



Foundation of Faith

A Christian in the World

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FOR ME, CHRIST IS LIFE

YOUR CLOTHING SPEAKS

BE SEPARATE

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

We have taken the first steps into this new year and have gone through the first weeks. But before us lies the future, and we do not yet know what we will be facing. Like Moses, if we were to send out the twelve spies and give them the task, “Spy out the land. Give us a report of what it will be like in the coming months. Tell us what the economy will be like—good or bad? Will there be peace or unrest, or even terror? Or can we count on peace?” How gladly might we desire to glimpse the future.

At that time, ten of the twelve spies brought back an alarming report, saying, “The land . . . is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people . . . are men of great stature. . . . and we were like grasshoppers . . . (Numbers 13:31-33). These ten spies spread lies and distorted facts.

But there were two men, Caleb and Joshua, who gave a factual and sound report, and with confidence they declared, “If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us” (Numbers 14:8a).

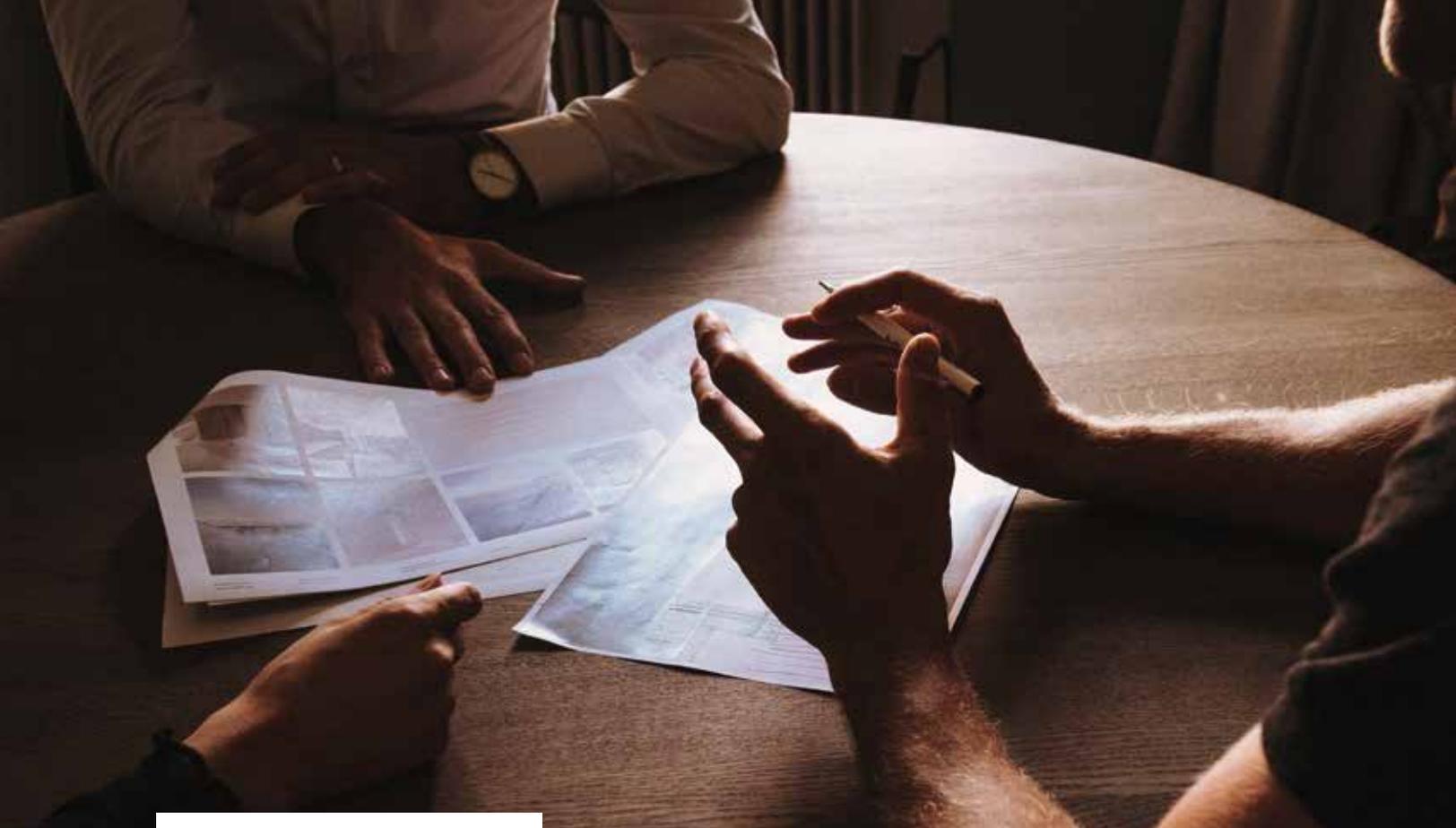
Therefore, we can also confidently trust God, for He has promised us, “And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

We also live in an evil world today, and many people have lost their faith and their trust in God.

It was the same during Jesus’ time. The Son of God said to the unbelieving Israelites, “You are from beneath; I am from above. You are of this world; I am not of this world” (John 8:23).

Our Lord came from heavenly glory to this earth to deliver us from sin and guilt. As children of God, we are certainly still in the world but not of it. Rather, we follow the Lord with all our hearts and are on the path to our heavenly home.

H. D. Nimz



A CHRISTIAN IN THE WORLD

Is Lying Permitted?

Early one Monday morning, a young man arrives at the office. His boss stops him on his way in and instructs him, “If Mr. K. calls, tell him I’m not in.”

“Mr. M, I’m a born-again Christian, and I don’t lie. I don’t want to knowingly commit a sin.”

“Listen, lying isn’t a sin. If you won’t do what I tell you, you’re of no use to me. I can only use people in my business who do what I say.”

“Of course I’m ready to obey your orders. But if you ask me to commit a sin, I can’t—I need to obey God first.”

“If you don’t obey my order, I’ll have to let you go.”

The telephone rings, and the young man answers.

“Is Mr. M. there?”

“Yes!”

“Could I speak with him?”

The boss angrily picks up his phone. After the call ends, he says, “Now pack up your things and go!”

At home, the son tells his mother what happened at work. She responds, “You should have just done what your boss wanted. You don’t need to take it so seriously. It was a white lie; that’s not a sin.”

“No, Mom, every lie is a sin.”

As the months pass, the young man urgently tries to find work, but every effort is in vain. Then, one day, he receives a letter from his former boss asking him to come and see him. When he enters the office, Mr. M. says, “I’m sorry for how I acted. Can you forgive me?”

“Sure, no hard feelings.”

“Thank you. As it happens, we just uncovered an embezzlement scheme at this office. It started during your time here and involved every single employee, except you. I fired the one honest employee I had. Please let me apologize for my behavior again. Have you found another job?”

“No.”

“Would you be willing to come work for me again?”

“Sure!”

“Great! You’ll be starting as office manager.”

Is lying not one of the most common sins of our times?

People are really good at finding justifications and excuses for their actions when they do something wrong. Even children at school, when caught breaking the rules by a teacher, are masters at feigning innocence. This goes to show that it’s still true today: “the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth” (Genesis 8:21). If children have already mastered this skill, just think how naturally it comes to adults!

Have you ever lied?

Maybe it was a white lie, just to be polite. I know most people don’t see this as a sin. However, the Holy Scriptures make it clear that every lie is sinful. We read, “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor” (Exodus 20:16). You may say, “It’s impossible to get through life without white lies.” Is that true? Obviously a lot of people lie without giving it a second thought.

A woman had done her laundry and was about to iron the freshly-washed clothes when the doorbell rang. Upon entering, her visitor asked, “Is this a good time? Please feel free to tell me if it isn’t.” A while later, she repeated her question.

“Absolutely, stay as long as you like,” came the reply.

The visitor finally left, and the door barely had time to close behind her before the hostess began venting her frustration and annoyance at the extended interruption to her work. Wouldn’t it have been better if the hostess had been honest? She could have said, “You know I always have something to do, but I’d love to take some time for you now.” No one would seriously think the other person had nothing to do. So let’s be honest and ensure that the prophet Isaiah’s following words cannot be applied to us: “We have made lies our refuge” (Isaiah 28:15).

Many people claim it is impossible to get through life without white lies. Consider the sick bed. A Christian sister was asked to care for an ill woman. She was instructed not to tell her under any circumstances that she would die. The sister took this advice to heart and consoled the patient with words of false comfort, but then death came. As the patient felt the end approaching, she clung fearfully to the sister. No longer able to speak, she looked up at her reproachfully as if to say, “Sister, I’m dying, and you

didn’t tell me!” The sister has never forgotten that accusing look, resolving “never again will I lie to someone who is sick!”

If we lie to the ill, we rob them of their last opportunity to prepare for death. Do we want to take responsibility for that before God? If someone who is sick asks us, let us be honest and reply that we must all die sometime and the most important thing for us is to be ready.

Today’s business world is also rife with seemingly small lies. Repeatedly I hear that people who are unwilling to fudge the truth a bit when doing business cannot succeed. However, many experiences have taught me a believer can succeed in business without resorting to lies.

In the midst of a particularly tense round of negotiations, a boss instructed one of his office employees to deliver a certain message. “Sir,” she replied, “I’m afraid I can’t do that because I know it isn’t true.”

“Fine. I’ll conduct the negotiations myself, then.”

The young woman now feared she would be fired. Several days later, she was called to the boss’s office. She was astonished at his friendly demeanor as he offered her a seat and said, “Might I ask about your beliefs?”

“I am a Christian.”

“No, I think there’s more.”

“Well, since you ask, I must say I’m a follower of Jesus Christ.”

“That’s what I thought. Can you tell me how to become a follower of Christ too? You have impressed me.”

Does this example not encourage us to tell the truth in the future as well?

The apostle Paul admonishes us to speak honestly, “putting away lying” (Ephesians 4:25), and the Lord Jesus instructs, “But let your ‘Yes’ be ‘Yes,’ and your ‘No,’ ‘No.’ For whatever is more than these is from the evil one” (Matthew 5:37). There are many verses in Scripture making it clear that lying is a sin.

Let’s not forget, anyone who lies is subject to Satan’s power, for he is the father of lies. This means there is no room for liars in the heavenly Jerusalem. Whoever claims lying is not sinful makes a mockery of the Holy Scriptures and insults the holy God, for Whom sin is an abomination.

If you’ve been taking liberties with the truth, bow down before God and confess your sins to Him. You, too, will experience that “blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:7).

The Christian and the World

Salvation does not relieve us of our obligations as citizens in this world, but it frees us from the power sinful influences of the world have on us and enables us to have victory over temptation. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul assures us Christ “gave Himself for our sins, and that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of God and the Father” (Galatians 1:4).

Separated from Sin

God cannot agree with nor have fellowship with morally impure and debased motives. He has no pleasure in those living ungodly lives. The saints bring Him joy. Therefore, His people need to be separate and remain free from the polluting influences of the world.

This truth is mirrored in the Old Testament concept of separation to conserve purity. The Israelites were God’s special people. They were not allowed to mix and mingle with the heathens. They were forbidden to marry anyone belonging to the other nations inhabiting Canaan (Deuteronomy 7:1-6). Exodus 23:32-33 expressly says, “You shall make no covenant with them, nor with their gods. They shall not dwell in your land, lest they make you sin against Me. For if you serve their gods, it will surely be a snare to you.” When the Israelites transgressed this law, the consequences were always severe.

After coming back from Babylonian captivity, Ezra lamented the condition of the people of Israel because they had not kept themselves separate from the nations around them and had intermarried with them. He initiated a reform in all of Judea and Jerusalem by commanding them to confess their sins and to separate themselves from the inhabitants of the land and from their foreign wives. The fear of the Lord came upon the whole congregation of the people of Israel, and they obeyed Ezra.

This concept of separation is not only for the Old Testament people of God. We also find it clearly taught in

the New Testament. In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, we read, “Therefore come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean and I will receive you” (2 Corinthians 6:17).

Our Separation from the World

Our separation from the world need not necessarily be physical or geographical, but rather separation in the Spirit. We’re to “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness” (Ephesians 5:11). At work or in our daily lives, we will come into contact and interact with non-believers. Yet we shouldn’t agree with nor take part in their worldly attitudes or sinful strivings. A true child of God, walking in the light, does not have a judgmental, legalistic spirit. Christ has set us free from this. But a true child of God will have no desire to participate in anything ungodly or sinful, nor to fellowship with the follies of this world. Only when someone is starting to backslide or beginning to grow lukewarm will the desire to engage in worldly pleasures and enjoy its follies begin to resurface.

In the past, there has often been an emphasis on physical separation from the world. That’s the reason monasteries and nunneries exist. But experience has shown that physical separation does not mean our spirits have been freed from the world’s sinful influences. Under certain circumstances, it may well be wise to completely withdraw from certain people in order not to be tempted by their evil ways. But each unique circumstance should cause us to prayerfully consider what God really wants, as we are led by His Spirit.

Christ our Example

Regarding the way we should deal with sinners and the world, Christ has given us the best example to follow. Of His disciples, He said, “They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14). But wasn’t He called



a friend of sinners? Yes, He was often found among sinful people who were in need of salvation. When He was invited to the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee, He accepted the invitation. From John, we learn this wedding was celebrated according to the custom prevalent in the East.

How do you imagine Christ acted at this festival? Do you think He participated in godless talk and jesting? Can you imagine even for a moment, that He took part in excessive drinking or engaged in any other sinful activities? Impossible! I can only imagine He behaved in the most honorable manner among family members and friends of Levi and Zacchaeus when He was invited to dine with them. He didn't seek fellowship with sinners because He was looking for entertainment, but because He was seeking to save the lost. Remember how His disciples were astonished when He conversed with the woman from Samaria? He spoke to her about the living water of Life. He wanted her to drink of that water so her soul would thirst no more.

Repeatedly, we see Him speaking with and helping those who were in need, teaching them the way of truth that leads to holiness. It was His burden for the lost that led Him to seek the sheep of the house of Israel that had gone astray. Christ did not withdraw from human fellowship.

Our Relationship with Those Around Us

We can learn much from the way Jesus interacted with the people around Him. We should not withdraw our fellowship from sinners, but at the same time, we shouldn't participate in their sinful activities. Our goal should be to win them for the truth so they too would live undefiled, holy lives. In order to achieve this, we need to keep ourselves from evil and from any impure things they're engaged in.

You may think a sinner will not look down on you if you participate in their worldly ways. Yet that isn't true. If we compromise our testimony and our standard of holiness by engaging in some questionable activity, our positive influence will be lost.

Our hope to save lost souls is dependent not only on the gospel we wish to proclaim, but also on our Christian walk. In order to reach people, we must fellowship with them and try to win them to Christ by living a holy life and sharing Christ's teaching with them. If you aren't able to be with sinners without being influenced by their worldly ways, then you're either not a steadfast Christian or you're very weak. Take the Lord Jesus as your example. Pray for God's guidance. Then you can withstand the negative influence of the world and be a blessing for the people around you.

G. O. C.

For Me, Christ is Life

How would you begin the following sentence: “. . . is my life.” Which word could you honestly insert in the empty space?

Paul wrote to the church in Philippi, “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (Philippians 1:21). With these few words, he laid his foundation, his philosophy, and his purpose in life. What is your life’s principle? What does life mean to you? Let’s look at some decisive philosophies in life and compare them with the apostle Paul’s compelling testimony.

For me, Life is Pleasure

This is what many people believe: “Eat, drink and be merry, for tomorrow you will be die;” or “Enjoy yourself, for you don’t know what hour it is.” These slogans are only a few examples of the modern attitude.

People often let themselves go in pursuit of pleasures while vacationing, partying, compromising morals, doing drugs, and more. We are referring to an epidemic, nationwide addiction to pleasure, with the potential to ruin souls. There are millions of people in this world who could describe their life’s purpose with this one word: pleasure.

But this is truly not the right choice nor purpose in life. It isn’t wrong for us to be happy. In fact, we are called to rejoice. But pleasure in itself is not sufficient. We read in 1 Timothy 5:6, “But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.” Even the wise king Solomon captured well the state of so many people: “Even in laughter the heart may sorrow, and the end of mirth may be grief” (Proverbs 14:13).

For Me, Life is Fame

Not just a few, but rather millions of people have made this their goal in life, revealing an egotistical philosophy. Everything is concentrated on how to build an outward image. Modern society exalts “the successful man;” he has

become a popular hero. But fame doesn’t last; it is unstable and fading in every way. The Lord asked a challenging question: “For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?” (Matthew 16:26). It is entirely foolish to desire recognition among people without knowing God. Wouldn’t it be better to take refuge in God for all time and eternity, as Paul states in Galatians 1:10, “For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ”?

For Me, Life is Wealth

What people are unwilling to do out of love, they are certainly ready to do for money. But tangible riches have so often been a curse rather than a blessing, because so many things can’t be bought with money. In Matthew 13:22, Jesus speaks about the “deceitfulness of riches.” And in Luke 12:15, He gives an explanation: “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.” He then states that it is better to lay treasures up in heaven rather than here on earth.

I have heard the expression, “You can’t take money to the grave, and if you could, there would be no opportunity to spend it.” Therefore, striking it rich or striving after money is not the engine of life, but instead, it leads to death both physically and spiritually.

For Me, Life is Eating and Drinking Well

A well-known dietitian discovered that thousands of people overeat, potentially causing death. Overeating and the obesity that often results, causes thousands of deaths annually. Many die from a heart attack, or other diet-related complications. What a tragic irony that thousands die due to starvation, while thousands of others die due to overeating!

The Bible curses gluttony and admonishes people to be satisfied with what they have. Meaning, sufficient

food, shelter, and clothing. Paul categorizes this type of people in the following way: “Whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things” (Philippians 3:19). Bodily nourishment, while a necessity, is not the only thing we need. Jesus says, “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). We are spiritual bodies that can only be satisfied by God.

For Me, Life is Fashion

In the present day, it seems at times as if some people just live to show their flair for style. “For man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). Beautiful clothing can hide an evil heart. But fashion is fleeting and will one day no longer matter, nor exist.

For Me, Life is Freedom

The word “freedom” can be used in various contexts. For some, it simply means permission to go ahead with something not even related to freedom. Others use the word “freedom” to describe a life detached from morals, where a person does what he wants, whenever and wherever he wants. This type of freedom is actually the greatest form of slavery to sin, selfishness, and Satan. It is earthly, carnal, and satanic. Only when the Son of God makes us free are we free indeed (John 8:36).

For Me to Live is Christ (Philippians 1:21)

What a great difference there is when Christ is the focal point of our lives. Paul came to realize that in every situation, Jesus is near. Christ meant everything to him, and that satisfied his needs. If we carefully read through his testimony, we see this is absolutely right. Other than a life in Christ, there is no other true life available. The unbeliever is dead in the transgressions of sin. “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1). Through Christ, we receive eternal life beyond description.

In other words, up until the time when Jesus became the focal point in our lives, we had no idea what real life was. When the born-again Christian looks back at his previous life, he realizes how worthless, empty, and purposeless it was. Abiding joy was missing. Therefore, the unbeliever is not really living but actually dying. A Christian has everything in Christ that a worldly person seeks: He has now and in the future, complete joy and eternal life; riches that will never pass away; the finest and purest garments; food from the tree of life and drink from the springs of living water. And there is more! Only he who can say, “for me to live is Christ” can also say, “to die is gain.” Everything the world strives for and is looking for is lost when we die. But in Christ we have everything.

What is the meaning and purpose of your life?

W. G. Hunt

Do Not Conform to the Pattern of This World

In 1 John 2:15 we read, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” We must understand the writer is not speaking about planet Earth with its immense beauty. We should enjoy Earth and praise the One who created this fantastic planet with its mountains, waterfalls, lakes, streams and more. “The earth is the LORD’s, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein. For He has founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the waters” (Psalm 24:1-2).

When the apostle Paul admonishes the Romans and us not to conform to the pattern of this world, another translator puts it this way, “Don’t copy the behaviors and customs of this world. Don’t let the world around you squeeze you into its own mould” (Romans 12:2 NLT, Phillips).

How should we not conform to the pattern of this world? The worldly-minded have to eat, sleep and work to make a living, and so do spiritually-minded people. How should followers of Jesus Christ differ from them?

1. In Our Attitude

The world is materialistic, but as followers of Christ we must be different. 1 Timothy 6:6 states, “But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into the world, and we can take nothing out of it. But if we have food and clothing, we will be content with that.” The advertising industry is constantly trying to make us dissatisfied with what we have in order to sell us something newer and better.

If we could only learn to be content with what we have we wouldn't be so vulnerable to the many “get rich quick” schemes many an unwary soul has succumbed to. “But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses” (1 Timothy 6:9-12).

2. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus (see Philippians 2:5).

Jesus said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls” (Matthew 11:28). Not like a sign I read, “I'm humble and proud of it!” There are many examples of pride in the world of politics and sports: “I'm the best!” “I'm the greatest!” “I'm number one!”

3. In Our Speech

In Ephesians 5:3-5, Paul states, “But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God.”

4. In the Way We Dress

Let's not choose our fashion styles from the Hollywood

models. Instead, let's follow the admonition in God's Word: “I also want the women to dress modestly, with decency and propriety” (1 Timothy 2:9), and not provocatively, in order to entice men to sin. “You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:27-28).

5. In our Attitude Toward the Future

The world often suffers from anxiety, stress, and worry that when extreme, can lead to a nervous breakdown. Christ followers should be an exception and an example for the world. “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:31-34). Philippians 4:6 also tells us, “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.”

6. In our Attitude Toward Grief & Loss

“But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Let's never forget that “this world is not my home; I'm just passing through!”

Art E. Lange
Vernon, British Columbia

Your Clothing Speaks

In most cases, clothing is the outward expression of the heart. This is a law of nature. The inner life desires to express itself. An outward appearance reveals what is inside.

The clothing we wear reveals what is inside our hearts. You just have to take one look at a person to see them communicating, perhaps unknowingly, through the clothes they are wearing.

The nicest attire is usually worn at a wedding. What is the bride trying to demonstrate? She is often dressed entirely in white, which may communicate, “I am pure. I have waited and prepared myself for this great occasion.”

The church is the Bride of Christ. She waits for “the wedding of the Lamb.” What image do we portray when the church gathers for prayer? Does she look like a bride waiting with anticipation for the second coming of Christ? What people wear in the congregation reveals if they are waiting for His coming. Our clothing should show that we are pure and waiting for the Lord.

How can we stand before God one day if we don’t show through our clothing that we are separate from the world and awaiting His return?

The old metaphor says that if you place a frog in a bowl full of water and slowly warm it up, it will not make any effort to jump out, even if the water hits the boiling point and he cooks to death. This seems to be a picture of today’s Christianity. Contemporary fashion influences our Christian circles more and more. It seems many Christians gravitate toward worldly styles, while still expecting to grow spiritually. As a result, they lose what little faith they once had.

The fashion industry uses various forms of media to make people become tolerant toward their styles. They are so successful that even sincere Christians open themselves up to these fashions. In some cases the congregations are used as places for fashion shows and an oppor-

tunity to express this “new freedom.” You can do what you like. Sadly, the church no longer influences the world. Instead, the world influences the church. The Bible gives us principles and guidance of how we are to dress, and we would do well to heed them.

Although various hypotheses exist as to why violent crime, including rape, increased in the U.S. and Europe for several decades, beginning in the 1960’s, it might be noted that it was also a time of sexual revolution and provocative dress.

And while perception might differ from intent, one should consider that certain clothing can indeed send a message.

When a preacher warns about this transgression he is labeled as “sick” or “psychotic.” Instead, these warnings must come from crime experts and police, who deal with the consequences that have followed.

Those who wear provocative clothing and inadvertently encourage one to think sexual thoughts are not the only ones who are at fault. Mothers who mislead their daughters by encouraging them to wear this type of clothing are also to blame. A mother allowing her daughter to be a poor example in her choice of clothing will one day reap the results of her bad decisions for her family. If she doesn’t repent, these consequences may be eternal. Often these potentially devastating repercussions won’t show up in the family until many years later.

The house of God can be defiled by the clothing of the those who belong to the church. If we don’t show God respect through the clothes we wear when we enter His house, then we are not demonstrating that we love Christ and await His return. Our joy and longing should be to please God more than people. “For I am jealous for you with godly jealousy. For I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ” (2 Corinthians 11:2).

Be Separate

In the world, but not of the world

We would like to study God's lessons of faith concerning Abraham, and apply them to ourselves. Abraham obeyed and fulfilled the Scripture passage, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. And he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23).

Abraham's Faith and Obedience

- God spoke—Abraham listened.
- God said "Go"—he went.
- God pledged—and he believed.
- God commanded—and he obeyed.
- God promised—Abraham patiently waited.

Godly Separation

The First Lesson: Severance from the Old Life

There were three things Abraham needed to be severed from: "Get out of your country, away from your extended family, and away from your father's house" (Genesis 12:1).

A Lesson for Us Today:

Read 1 Peter 1:14–19

- Separation from your old life, where you pursued your lusts in ignorance.
- Separation from your aimless conduct received by your father's traditions and false church commandments.
- We should become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom we shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15).

A Second Severance—Departure from Egypt

Abram went to Canaan, as God commanded him to. However, when hard times hit the land, he migrated to Egypt (see Genesis 12:10-17). Abram became fearful and brought his wife, Sarai and himself into a dangerous situation. Nevertheless, God protected them. Then Abram moved back to the place where he had previously built an altar. There he prayed and preached the Name of the Lord.

For us, Egypt symbolizes the world and all that is not righteous before God. Scripture says, "Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of

the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1 John 2:15-17).

A Third Lesson in Faith: Release of Personal Rights

From Scripture we know that Lot, Abram's nephew from Haran (Mesopotamia) had also traveled to Canaan with him. Both parties had huge herds of cattle and sheep. Due to a shortage of grazing pastures, a conflict between the two parties arose. "And there was strife between the herdsmen of Abram's livestock and the herdsmen of Lot's livestock. The Canaanites and the Perizzites then dwelt in the land" (Genesis 13:7).

Abram realized this situation was a disgrace in God's eyes and a poor example to the unbelievers. He made an offer to his nephew: "Is not the whole land before you? Please separate from me. If you take the left, then I will go to the right; or, if you go to the right, then I will go to the left" (Genesis 13:9). What did Lot do? He chose the best pastures, the plain of Jordan, that was well watered everywhere (before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah) like the garden of the Lord.

What was left for Abram? The inferior, mountainous land. He was betrayed and taken advantage of. But Abram waived all his rights in order to keep the peace so that the strife would finally end and the name of the Lord would not be disgraced.

What can we learn from this example? Live peaceably with all men and focus on Jesus' words, "Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God" (Matthew 5:9).

Turning Away from Material Possessions Acquired in Sodom

After their separation, Lot soon ended up living in Sodom. Then war broke out: five kings against four. The entire region of Sodom and Gomorrah was conquered. They were robbed of all their valuable items, their food provisions, and also the people, Lot and all his possessions included (see Genesis 14:1-24).

When Abram heard this news, he promptly summoned 318 of his trained servants and stormed after the kings. He caught up to them and attacked them at night, rescuing Lot and his belongings, the women, as well as the other prisoners.

As Abram returned from the battle, the king of Sodom went out to meet him. “Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, ‘Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself’” (Genesis 14:21). But Abram answered, “I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, ‘I have made Abram rich’—” (Genesis 14:22-23).

In this day and age, wealth has often been acquired through sinful methods and wrongdoing. Many possessions have been acquired through blood money, fraud, money laundering, and drug dealing. We read in Proverbs 3:33, “The curse of the LORD is on the house of the wicked, but He blesses the home of the just.” Just as Abram forfeited unjust acquisitions, let us also follow his example. God’s favor and blessings are worth more than anything this world could offer.

The Departure from Kinship

When the Lord called Abram to leave his people at the age of 75, he also gave the promise, “I will make you a great nation, I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed” (Genesis 12:2-3).

After ten years, Abram’s wife Sarai [later, Sarah] decided it was high time to have a child and suggested to Abram that he take her Egyptian maid by which to obtain children. Thus, Ishmael was born when Abram was 86 years old.

However, in God’s kingdom, hastily made plans and premature actions are not right, and even though they’re sometimes well-meant, they can lead to trouble and distress.

This premature intervention on the part of Sarai proved to be a huge error when God fulfilled His promise and gave the 100-year-old Abraham a son from her. For we read that Sarah commands, “Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Isaac” (Genesis 21:10). Sarah had noticed Ishmael scoffing at her son Isaac.

At first Abraham was displeased, as Ishmael was also his son, and he did not want to isolate himself from him. Nevertheless, God spoke to Abraham and said, “Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Isaac your seed shall be called” (Genesis 21:12).

This lesson teaches us that separation from family or kinship is required when association with them results in negative influences. Following Jesus will often cause separation and clashing of values. Jesus said, “and ‘a man’s enemies will

be those of his own household.’ He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me” (Matthew 10:36-37).

Surrendering Isaac

This requirement was the high point in God’s lessons of faith and trust. God put Abraham to the test: “Take now your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I shall tell you” (Genesis 22:2).

The Lord tested His servant to see if he would sacrifice his most treasured and beloved son. Abraham had to travel on foot for three days from Beersheba to the place God sent him with his son and the servants, along with wood for a burnt offering. Only eternity will likely reveal to us what took place in the heart and mind of Abraham during those three days.

It had to be the faith and absolute obedience of the patriarch that won the victory over all doubts and objections he may have had. Abraham was willing and ready to place God over everything; to give up everything, even if it meant surrendering his most cherished treasure, his beloved “son of promise.

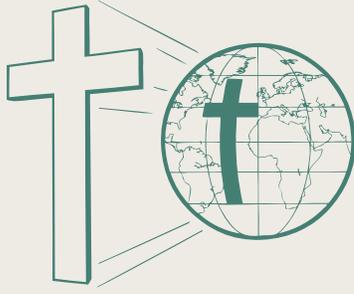
In Hebrews 11:17 and 19, the chapter listing the ‘Heroes of Faith’, we read, “By faith Abraham . . . concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.” How great and vast are the promises and the godly blessing! “[B]ecause you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son— blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (Genesis 22:16-18).

Are we ready, as followers of Christ, to give God our all, our best, our most cherished treasures? Are we willing to surrender everything, even to put ourselves on God’s altar as a sacrifice for time and eternity?

Yes, letting go is often painful. It is not possible though, to serve God half-heartedly. You cannot serve God and mammon (money). The result in God’s eyes of seeking earthly fame and worldly lusts is this: “You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting.” We need to make a clear and determined choice.

Dear reader, let us take Abraham’s lessons of faith and his decisions as an example. God requires your whole heart, your wholehearted service, and promises a heavenly reward for all eternity.

H. D. Nimz



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

The Lost Path

How dangerous, fateful, and tragic it is to stray from the right path and lose the right course in life!

Can we even begin to imagine the danger and distress of a ship that has lost its course? If no immediate rescue is attempted, it will drift aimlessly or even perish. So it is with us if we lose all orientation while on the road. We are all “en route.” We are on our way to eternity, whether we want this to be true or not. Time and eternity are more than just words that exist in our language. Like time, eternity is a reality we are moving towards. Just as we have the contrast of day and night, we also have the opposites of light and darkness in eternity. God’s Word gives us a clear explanation.

Whoever desires to reach eternal light, glory, and life, must choose the right course here in this life. God has created a way for us through Jesus Christ. Many chose this way and stayed on it until they were allowed to enter the peace of eternity after a victorious battle. Others, unfortunately, have either lost this safe course or have given up on it. Their baseless hopes deceived them, and they missed the highest goal of life. And what about us?

In Job 6:18, we are reminded of past journeys through the desert: “The paths of their way turn aside, they go nowhere and perish.” These were mostly trade caravans, which were common at the time. The lead caravan apparently knew when the next one would leave and follow them. Therefore, one watched in hope for their arrival. The wait was often in vain as the caravans didn’t always arrive. The causes for this varied. For example, there were mirages, which led many travellers astray and into calamity. Others lost their course due to dangerous sandstorms and died. Job compared this to a stream that

dries up and disappears in arid summer heat (see verses 15-17). What happens if you lose your way or give up the right course for your life?

Let’s consider young King Saul, a handsome man with gifts and abilities. He was chosen to be the first king in Israel. He showed good character, his first deeds pleased God, and he stood in high esteem among the people. But soon after, he became self-confident and arrogant, and ignored God’s Word. Added to this was envy and the evil resolution to kill his faithful servant, David. The path he took was devastating, and soon Samuel had to tell him, “Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, He also has rejected you from being king” (1 Samuel 15:23). His path led him to a regrettable end.

Think of Samson. He was the son of devout parents and anointed by God. We read, “And the child grew, and the Lord blessed him. And the Spirit of the Lord began to move upon him” (Judges 13:24-25). At the time when he was to begin his service for the cause of the Lord, he was enticed by several young Philistine women. He no longer paid attention to what God wanted, but did what he liked. This distracted him from the godly course and onto a path of ruin. He brought misery upon himself. He played with sin and provoked the Philistines until he lay powerless in their bonds and died in their midst.

Let us look at an example from the New Testament. In Acts 1:25, we read about Judas, how he left the ministry and apostleship and betrayed Jesus. The writers repeatedly emphasize that he was one of the Twelve. For thirty pieces of silver, Judas purposely turned his back on God’s way, and, as we all know, had a horrific end.



Our beloved Lord paid the highest price to provide us with the only safe and rewarding course of life. But it will always cost us much, even everything, if we recklessly or willfully give up this course.

Many are leaving this path today. “She had turned to God and received salvation and made a good start. But then she went back to the ways of the world” is what someone told me about a young woman. She had left the godly way and began a self-satisfied, vain life.

“Martina” had been raised in a Christian home. But later no longer asked about God’s will, instead living her life according to the standards of this world. Twenty years without God! She had committed adultery, gone through a divorce, and even ended up in prison.

These were the unfortunate consequences of losing her course.

“Once again, a haunting letter lies before me,” a pastor writes. He had been told that some believers had left the faith and gotten on the wrong track. Pained, he said, “The Lord had given them a blessed start, and now there was this figure of ‘death.’” That is how the end looks when one loses his course.

You can never reach the right goal if you are on the wrong course. Isaiah writes, “Return to Him against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted” (Isaiah 31:6). This is the only possible way out of error and from being lost. We want

to help throw a lifeline, but the one to whom we throw it must be willing to take it.

**Whoever desires to reach
eternal light, glory, and life,
must choose the appropriate
course here in this life.
God has created a way for us
through Jesus Christ.**

A Scientist and the Bible

It is 1844, and the great German scientist Tischendorf is on his way to Egypt. He has studied Hebrew, Greek, and Latin for many years, earning no small measure of fame along the way.

Once in Egypt, he hires camels, camel drivers, and interpreters before heading out into the desert with his caravan. Is he perhaps searching for gold? No. He is looking for a treasure much more valuable to him than gold: ancient parchment scrolls.

They visit many old, decrepit monasteries before Tischendorf's big day finally arrives. In the waste basket of a dusty storeroom, he finds partially-decayed sheets of parchment, crumpled and torn up. Excitement coursing through his veins, he reaches for them and holds them up to the light. He is overjoyed, and the whole world soon knows: in a monastery in the Sinai mountains, Tischendorf has found

the oldest most complete known manuscript of the Bible.

He spent years deciphering the oft-illegible letters, copying the words out one by one with the aid of his friends. The manuscript ended up becoming so well-known, the British nation purchased most of it for £100,000 in 1933 (today approx. 8.3 million CAD; 6.3 million USD). It can still be seen in a London museum today.

Is the Bible an insignificant storybook for children and select scholars? No. The scientist Tischendorf saw the Bible as the most important and interesting book of all and invested the whole of his knowledge to give us a better grasp of Scripture today.

Faith Beyond Fear

Fear always makes us our worst self. When we look at some of the worst things humans have done, no matter what their social, political, or religious identity is, it is almost always grounded in fear. Whether it is war, greed, lying, or any other selfish or anti-social behavior, fear is most often the underlying factor.

Fear is aimed at self-preservation. We're wired for it; however, each of us is wired differently. Self-preservation turns nasty when it comes to groups of people. It grows and festers as tribalism, as us versus them, or as egotistical comparison and scheming. Wherever there are groups of people, you can expect to see this. And part of that self-preservation comes with insidious self-justification. Without it, we would see what we are up to and be afraid of ourselves—and that just won't do.

What overcomes fear? Of the kind of fear we are speaking, no amount of our tools or our strength

are enough. We need hope. We need trust. I call this faith, and in many ways, we all use it daily. Faith in our police, faith in our government . . . but when our police and our government are made up of people just like you and me—people who are afraid—that only goes so far. We need a better assurance than that.

This is where I've found faith in God and His love to be the surest remedy to fear. And I'm not perfect at dwelling in that faith, but by His grace, I'm growing. In my own circles, I've seen Christians lash out and say the nastiest things in fear, but I've also seen Christians overcome fear in the absolute best ways through love, in faith. The truth is that we are all growing in faith and we do not get it perfect. Lord help us—we are still growing.

With all the tools in the world, and all the strength, I know full well I can't put faith in myself—it is in God alone that perfect rest from fear comes.

He alone is flawless. He alone is almighty and good; good beyond death itself as evidenced by the cross. He alone is victory over fear. In His love is security.

“Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand” (Isaiah 41:10).

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18).

Anthony Zerbin
Edmonton, Alberta

Lessons From School (3)

Each morning, we would check the hospital board to see with whom we would be working that day. I was assigned to a senior anesthesia nurse who was feared by most of the staff. She was considered competent but not very amiable, and she was quite severe with the trainees. Since she was not stingy with her criticism, few people had a good relationship with her. I was always a bit nervous when I had to work with her and glad when someone else received the assignment. But I decided to accept the inevitable and asked God to help me get along with her, and then made an effort to be an attentive student. It took only a few days for a change to occur. She became friendlier and more open, we found common topics of conversation, and she patiently explained the secrets of our profession and complained about the trainees who were unwilling to learn. Soon, she was so drawn to me that she didn't tolerate any criticism from others about me. Several times, I heard her reply to a complaint, “This is my student!” whereupon the discussion was over. If the other's complaint was valid, she showed me how to do it better, never holding it against me. The harshest reprimand she gave me was a short sentence, “You'll never do that again!” which I remorsefully promised. I realized I had learned the most from this woman during my training and that she was now one of my favorite colleagues. Although I was not initially sympathetic towards her, God helped me turn the situation into something good. A few days later, when the nurse in charge set up the schedule, she said to me, “I'll have the two of you work together again. You love each other so much.” She seemed a bit puzzled. But smiling, I said, “I have no problems with her!”

Corinna Kowalski
Hamm, Germany

VERSE OF THE MONTH

“I, even I, am He who comforts you. Who are you that you should be afraid of a man who will die, and of the son of a man who will be made like grass? And you forget the LORD your Maker, who stretched out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth; you have feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, when he has prepared to destroy. And where is the fury of the oppressor?”

(Isaiah 51:12-13)

Maybe you are familiar with accusation, contempt, ridicule, slander, and threat. It can arouse the fear of man in us, rob us of our courage to live, and hinder us in our service to God.

If you believe the Savior and serve and follow Him, then His outstretched, strong, fatherly hands are open to you. Remember, He is stronger and more powerful than any human authority or power. He will put an end to your affliction at the right time. He always has a way out and never leaves His helpless child alone.

The Better Land

A while ago, I rode on the train together with a middle-aged man. We were alone in our section of the train and he asked me some questions. During our conversation, he informed me he was a Danish railway official who was on a vacation. He planned to visit Switzerland, Italy, France, Spain, and Germany. He expressed his excitement over the beautiful landscapes he would see in the different countries.

After he finished speaking, I replied, “I know an even better land.” He was curious and wanted to know where it was. “It is a beautiful and glorious land with the Lord Jesus,” I replied. “When we seek to find peace with God through His Son Jesus Christ, while living here in this land of sin and suffering, we gain citizenship in a land of eternal bliss and joy. All pain and even death will no longer have power over us there. Eternal peace and perfect joy will surround us. I know that by His grace I have been cleansed and set free from my sins and that one day I will enter this land of perfect beauty.”

With rapt attention he sat across from me and listened to my remarks. He too was a religious man and came from a Christian family. I had the opportunity to tell him that without exception, everyone of us is a sinner before God who needs forgiveness through Jesus’ death on the cross. By believing in Him, we are cleansed and made righteous before God as if we had never sinned before. I encouraged him to pursue this way in all sincerity and not to rest until he was certain that his sins were forgiven.

“Earlier you didn’t accept my offer of a cigar. Does this have anything to do with it?” he questioned.

“I serve the Lord, and smoking is a hindrance. And since the Lord lived a life without hindrances, I am to follow His example. I am His child and heir. Since I serve Him alone, I am no longer bound to other things,” I replied.

Joyfully he replied, “I understand you now. A person whom Christ has set free through His blood and has filled with His Spirit has all that he needs. He no longer desires the pleasures and joys of this world.”

I agreed with him and was overjoyed by his clear understanding. The Spirit of God was openly working on his heart. As our conversation continued, I further explained the plan of salvation to him and begged him to not miss out on the opportunity to receive salvation for his soul. He promised me this. And with a solid handshake we went our separate ways.

Dear soul, has the Holy Spirit taken possession of you so that you have whole-heartedly and completely turned your back on the world and its pleasures, lifestyle, lust, and sin? Has Jesus become everything to you? Or are you standing in opposition on the other side? Sadly, there are many who are at a loss, when it comes to the Holy Spirit. They know nothing of the river of grace that is brought through the Holy Spirit. They know nothing about being submerged in the sea of love, a love that is revealed in Jesus. They also fail to joyfully proclaim the name of Jesus or experience the joy connected to sharing the Good News. They don’t experience what it means to be filled with the peace of God which surpasses understanding. And a clear view of the mercy seat is concealed from them.

Dear soul, should things remain this way for you? Break up with the world and its sin, even if it keeps on pursuing you in various forms. Ask the heavenly Father to forgive your sins. Pray earnestly without ceasing and remain sincere before God and others. Follow the prompting and working of the Spirit and you will experience the miracle. Your relationship with God will become deeper and stronger. The Word of God will become new and clear to you, and a holy concern for others will fill your heart.

W. L.

A close-up photograph of a child's hands stacking wooden blocks. The child is wearing a red shirt. The background is blurred, showing the child's face and hair. The lighting is warm and focused on the hands and blocks.

CHILDREN'S CORNER

The Report Card

Yesterday, Lena again had to do her homework very quickly. In the afternoon, she had played outside with her friends and forgot about it. Only when her mother reminded her of her homework did she come in. Then it was soon evening. But Lena didn't think much of it. She would do just fine in school. She was good at hiding behind the backs of her classmates if she didn't know something and to make herself noticeable when she did know the answers to the teacher's questions. By doing this, she had always passed.

Today, report cards were handed out. Lena's heart beat a little faster when she received it. But then she beamed. It had turned out quite well.

On the way home, she compared her report card to Hannah's, her best friend. Hannah was more hardwork-

ing and intelligent than she. She knew that, and yet her report card was not as good as her own. Her friend was rather quiet and reserved and didn't know how to push her way into the spotlight.

While she thought about it now, she felt ashamed. She felt she hadn't earned this good report card. She hadn't been honest. And then she remembered these words from Sunday School, "For man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

She quietly entered the house and went to her room. With tears, she asked the Lord for forgiveness and promised to be faithful and honest even when no one saw her.

M. Rose

The Family “in the World”

The family was God’s idea. No person and no committee initiated it, but God created man at the beginning of time and laid out for him the foundation of marriage and family. We have to keep this thought in mind when we speak about the family.

In everything God does, He always has our well-being and happiness in mind. Even the foundational laws of God should not be viewed as the tactic of a spoilsport but as the loving action of a heavenly Father who desires things to go well for us. We need not even wonder that God’s opponent, Satan, has made the family his target. He is in no way interested in our happiness but attempts to harm us with all kinds of ideas.

In a constantly changing world, the family has its place. It is no longer protected by the government, as it was earlier. Rather, governments worldwide have dismissed the foundational commandments of God in relation to marriages and families. What is normal is being replaced by what is abnormal. Of course, this does not leave the Christian family untouched. Our children and grandchildren are being confronted with these unbiblical views and values. We are facing a tremendous challenge.

And somehow, we have to find our way through and take a stand. This matter is far more serious than we imagine. The future, indeed the salvation of our children is at stake. There can simply be no indifference of any form. Despite the importance and blessing of having Sunday School in a congregation, God has placed the task of raising children into the hands of parents. Parents are challenged, but in their task, they are not left without help. The Word of God is our standard, the Holy Spirit is our strength, and Jesus is with us “always, even to the end of the age.” In plain language, we are not alone in this battle and are not reliant on our own strength.

Signposts in God’s Word

First of all, let us allow Scripture to give us instruction on how the family should conduct itself in the world.

1. In regard to His disciples, Jesus once said, “I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them be-

cause they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world” (John 17:14-16).

2. Paul wrote to the church in Rome, “And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Romans 12:2).

3. John instructs the recipients of his letter, “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Scripture indisputably points in one direction: we are not of the world, we do not conform to the world, and we do not love the things of this world. It is very clear we need to deal with two systems that are entirely different. The crucial question is if I belong to the system of “this world” or if I am oriented toward “that world,” the heavenly one.

Practical Tips

Children come home from school and bring many questions with them: “Why don’t we go . . . ?” “Why don’t we have . . . ?” “Can we . . . ?” “Can I also . . . ?”—Satisfying answers to such questions surely challenge us. Children are ultimately children, and we cannot simply prohibit them everything. Not everything is necessarily wrong. But where do we draw the line?

What do we need in order to lay a good foundation for our family?

1. Prayer – God has promised to guide us, or rather instruct us, in our decisions. His counsel is always good. You can even ask God for guidance in regard to your children’s questions. James wrote years ago, “If any of you

lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

2. God’s Word – How good it is when our children know from a young age that our family aligns itself with the Word of God. All the ideas children bring home must be measured against the standard of God’s Word. You can pause the children’s conversation and ask the question, “What does God’s Word say about that?” Then search together for an answer. If a child grows up with a Bible within arm’s reach, he will learn to look for answers in God’s Word.

3. The Ability to Discern – Today, we must deal with many things that were completely unfamiliar at the time the Bible was written. There is nothing in the entire Bible that mentions Facebook or cellphones, the Internet or magazines. Does this mean we should give our children unlimited freedom in these matters? At this point, fathers and mothers need a healthy ability to discern. Even though the Bible does not mention these things, it gives us guidelines that form our ability to discern.

4. A Role Model – Nothing is worse than a missing role model. Strict upbringing, many rules but no explanations for them, no conversations, no open relationship: a child would rarely allow himself to be positively influenced by that. On the other hand, the exemplary conduct of parents speaks and convinces.

5. Foresight – What is not necessarily wrong right now can have a negative impact in the future. You should not come to a universal decision without thinking about it. Today I might sign up my little toddler for a sports team and be thrilled with his abilities, but later, when he misses prayer meetings and worship services, I’ll be praying that God would free him from it. Today I might dress and make up my little girl to be the prettiest one, and later when she becomes a fashion model, I’ll need to pray . . . There are countless other examples I could mention. The question is this: How will this matter play out in the future?

6. The Matter’s Background – “That isn’t dangerous” is what we say and thereby shake off all misgivings. Others let their children participate in it. However, not everything is good, beneficial, and advantageous for a child. What is the origin? What or who is behind it? Is yoga just physical exercise or . . . ? Are the various Asian martial arts just a way of self-defense or . . . ? We simply must consciously consider these things in order to correctly assess them.

Suggestions for a Strong, Christian Family

Let me still show you the other side. Otherwise you might get the idea that everything is forbidden, that nothing is permitted and that serving God is wearisome. However, serving God is actually something very special, something attractive and something absolutely necessary. We can make serving God very appealing to our children.

1. Engage in a Bible study with your children. It shouldn’t be too long or dull, however. You can be creative and change the method from time to time.

2. Sing with your children. “People don’t sing anymore; they listen to music today” is what someone said. Both aren’t wrong. Children are so approachable and so open to godly things. Children like to sing. Godly truths are sung into their hearts this way.

3. Nurture – In all that we do, we cannot forget that the nurture of children is our duty. Parenting should steer in a specific direction. Paul described this direction in the following way: “Bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4).

4. Priorities – In Matthew 6:33, Jesus said certain things should be set “first”: “first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.”

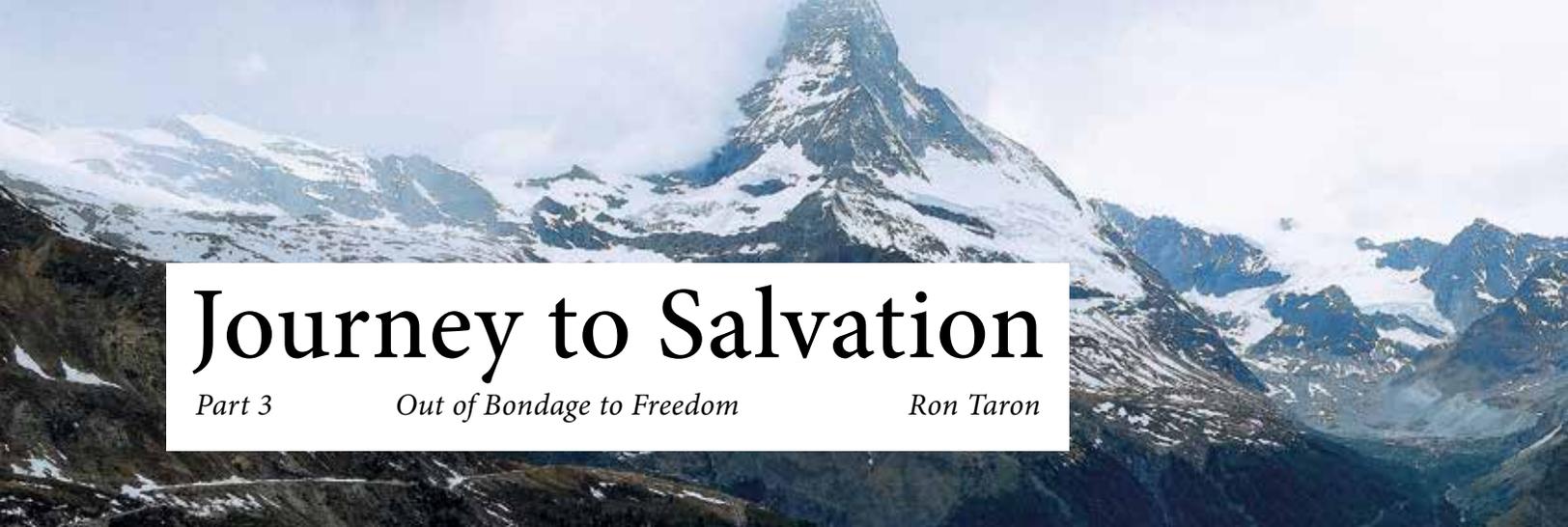
5. Values – Teach your child values such as a sense of duty, loyalty, honesty, a willingness to help, respect, consideration, kindness.

6. Let your child learn a musical instrument – It gives your child something to do, enriches him, and later allows him the opportunity to work along in the congregation and inspire praise to God.

7. Serve together with your child – You could visit the sick, go to a nursing home, and bring joy. It often seems dark in the rooms of those who are ill, with loneliness, worries, and fears. You and your child can bring light into the darkness. Here you could sing to the ill or aging the songs you’ve learned, as an encouragement. By doing this, your child learns to focus on others.

Much more could be mentioned. I hope I have given you some things to think about. Like I said, it is not always easy to be a family “not of this world.” On the other hand, the opportunity presents itself to transform this world into a better place by being a light in the world and by positively influencing the world. For this I wish you and your family God’s blessing.

Harry Semenjuk



Journey to Salvation

Part 3

Out of Bondage to Freedom

Ron Taron

“Now the sojourn of the children of Israel who lived in Egypt was four hundred and thirty years. And it came to pass at the end of the four hundred and thirty years—on that very same day—it came to pass that all the armies of the LORD went out from the land of Egypt.” (Exodus 12:40-41)

The people of Israel had lived in Egypt for a long time. At the time of this incident, all those alive had been born there and knew nothing else. Spiritually, Egypt is a symbol of a person living in the world and in sin. When Israel first came to Egypt, everything seemed fine. Yet Pharaoh was somehow able to manipulate this nation into servanthood, and then slavery. Now, after hundreds of years, Israel knew nothing but being in bondage.

Their experience is identical to that of a person living in sin. At first things seem to go rather well. The world naturally offers precisely what seems to lead to happiness. Sadly, it leaves the soul empty and gradually man realizes these things can't satisfy and that he needs something new, something different. And then, when man tries to turn from sin, he finds himself unable to do so. He is in bondage, a slave of sin. The story of Israel clearly describes this situation.

The Bondage of Sin

“Therefore they set taskmasters over them to afflict them with their burdens. And . . . the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter with hard bondage—in mortar, in brick, and in all manner of service in the field. All their service in which they made them serve was with rigor” (Exodus 1:11-14). What a fitting description of a person in bondage to sin! Paul explains, “For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. . . . For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice” (Romans

7:15, 19).

So many people have struggled to free themselves from the yoke of sin and have failed miserably in all their efforts. I did. Every time I told myself, “I’ll never do this again; that was the last time,” I had to realize I was powerless to succeed. I was doomed to failure. As much as I desired it, my own strength was insufficient to overcome or break the bondage of sin. “So the Egyptians made the children of Israel serve with rigor. And they made their lives bitter . . .” (Exodus 1:13-14a). Is this a description of your life?

Praise God, there is a way out! Even back then, God didn’t want His people to remain in bondage in Egypt. He saw their tears and the heavy burdens they carried. He heard their groaning and petitions . . . and opened a way to freedom.

What did it take to enable their freedom?

1. God had to do it. The Israelites couldn’t free themselves, no matter how they struggled or desired it. They simply remained slaves under the yoke of their enemies. They had even resigned themselves to their fate. When Moses tried to explain to them that God had ordained him to free them, they couldn’t believe or even understand that, especially when their torment was increased after the first failed attempt. Likewise, many have attempted to please God, but have repeatedly failed and finally given up. They have ceased to believe it’s possible for them. Maybe for others, but not for them.

2. But God had a plan. He opened the passage from slavery to freedom, a way that led to Him. He sent the



10 plagues. He did wonders. He proved His omnipotence and showed that defeating the whole might of the Egyptian army was child's play to Him. Before the foundation of the world, God had a plan in place to free man from the power of Satan and sin. He made a way; He became the way.

3. An innocent blood offering had to be sacrificed. As we have already seen, a lamb had to shed its blood and die. In Israel's day it was the Paschal Lamb and the blood-stained doorway, a fitting symbol of the true Lamb of God that would come. Angels heralded His coming to earth, and John introduced Him to the world with the words, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (John 1:29) Jesus, the pure, holy God and Man went onto the cross and shed His blood for the atonement of the whole world. Yet, sadly, so few will accept Him as their Savior and Redeemer.

4. The Israelites had to be willing to leave Egypt and begin a long pilgrimage through the desert in order to reach the promised land. That may seem so obvious, yet for many people it is such a difficult decision to make. They are loath to give up Egypt, the world, and sin. They want the benefits of salvation, but to give up the joys of the world? No, that's more than they're willing to sacrifice. Do you share this view? Then let me tell you, you will never escape the bondage of sin. And therefore, you will never reach the eternal Canaan, heaven. You need to flee Egypt.

5. In order to be freed, Israel had to heed the voice and commands of God relayed to them by His messengers. We see an initial unwillingness of Israel to accept them. "Who is this Moses, that we should obey him? Moses, who set you over us? Will you kill us also, as you murdered that Egyptian?" But when they found a genuine desire for God to free them of their bondage, when it became obvious God was with Moses and Aaron, they were able submit to their every directive. It is no different today. As long

as people disdain a messenger of God who comes with an uncompromising message of repentance and a call to holiness, they cannot be freed from the bondage of sin.

6. What led to the freeing of Israel? They had to give up their old life and begin a totally new one as a holy nation of God. Note that God first led them into His presence, to the Mount of God, where He wanted to enter into a covenant with them. How difficult it is for many people to give up their old life! "What will this cost me? The journey leads into the desert! I'll lose all my friends there! I'll have to give up my comfortable life and everything that brings me joy," etc. God's Word tells us, "And those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24).

7. To reach freedom, Israel had to go through the Red Sea, which can be seen as a beautiful symbol of Jesus' blood and sacrifice. God made a way where there wasn't one, and definitively freed Israel from the Egyptians. "And Moses said to the people, 'Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD, which He will accomplish for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall see again no more forever'" (Exodus 14:13). Not only does the Lord cleanse our heart of all sin, He also breaks the power of sin in our lives. Just as the sea annihilated Israel's enemies, by God's salvation our sins are purged and those "Egyptians" no longer have power over us. Praise God! This is a symbol of a new creation in Christ, a life of victory by the blood of Jesus!

Have you been redeemed from the bondage of sin into the glorious freedom in Christ? Or are you still pining for Egypt, being held captive by a few favorite sinful behaviors that keep you in bondage? Flee through the Gate of Christ, onto the narrow path of Life. It is a holy and glorious path, which you too may achieve by the blood, the sacrifice, and the resurrection of Jesus. "Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36).

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Am I Really a Christian?



When the followers of Jesus were first called “Christians,” in Antioch, this label did not have the far-reaching sense it has today. Today, a Christian as a rule is both someone who professes to follow Christ, as well as someone who self-identifies as a Christian, but doesn’t profess to follow Christ. People living in so-called Christian nations are often assumed to be Christian by people

of other countries. A Christian in the biblical sense is more than just a resident of a “Christian” nation. Being a Christian is more than a geographic matter. Yes, to be Christian means even more than being a morally good person. It means more than following a specific formula and also more than being a member of a church.

A Christian is a person who believes what Jesus Christ taught. Today, in many religious circles, what Jesus and

His apostles taught is portrayed as incidental and non-essential and is often ignored. We often hear, "It does not depend on what a person believes as long as he is honest and lives an upright life."

If it does not depend on what a person believes, why does the Bible give so many definitive teachings? If the Bible gives us unequivocal teaching, we are to believe and obey it. "If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God" (John 7:17), says the greatest Teacher. Again, He says, "If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32).

God's people everywhere need to be grounded in the principles of the Bible. Only when we are grounded with a solid foundation can we express the hope we have within us. How would it be possible to stand up and defend the faith that was given to the followers of Christ if we do not know what this faith is? We ourselves must be convinced of this faith. We need to know what we believe and why we believe it if we are to stand for the truth. We need to recognize truth if we want to live as Christians.

A Christian is a person who has an intimate connection with Christ and has experienced a personal conversion. Christianity is more than just a teaching. We can compare the teachings of Christianity to a ladder that leads us to a higher plane. It would not be enough to place the ladder against a structure and just remain standing under it. In the same way, our belief in biblical truths leads us to an experience with Christ. The gospel requires that we honor Christ not just with our intellect, or because we agree with a teaching, but most importantly with our heart so that Christ may live in us. A person may be devout but without a pure heart. Christianity is not only a series of teachings but has to do with a Person, who is Christ. Everything revolves around Him. In the biblical sense, a Christian is one who has experienced Christ, is in contact with Him, and maintains a relationship with Him.

If our faith is real, it will effect a real change in us. On the threshold to the Christian life is the need to be born again. "You must be born again" (John 3:7), Jesus Himself said. We need to become a new creation in Christ, being dead to sin and having a new life in Christ. Yes, a Christian is part of the godly nature. Christ must be in us. The likeness of God, the righteousness and the holiness, must be within us. We must experience a personal conversion. That means we become a new creation through Christ.

Also, to be a Christian does not simply mean that we once *had* a conversion experience. It is not what we once experienced but what we now *have* that is important.

Also, true Christianity is not based on feelings, although a true Christian does experience good feelings. A Christian has joy, pure, true joy. Without it, Christianity is not even imaginable. However, joy is the result of this experience. One person may have more joy than another, and yet both may be true Christians. Whoever is truly born again seeks this fellowship with His God and Lord. Time spent in communion with Him is precious.

A Christian is someone who lives his life as Christ did. If the life of Jesus dwells within us, then we must live it. If Christ is in residence on our heart's throne, He then has control of our total person: the tongue, the hands, the feet, and over each member of our body. Everything must be put under His control. Our life will be in agreement with our faith and experience. A river cannot rise higher than its source. Each tree bears fruit of its type. Jesus said, "By their fruit you will know them." If righteousness dwells within one's heart, it will also be visible in that life. Someone once said doctrine is the root of the Christian life, experience the flower, and our lives, the fruit.

Our Christian life must be in sync with the reputation and name we bear. A true Christian will live a pure and God-pleasing life. The life of a Christian has been changed through rebirth, when everything became new. A pure life originates from a pure heart. It is a holy life. If the heart is holy, then the life will also be holy. "But as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct" (1 Peter 1:15).

The life of a Christian is also one of obedience. God does not have any disobedient children. He said, "If you love me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). A Christian is devoted to God and ready to serve Him. It is a life of service in His vineyard and, above all, a life of prayer, an intimate relationship with Him, the source of all life. It is a joyful and peaceful life upon which eternal life follows.

It would not hurt and would certainly be a great blessing if all of us who profess to be Christians would ask ourselves the question, "Am I truly a Christian in the biblical sense?" Let us look at ourselves in the mirror of God's Word. If our conversion was truly genuine, it will survive the test of time. Should our conversion not be genuine and we have no fruit to prove it, it would be better to realize this now so we can once again turn to the Lord and experience genuine revival before it's too late.

A Good Witness

In Madras, called Chennai today, in eastern India, a native-born missionary met a Hindu on the road who looked inwardly unsettled. This indeed was the case. He had received a large amount of money which he was carrying with him, and was afraid of being robbed or even murdered in this foreign city.

When he saw the missionary, he noticed by his clothing that a Christian was standing in front of him. So he said to him, "I would like to spend this next night in your home."

The missionary answered, "Dear man, I am a Christian, and you are a Hindu. You should go to one of them. There are thousands in this city."

The man replied. "I would like to stay with you precisely because you are a Christian. I know I can trust a Christian!"

*"Let your light so
shine before men,
that they may see
your good works and
glorify your Father in
heaven."
(Matthew 5:16)*

Experiences with God

*"For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand,
Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'"*

(Isaiah 41:13)

Very recently, I too have been able to experience how the Lord helped me and lifted and carried me. I can only be thankful I have a Savior to whom I can come with all my needs and problems.

In July 2018, the Lord called my husband into eternity after nearly 64 years of marriage. He had dementia, and could not think clearly anymore. On June 1, he fell and broke his thigh, resulting in hospitalization and rehabilitation. All this only worsened his condition until the Lord called him on July 16th. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart that He redeemed him and called him to heaven, where there is no pain and sorrow. Whenever we prayed together, he always said, "I know the Lord has forgiven my sins. I am His child. I'm ready to go home."

Then I got sick, and had a lot of pain in my back that spread into my leg, so that I could not walk without a

stick. In the night the pain was almost unbearable, and I could only pray, "Lord, help, give me strength!" And the Lord helped.

After an MRI I was given the choice between an operation or an injection in my back. I decided to take the injection. We especially prayed for the procedure. The Lord can help with or without doctors. But He also gives people wisdom. Everything went well with the procedure and now the pain is gone! The Lord be glorified for His help, strength, and support.

What would I do without Jesus?

What would I do without Him?

There would be no one to guide me
Here through this dark world of sin.

What would I do when I'm weary,

Or facing heartache and woe?

What should I do when I'm tempted?

Now to my Savior I go.

Martha Scholz



Announcements

Easter Conference in Hamm, Germany

April 19th – 22nd, 2019

Further information:

www.gghamm.de

Fest in Winnipeg, Manitoba

May 18th – 19th, 2019

Pentecost in Herford, Germany

June 8th – 10th, 2019

Fest in Aylmer, Ontario

50th Anniversary of the Congregation

June 29th – 30th, 2019

Bibel Course in Neustädt, Mexico

July 22nd – August 2nd, 2019

Youth Seminar in Tuningen, Germany

July 28th – August 1st, 2019

Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany

August 17th – 24th, 2019

Christ is Building His Own Temple

*Christ is building His own temple,
Building it with living stones;
Follow Him as our example,
For the church is His alone.*

*Every born-again believer
Has been placed by Christ above
In the temple, as is needed,
And cemented by His love.*

*Search for stones, for God is building
Here a temple of His own;
Every stone within the dwelling
Will be placed by Christ alone.*

*Labor till the work is finished,
And each stone is set in place;
When the building is completed,
We shall enter heaven's gates.*

Ludwig Besler