “The valleys . . . shout for joy, they also sing” (Psalm 65:13). Again, “Let the nations be glad and sing for joy!” (Psalm 67:4). In nature, beings with feelings are happy even though life for them is full of danger and hardship. The birds sing even though they know they are surrounded by enemies. In spite of the harsh reality of life, and undeterred by storms or cold, hunger or privation, the voice of joy still rises in melody.

Man is likewise permeated by the same cause of joyfulness. Difficulties may come, dangers may sur-

round him, he may fail, have losses, and sometimes almost despair. Notwithstanding all this, his spirits will ever rise despite his difficulties, and the song of joy is never fully quenched in any normal human being. Troubles, when they lie in the past, may be quickly forgotten. The young trees bent over by the snowfall rise again when the snow is melted, to gaze anew upon the sun. So man rises from his troubles. He lifts his head up into the sunshine, and again his heart breaks forth in joyfulness. The heart is naturally merry, and God would ever have it so. He says, “My servants shall sing for joy of heart” (Isaiah 65:14).

While preparing to write the chapters that follow, I took my concordance and Bible and looked up some of the words that express rejoicing and happiness, such as rejoicing, gladness, happy, blessed, joy, rest, etc. I found that these words and similar ones occur nearly nine hundred times in the Scriptures, even then my search was only partial. Assuredly this fact should convince us not only that happiness is the natural state of man, but that it is God's will for him.

Again and again we are exhorted to rejoice, to be glad, and to give expression to our joy. The poet has said, “Hope springs eternal in the human breast.” Joy is more powerful than sorrow. Peace is more lasting than trouble. Sorrow is but transitory. Life has balm for all our woes, light for all our darkness. Morning breaks after the darkest night. There is sunshine after the fiercest



C. W. Naylor on his sickbed with a dictation machine

storm. There is warmth and beauty after the cruel winter. In normal life happiness is the rule; unhappiness the exception. Troubles will come. There are things to be endured, but these need not take out of life its beauty, its happiness, or its worth.

One thing should ever be present in our thoughts of life. Our happiness does not depend upon our environment, our station, our circumstances, or any external thing. The songs come from within. They bubble up out of the heart. Someone has spoken a great truth in the lines that follow:

*"There's no defeat in life
Save from within.
Unless you're beaten there,
You're bound to win."*

It is what we are within that counts. It is our outlook on life, our purposes, our ideals, our hopes, our faith. The most thankful people, the most appreciative, are often those who have little. Some of the most contented, cheerful, and light-hearted people I ever saw were people whose situations seemed least tolerable. In my ministry, I have gone into homes where pov-

erty abounded, where sickness and sorrow existed, yet I found in some of those homes happy, trustful, rejoicing hearts.

Favorable external circumstances may encourage the song in the heart, but the lack of these things need not still the song. External things alone cannot produce a song in the heart. A favorable condition of heart is like the reed of a wind instrument. The wind itself can produce no music without the reed. So, the music in human hearts is born in hearts, and as the reed in the instrument makes the instrument vocal, so the proper qualities in the heart make joyous music even in the night of sorrow.

Too many people have a wrong philosophy of life. The pessimist makes his own clouds. The optimist sees the sunshine on the other side of the clouds and is happy. The philosophy of the hopeful outlook, the expectation of success, and the discounting of that which is unpleasant and undesirable, is the true way to happiness. The God who made the birds that sing so sweetly desires the same melody of song in the hearts of the highest of His creation. Believing this, we face life with the elements that create melody in our hearts to teach us the Secret of the Singing Heart. ■

The Pastor and His Ministry

Calling—the word inspires both awe and fascination. It describes the moment when the living God steps into our life and calls us by name. In a time when people are desperately searching for meaning, it is of utmost relevance, showing that our lives are not a product of chance. The Bible reveals that God Himself takes the initiative and calls people to follow and serve. In discussing this teaching, however, it is important to distinguish between two dimensions that reinforce each other but remain clearly distinct.

The first call: “Come and follow Me”

The first call goes out to everyone, without exception. It is the call to follow Jesus Christ. God calls loudly and clearly through His Word, through the preaching of the Gospel, through creation, and through our conscience. Jesus Himself called people during His earthly ministry, simply saying, “Follow Me.” This call required an answer; it forced those who heard it to take an unambiguous position. Jesus took this approach because there is no neutral ground in the spiritual struggle. Anyone not with Christ is against Him. That may sound harsh, but it is in line with the reality of the Gospel. A non-decision is already a decision: those who do not explicitly say “yes” to Jesus have, by omission, actually said no (Matthew 4: 19; Luke 9: 23; Matthew 12: 30).

Accepting this first call by necessity leads to a break with the world. The disciples called at the Sea of Galilee left their nets behind, and Matthew left his job as a tax collector. They broke with their old lives and their usual certainties. This is an essential part of Jesus’s call, as those who follow Him cannot continue their old lives at the same time. Unfortunately, not everyone

who hears the call chooses to follow Him (Matthew 22: 14; Matthew 19: 27–29).

The second call: Selected for service

Beyond this general call to follow Jesus, there is a second, special calling. It is the call to consecrate oneself entirely to the Kingdom of God. The Apostle Paul referred to this aspect of his own life in his letter to the Galatians, which he opened by writing, “Paul, an apostle (not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father).” His calling came directly from God. Crucially, this second call can only go out to those who have accepted the first call. God chooses His servants from among His people (Romans 1: 1; Galatians 1: 1).

The resulting vocation can take various forms: evangelist, teacher, elder, or preacher. The specific tasks may be different, but the principle remains the same: build and witness. If we accept this special call, we bear a special responsibility. Only if we are certain of having received this call from God do we have the authority to say, “Thus says the Lord.” The call to service is not a vague feeling; it is a concrete event. God makes His will clear. Along with this call comes the duty to share the Gospel. As Paul once exclaimed, “Woe is me if I do not preach the gospel!” This does not mean that God expects His servants to start preaching immediately upon being called. In fact, God takes care to prepare His servants before sending them out. However, those who hesitate to pass through the open door risk losing their calling (1 Corinthians 9: 16; Ephesians 4: 11–12).

Moses: Eighty years of preparation

Living in Egypt, the people of Israel cried out to God in their distress, and God remembered His cove-



nant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He wanted to save His people. God started by giving them a leader. Seeking someone who was not from the Egyptian sphere of influence but who could nonetheless stand before Pharaoh, God's choice fell on Moses (Exodus 2:23–25).

God did not rush Moses's preparation. First, He had him raised as prince, gaining all the wisdom of the Egyptians. Then, after 40 years, He sent Moses into the silence of the desert. Through this immense change, with Moses going from royal prince to simple shepherd, God formed his character and prepared him for the immense burden of leading the whole nation (Acts 7:22–30).

The call itself took place in the desert. Speaking through a burning bush, God called him by name, saying, "Moses, Moses!" Deep awe filling him in this holy place, Moses replied, "Here I am." God presented Himself as the God of his fathers, and Moses covered his face, for he was afraid (Exodus 3:1–6).

This encounter shows both God's holiness and His mercy. God said, "I have surely seen the oppression of My people . . . I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring My people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt." God was calling Moses, personally, to this responsibility. However, Moses hesitated, caught up in feelings of inadequacy and a fear of public speaking. God met all his objections with patience and encouragement. Not until Moses refused Him—by saying, "please send . . . whomever else You may send"—did God become angry. Even then, God remained gracious and put Moses's brother Aaron at his side as a spokesman and helper (Exodus 3:7–12, 4:10–14).

God equipped Moses through three signs to strengthen his faith: his shepherd's staff becoming a serpent, his hand becoming leprous and being healed, and the water of the Nile turning into blood when spilled on land. Despite all these experiences, Moses remained reticent, thinking himself incapable. His words were not ones of rebellion but rather an expression of true humility. God told him, "I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall say." We can draw courage from this assurance that God will be with the people He calls. Discouragement should not be allowed to eclipse the obedience that God demands (Exodus 4:12; Jeremiah 1:7–9).

Eventually, Moses accepted the responsibility. God strengthened him and reminded him to show Pharaoh all the miracles, even if his heart was hardened. This way was not easy, but God's plan was firm (Exodus 4:19–21).

The account of Moses' calling demonstrates that God starts preparing his instruments long before their task begins. He calls people personally, reveals His holiness, strengthens their faith, and overcomes human reticence with grace. In the end, however, it is always a matter of choice: the person He calls must say "yes"—must follow God, must take the place God assigns, and must remain faithful. However great the task may seem, God's presence is greater. Just as God promised Moses, He assures us today, "I will be with you" (see also Joshua 1:5; Matthew 28:20). ■

This is the first of three articles addressing God's call; they are based on a series of five messages given by Brother Gustav Sonnenberg.



Trust In God

*I want to be fulfilling the will of God for me,
And always to be willing to joyfully agree.
Lord, let my heart be striving in all I say and do
To love You and my neighbor, for then I will please You!*

*How could I have it better? How could my joy be more?
My peace, it is unfettered, God's leading I adore.
In pain, in need or anguish, my faith rests on God's Word;
I do not need to languish. My helper is the Lord!*

*And when the sun is rising, and shines at His command,
I find it not surprising, this blessing from His hand.
I praise Him for His goodness, His grace refreshes me.
His faithfulness is endless. I thank Him gratefully.*

*And when a night of sorrow, should follow sunny days,
He knows what comes tomorrow, He knows my future ways.
I accept His leading; in times of joy or pain
He knows what I'll be needing, He'll turn the tide again.*

*And so I can go onward, unharmed in joy or sorrow,
His holy will I honor, I trust Him for tomorrow.
No foe nor evil power can alter His command;
He gives me strength each hour, and by His grace I stand.*

Johann Gabriel Wolf