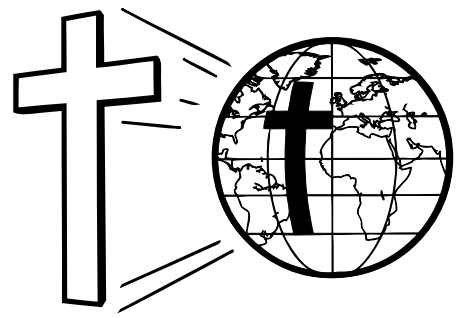


Foundation of Faith



WATCH

*“Watch therefore, for you do not know
what hour your Lord is coming.”*

Matthew 24:42 (NKJV)

SLUMBERING CHRISTIANS

Why do you sleep?

GET UP!

How to

OVERCOME A CRISIS OF FAITH

SETTLE YOUR ACCOUNT

with Heaven

WHEN SATAN JOINED THE CHURCH

2017 PRAYER WEEK TOPICS



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Editorial

Once again, the year will soon be coming to an end. We want to sound an alarm in order to rouse people from their lost condition, that they might come to the Savior and find peace and salvation before it is too late. We are also obligated to remind all that Jesus said to "Watch!" (Mark 13:37), and also wish to call our attention to the word of Isaiah 58:1: "Cry aloud, spare not; lift up your voice like a trumpet; tell my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

The wonderful gospel message of salvation has been preached to the world for over 2000 years. After His work on Calvary was fulfilled, the Son of God promised to come back and bring His own into glory and hold final judgment.

As long as the Master delays His second coming, there is danger of becoming spiritually tired and falling asleep. This is the moment the devil takes advantage of with his attacks and temptations, leading people to fall into ruin. This possibility threatens not only the individual, but also entire congregations.

Over the centuries, there have always been times in which the Lord made it alarmingly clear to "Christians" how deeply they had sunk into sin and wickedness and therefore could not stand before God. The call to repentance must take place. "Therefore He says: Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Ephesians 5:14).

Dear Reader, if we faithfully serve God, then we have His favor and may know: "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching" (Luke 12:37).

Brother Warren admonishes us in his song:

"Watch, for the Savior is coming

Thus He has said before;

Soon we shall hear Him, not knowing,

Till He is at the door.

Jesus comes, lo, He comes, Oh, the awful moment!

Oh, prepare, for He comes. Comes in final judgment."

H. D. Nimz

Settle Your Account With Heaven

Horst Mechhofer, a respected middle-aged man, was in a good mood as he was driving to work on a Monday morning. “Was that ever a nice Sunday!” he thought to himself. “Glorious sunshine, money in my wallet, nice company . . . !” His co-worker was a great guy with a good sense of humor—he held nothing sacred. Even the wife of his co-worker was alright. He couldn’t compare his own wife with her, no, she had changed lately. The wilder Horst and his buddy got, the more subdued she became.

Maybe she would not have changed so much if this strange young man, Mr. Berger, had not come into their home. With his fanatical ideas he had already influenced their son, Bernard. Berger had even tried to talk to Horst about the need for conversion, but there he had met his match!

When Horst arrived in his office, he looked through the new mail that had arrived. Among the different business letters, he found a personal one with the return address: R. Berger. Strange, what did he want? He opened the letter and read:

Dear Mr. Mechhofer!

For a long time I contemplated on whether I should write to you and how I should write it. The fact that you are Bernard’s father gives me the courage to write. Have you ever heard about a Saul or Paul? Out of hatred for Christ he even had Christians killed. And how did God respond? He made a dedicated follower out of this persecutor. Should it be impossible with you if it happened to Saul?

Why are you fighting against Jesus Christ? We all have to face Him sometime, if not in this life then in the next. The patience of God is great, but we must be careful; God’s patience could one day run out!

“Great, just great!” grumbled Mr. Mechhofer, “now this kid is even threatening me! ‘We must be careful.’ If someone’s patience has run out it is mine. Enough of this!” He tore the letter in half and threw it in the trash can.

He successfully pushed thoughts of the letter aside. When young Berger visited his son, Horst Mechhofer made himself scarce, but otherwise he was undisturbed.

When Horst sat at the wheel of his car, he loved driving fast and fearlessly.

One day he was on a wet road and took the curves with an elegant sweep. Suddenly he saw a car coming toward him. He hit the brakes but his car spun out of control and rolled over. He was thrown out of the car into the ditch. Other than a few small shoulder bruises, he walked away unscathed. “Horst, that you walked away from that accident as though nothing happened is a miracle,” his wife said to him that evening. “Yes,” he replied without contradiction.

His car received a complete body makeover and soon was ready to drive again. But the owner of the car was no longer in such a hurry. And though he didn’t speak out against the mockery of his colleague, he himself no longer participated.

One morning a woman called the Mechhofer residence and reported that Mr Mechhofer’s mother had suffered a stroke during the night. Horst Mechhofer did everything he could for her. By the doctor’s serious expression they knew that they needed to be prepared for anything. During the day Horst’s wife stayed with his mother, and in the evening, after work, he took over the night watch at his mother’s side. The 82 year old woman, who had been incredibly energetic until now, was lying there, completely broken and unconscious. The night was long.

To stay awake, Horst rose and looked at the books on the shelves. There weren't many. Some were from his school and youth years. Now he took Schiller's "Tell" into his hand. How often had they role played that piece. They had felt a shudder come upon them every time they heard Tell speak in the ghostly lane at Gessler—where was that line again? Oh yes, here: "Settle your account with heaven, Vogt, your clock has expired."

Horst Mechhofer had read these words half out loud and suddenly he felt paralyzed. He sank into the chair and words came to him that he had hoped he had forgotten: "we must be careful, God's patience could one day run out!" Then came the memory of the car accident. He asked himself what would happen if the time had come

for him to settle his account with heaven and he heard: "Horst Mechhofer, your clock has expired." How could he justify himself if he were called to stand before Jesus, the Great Judge?

During these hours of the night, at the side of his mother's deathbed, he realized that he needed grace. He ceased to resist and actually began to pray.

During the day he remained calm and very silent. And when his mother passed away and was buried a few days later, people that observed him came to the conclusion: "He is a completely different person now. The death of his mother has totally changed him."

Charlotte Sprengel

Upheld from Hour to Hour

A big, strong Scottish man was generally popular among his co-workers in a steel factory. He was one of the most efficient workers in his department, but also one of the heaviest drinkers among those who passionately enjoyed drinking.

But one day the news spread that the man had been converted and would no longer drink. When asked why, he quite frankly and openly said that it was true, he was converted to the Lord Jesus, who made a new person out of him. "Never again will I drink with you, my friends," he said, "because a drunkard cannot be a citizen of the Kingdom of God. And Jesus Christ has made me a citizen of this Kingdom."

The co-workers smiled and said among themselves: "We will wait and see. He'll give in, especially when the first hot weather arrives. Then he will find it impossible to carry out his firm resolution. He will certainly go along to the tavern with us and drink."

Time passed, and our Scottish man remained faithful. Never again did he go to the tavern. Even in the hottest weather, no one could persuade him to drink again.

One day one of the former drinking companions asked: "How can you control yourself constantly, especially during these hot summer days, whereas previously you were one of the most passionate drinkers? Do you never get tempted to join us again for a drink?"

"Oh, yes!" was the reply, "I do get tempted. But Jesus gives me the victory. Today is the twentieth of the month. As I arrived to work at seven o'clock, I prayed, 'Lord, give me victory in this hour,' and He did! At eight o'clock I thanked Him for safeguarding me the past hour, and implored His help for the next hour. He helped me again. And thus it goes on, hour after hour, day after day, so that in the evening I can make a mark on my calendar. That means: The Lord has helped!"

Christian Watchfulness

*“Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”
(Matthew 26:41)*

In this verse we are encouraged and exhorted to watch and pray. Why should we be watchful? First, because we do not know when our Lord will return. Jesus Himself says: “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming” (Matthew 24:42). Another reason is because the devil lies in wait to cause us to stumble. In 1 Peter 5:8 we read: “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.”

We must watch ourselves

It is not our job to watch others. If we watch ourselves, we will be so busy that we will not have time to watch others. Those who spend their time watching others are usually not good examples themselves. God’s Word admonishes us: “Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you” (1 Timothy 4:16).

We must watch our thoughts

We cannot pursue wicked or impure thoughts without being influenced toward evil. There are so many good things to occupy our minds: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

We must watch our words

James writes: “If anyone among you thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his own heart, this one’s religion is useless” (James 1:26). According to this passage, a person who does not guard his tongue only

imagines that he is serving God. Words are like feathers when they are scattered. Once they are spoken they can no longer be retrieved. What great harm has come through thoughtlessly spoken words! Therefore, watch your words!

We must watch our conduct

This applies at all times, whether at home alone or with others. If we wish to exercise a good and truly Christian influence on others, we must be careful and vigilant in our ways and manners at all times. This begins in the home. We must never forget that people are watching us. Many do not read the Bible, but they read our lives. Are we adorning the teachings of Jesus Christ through our conduct?

We must watch our aspirations

Where are they directed? Perhaps the honor and praise of others, or earthly advantages and profit? As children of God, our aspirations should be directed primarily to divine things.

We must watch our attitude toward others

If we are not careful, it is very easy to give someone the cold shoulder and indifferently pass them by.

We must watch our motives

What is the motive for our church participation? Are we working for the Lord’s cause, or would we like to be seen and honored by people? God knows our hearts. “Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Samuel 16:7). If our motives are pure, we will be willing to serve and do that which may not be visible to the eye or bring honor before men.

O Watch and Pray

*O watch and pray, start in the early morning;
The sun is lovely, shining warm and bright,
Lest in your heart a tempest without warning
May start to brew and cloud the precious light.
So watch and pray, let come what may.
O be watchful today.*

*O watch and pray, amidst your daily cares,
When hours fly by and there is much to do;
Take a few moments, look to God in prayer
And He will give you strength and joy anew.
So watch and pray, let come what may.
O be watchful today.*

*O watch and pray, when evening shadows lengthen;
Throughout the day, He kept you in His sight.
Cast all your cares on Him, and He will strengthen
Your faith and keep you safe throughout the night.
So watch and pray, let come what may.
O be watchful today.*

*O watch and pray, at all times heed the danger,
The world surrounds and tempts you with its own;
For sin desires to enter your heart's chamber,
Which is reserved for God, your Lord, alone.
So watch and pray, let come what may.
O be watchful today.*

We must watch to make use of opportunities available to us

We should keep our physical and spiritual eyes open and ask the Lord to help us see where we can do good or be a blessing to someone. We don't want to let these opportunities slip by unused!

We must watch over our prayer life

"Watch and pray!" Watchfulness must be combined with prayer. We cannot watch properly if we do not pray properly. Let us not neglect our prayer life through unwatchfulness!

We must watch in temptation

It is not that easy to be an example in patience when we are suffering physically. It is therefore very important to be watchful. God has enough grace for us to pass through all trials and tribulations victoriously. Through prayer in faith, we can always receive necessary help, grace, and strength from Him.

We must watch when we are misunderstood

If we are not watchful, we will begin to pity ourselves and set up barriers between ourselves and others. We need a forgiving spirit and a heart full of love. In most cases, misunderstandings will then soon be cleared up. If we remember that our Savior was misunderstood, it will help us to adopt the correct attitude and always have a forgiving spirit. Yes, we can have the same attitude in our heart as He did when He prayed: "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Yes, we must always be watchful! "Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching" (Luke 12:37).

Selma Köhn Jackson



WATCH

Slumbering Christians

Many years ago a steamship sank near the coast of France. A thick fog had risen in the night. Just as the ship was scheduled to enter the harbor, it crashed into a large boulder. Why wasn't a warning signal sent out? Why was no foghorn sounded to announce the impending danger? Yes, therein lies the saddest part of the story. A large foghorn was present in the nearby lighthouse, but the man in the watchtower above was asleep. Even though the horn may not make the most pleasant sound, it produces an important warning call that signals through the thick fog.

May God help us Christians to stay awake and to continue to sound the "foghorn." We are not required to play masterful symphonies that please the modern ear. Much

like the foghorn, our call may not sound pleasing if it fulfills its purpose. Just as long as people wake up from their slumber and are reminded of the approaching judgment!

One single person who is awake and alert can awaken an entire city! Consider Jonah, how he wandered through the streets of Nineveh all alone! Listen to his unsettling cry: "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4). He found the entire city entangled in godlessness and reckless living. They were in a deadly slumber, only forty days away from hell. Jonah's "foghorn" woke them up and brought them to repentance.

One single man awake with eyes wide open accomplished that. But how did God have to prepare him for the mission in the first place? Who but Jonah received

a more thorough awakening than when he was spewed out of the belly of a fish! He had experienced God's fair anger and judgment firsthand and therefore willingly passed on the warning call.

We need the fire of the Holy Spirit in order to properly blow the "foghorn." Our own earnestness and enthusiasm are not sufficient. Only the power of the Holy Spirit can direct the sound into the heart of a sinner to rebuke and warn.

Are you personally awake or would you rather lie down to have a comfortable snooze? We must be on our guard, as we can unknowingly be overcome by sleep. We do not purposely fall asleep; it happens unintentionally when we find ourselves in a comfortable situation. Everything around us is pleasant and comfortable. As a result we retreat and fall asleep. And we don't even know that we were asleep until we wake up!

The devil takes advantage of our weak flesh and attempts to put us Christians to sleep. When he notices that the rough winds of persecution can't chase us from our stations, he tries another tactic. He uses the calm, southern breeze and lovely sunshine to make everything so pleasant and comfortable for us that we are overcome with sleep.

There is a story about a great war council held by Satan at which his various commanders and officers were present. He asked them to report on victories they had won that contributed to world destruction.

Many dark deeds were mentioned as they boasted about the way they had led people off the right path and enticed them to engage in drunken play, fleshly pleasures, and cunning deception. But in closing, one of them stood up and declared with disgusting delight that he had surpassed them all, "for I," he declared, "have lulled a Christian to sleep!"

Indeed, Satan uses a great variety of sleeping pills to make Christians tired and sleepy! His favorite method is known in modern terms as a "liberal spirit."

"I don't want to be stiff and narrow-minded," says one poor soul. "How can so many around me be wrong? Didn't someone once say that there is more faith in honest doubt than in many dogmas? Doesn't every question have its two sides?"—If someone disputes in this way, we can be certain that this is a sign

that they are sleeping. Fog clouds hinder their ability to see sinking souls around them.

"Two sides to every question?"—Indeed these do exist. And with most questions one side is right and the other is wrong. "He who has the Son, has life." That is one side of a very big question. "He who does not have the Son of God, does not have life" (1 John 5:12). That is the other side. Which side are you on? What about your friends and acquaintances?

Most likely you should be waking up and demonstrating your faith by endeavoring to wake up those around you who are sleeping. If half of the so-called Christians aren't any better than ungodly people, then you have all the more reason to at least stay awake and warn others of the coming judgment.

If you are snoozing even though you are a Christian, then you could become guilty of your soul's death, for God says: "When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand" (Ezekiel 3:18).

Oh children of God who hold to His Word, be on your guard against spiritual death! The fog of sin and unbelief affects people's eyes so that they do not notice the ruin around them. God expects you to warn them. Make sure that you stay awake and sound the "foghorn"!

How can we wake up? Sometimes God awakens us suddenly in unpleasant ways. He might send us a heavy burden to bear. Sometimes He shatters our sweetest dreams, jolting us out of our slumber to finally decide to live our lives fully for Him!

But how much sweeter it is if we are awakened by the soft glow of the morning light, when the rising sun sends its rays through the window and gently touches the face of the sleeper and nudges him to receive new life and renewed joy in serving!

In this manner Paul urges us to wake from our slumber, because "the night is far spent, the day is at hand" (Romans 13:12). The dark night of Jesus' absence is passing quickly, the dawn of a new day is breaking—the day of His return. Let us continually walk in the light of His Second Coming! This will keep us awake, for oh, how terrible it would be if He should return and find us to be slumbering Christians!

Why Do You Sleep? Get Up!

“So the captain came to him, and said to him, ‘What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish.’” (Jonah 1:6)

These words were spoken at sea. A violent storm had arisen, the ship was tossed to and fro, ready to break apart. The danger of shipwreck was huge. The sailors were very afraid and each called out to his god. The storm did not abate and continued to grow in strength, threatening to shatter the ship and sink everyone into a watery grave. Only one person slept through this storm and did not realize the great danger he was in. It was the prophet Jonah.

How many times do we see people that are just like Jonah! They sleep calmly amidst the greatest dangers. They know they are not obeying God or doing His will, but they continue to rest unconcernedly. They waste their lives sleeping and seldom think about the ship they are on or the danger of becoming stranded, or that their souls will end up in the terrible depths of destruction.

Dear Reader, if you belong to this group of people then we would like to say to you: “What do you mean, sleeper? Arise, call on your God; perhaps your God will consider us, so that we may not perish” (Jonah 1:6).

Oh, how many are sleeping just like Jonah, completely unaware of the great danger they are in! The ones belonging to this group are not just those living in sin, disregarding their salvation, but also those who profess to be saved but are not willing to walk the narrow path and fulfill all the requirements of God’s Word.

Jonah only disobeyed one divine commandment. He was thrown into the sea and would have perished had he not called on God to save him. In His mercy, God sent a

fish to rescue him and bring him back to land. Then Jonah obeyed God.

Many people profess to be redeemed but are not obeying God’s commandments. They sleep and dream thinking that they will be going to heaven. When some are awakened by the preaching of the Word through the power of the Holy Spirit, they turn away from the fearless preacher of truth and find someone who will give them a milder sermon.

In Jeremiah 51:39, the prophet speaks of people who “sleep a perpetual sleep.” They don’t want to believe in God nor obey Him. Paul admonishes: “it is high time to awake out of sleep” (Romans 13:11). He also writes: “Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:6). (See also 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3; Ephesians 5:14).

The prophet Isaiah speaks of certain watchmen: “His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant . . . sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber” (Isaiah 56:10). Unfortunately it is true that many preachers, instead of preaching complete redemption from sin, even defend it. Jeremiah calls out: “For thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: Do not let your prophets and your diviners who are in your midst deceive you, nor listen to your dreams which you cause to be dreamed. For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them, says the Lord” (Jeremiah 29:8-9).

Let us take these warnings to heart, be watchful, prayerful, and faithfully fight the good fight!

Awake! See the Danger!

We need to be awakened from spiritual sluggishness and indifference. Comfortable living and our current well-being can work like lead weights on the feet of Christians. Addiction to pleasure is the distinguishing characteristic of today's man, or as the Word says, "lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God" (2 Timothy 3:4). Who is seeing the danger? Who will allow themselves to be warned, and then shake their neighbor awake as well?

We read in the Bible that most people will ignore God's Word. "Wide is the gate . . . and there are many who go in by it" (Matthew 7:13b). The people in Noah's time had no fear of the coming judgment. Despite the warnings of Noah, a just preacher, they did not allow themselves to be corrected. Ruin suddenly came upon them. Jesus said, "And as it was in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man" (Luke 17:26).

The Lord Jesus called attention to the careless situation of His time. The people were so wrapped up in daily worldly living that they did not see the black storm clouds of God's wrath. The reason for their indifference in the hour of danger lay in their hardened and stubborn hearts. The Bible speaks of people that have ears and yet do not hear, eyes and yet cannot see (Mark 8:18). This described their heart's relationship toward eternal truth.

Why are so many people deaf and blind? Scripture gives us information: "Exhort one another daily, while it is called 'Today,' lest any of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Hebrews 3:13). It is sin that hardens the heart and destroys any fellowship with God. The more it spreads, the more indifferent a person becomes to divine truth, no longer paying attention to warnings or signs of the time.

Through the influence of false teachings, many confessing Christians also have the opinion that everyone sins more or less every day. They are so trapped in this error that they cannot acknowledge that sin separates from God. The prophet Isaiah said, "Your iniquities have separated you from your God; and your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear" (Isaiah 59:2). The devil understands how to lull people through pious

speech, but it is still a lie hidden within a form of Christianity. An earthly-minded person will have more faith in these lies than in the truth.

Thank God for an effective means against all sin, as the prophet Zechariah says in chapter 13:1, "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." This prophecy was fulfilled through Jesus' atoning death. John wrote in his letter that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from "all sin" and "all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:7,9). The Lord saves and also grants full victory over sin.

Dear reader, be alert and heed the clear message of God's Word. We read, "Whoever has been born of God does not sin" (1 John 3:9). "We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18).

Many try to ensnare young people through distractions. There is much busyness, but the heart stays empty. How can one be wakened from such a position?—Through clear preaching of the gospel and earnest prayer that God's Spirit might send awakening. The person must acknowledge that there is hope of full forgiveness and cleansing of sin. If he has not realized this, he will not reach out for such an experience.

Whoever understands their lost position is able to experience full salvation through Jesus' blood. It is tragic that so many go through a form of religion without being awakened from their sleep of sin. Jesus warns, "Take heed that no one deceives you. . . . Many false prophets will rise up and deceive many" (Matthew 24:4b,11b).

Dear reader, wake up and realize the dangers of our time! If God has personally helped you, remain faithful in guard duty and strengthen what is dying. Shake a lost world awake from its sinful sleep and indifference. The Lord is coming soon, and He will bring home those who are alert, but those who are sleeping will not escape judgment.

G. C. L.



WATCH

Open Eyes

In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus asked His disciples to “watch and pray.” Earlier, He had warned them, “You will all fall away” (Mark 14:27). He knew well the great temptations that awaited them. The disciples, however, did not fully understand Jesus’ words when He told them that He would be crucified. Although Jesus warned them that they would experience these things, these events took the disciples by surprise.

We experience similar dangers today. They sneak up on us. Don’t events in our lives often turn out quite differently than we have planned? God sends us trials, and if we do not open our eyes (i.e. if we do not watch and pray), we become impatient and begin to complain about our situation. In light of such dangers, let us fervently pray for grace so that we can withstand whatever comes. Most assuredly, we will repeatedly experience that God never forgets us and that His love for His children never diminishes. Even though we have unfulfilled dreams and may experience many hard days, if we stay faithful and continue to pray simply and humbly, our soul will remain unharmed.

Unfortunately, few people understand that the flesh and its wishes and dreams are not so important. The primary purpose of the flesh is to carry the soul unscathed through sorrow and pain. God looks after His children’s earthly needs and desires, as far as it is necessary, according to His will.

How easily we can become distracted from the ultimate goal by worrying about food, clothing, and the like!

Even children of God face this danger; otherwise, the Word of God would not have so many urgent warnings against it. Let us be on our guard and continue in prayer, so that we do not lose sight of God’s promises. He promised to take care of our needs. When we worry, we close our eyes and lose sight of God. On the other hand, when we keep our eyes open, we develop a faith that does not need to see in order to believe. Jesus says, “But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well” (Matthew 6:33).

Not everything goes according to our dreams, but God knows what we need. He sent ravens to feed Elijah, and He did not let the widow of Zarephath’s oil and flour run out. The God who provided for His children so wonderfully in the past, still has the same power, the same compassion, and the same love. However, we must seek His kingdom and His righteousness first, above all things.

Many, who have already experienced God’s love, allow themselves to be seduced by earthly worries. These worries include the love of money. How deceitful is money! How many souls has the love of money led to destruction! Money does not bring happiness. On the contrary, money often makes people unhappy. Hatred, envy, strife, war, theft, murder, etc.—all these things have been brought on by the love of money. How many people have fallen victim to the deceitfulness of money! Their eyes have been blinded.



Another danger is that people make false statements when filling out their taxes. Christians can be tempted to do the same. However, let us be honest and sincere. It is better to suffer from a lack of earthly things than to have a troubled conscience and be lost forever. Yes, with open eyes we can distinguish what truly matters.

A further temptation that Christians face is the thought that if you give any more to the kingdom of God, you will not have enough for yourself. Just the opposite is true! Satan has always been a liar, and he will continue to deceive us if we listen to him.

Unseen, the enemy sows seeds during the night (Matthew 13:25). Before one notices, the weeds are there, and only when it is too late, do one's eyes open. Where did all the weeds come from? Whoever does not watch and continue in humble prayer easily becomes complacent, falls asleep, loses the Spirit's power, and falls into darkness. And then it is no wonder when things like pride, vanity, and self-love crop up. God's Word warns us to watch, pray, be sober, and walk in the light.

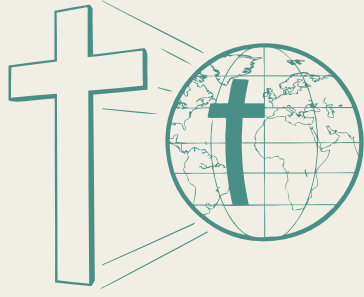
If a good friend sings your praises, stay humble and give the glory to God alone. It may also come to pass that you will be blamed even when you have done your best. But if you are humble, you can still thank God because He knows what really happened.

Another danger is self-confidence. When we have traveled a certain path many times, we feel comfortable walking it even in the dark. However, in our spiritual lives this self-confidence is much more dangerous than it is in our earthly lives. For here we must face the prince of darkness, who takes advantage of our confidence and uses it to make us fall. May the Lord protect us because only through His grace can we prevail.

It may also occur that we are asked, "What do you think about this brother, sister, or preacher?" How easy it is to make an unloving judgment!

The devil also wants to lead us astray through fear of suffering. People may say to us just like Peter said to Jesus, "this shall not happen to You!" (Matthew 16:22). In Acts 21, we read that when Agabus told Paul that he would face tribulations, the brothers asked him not to return to Jerusalem.

Yet, let us ask God daily for strength, wisdom, and protection. May God help us that our love might not grow cold, our faith might not fail, our zeal might not die, that our patience increases, and that we grow closer to and become more like Jesus. We must not stand still. When we go forward in faith, God's grace will lead us according to His will until our race is done. Only if we have open eyes, if we watch, can we be ready for the Lord's return.



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

Slumbering Christianity

During that time when the people of God were persecuted with fire and sword (and in countries where they are persecuted today), the danger of becoming lukewarm was not great. For the devil attacked like a roaring lion. One could not easily fall asleep. But through the affluence of our time we stand in grave danger of falling asleep. That is why we need to watch and pray!

In the New Testament we often find the clear call to vigilance. Our Lord Jesus Christ expressly said: “Watch therefore, for you do not know what hour your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into” (Matthew 24:42-43). And again: “Blessed are those servants whom the master, when He comes, will find watching” (Luke 12:37). Paul exhorted his readers with these words: “Therefore let us not sleep, as others do, but let us watch and be sober” (1 Thessalonians 5:6). These and other scriptural quotations show us how necessary and important it is to remain vigilant. Specifically, servants of the Lord are called to be watchful. Not only does their personal faith depend on their vigilance but also the spiritual welfare of the flock entrusted to them. Anyone who has ever passed by a military camp would have noticed the guard posted at the entrance gate. This guard has a huge responsibility. If he does not remain watchful during his period of service, it could cost him his life!

The Lord found His disciples sleeping in Gethsemane when He had expressly told them to stay awake and watch. He said to them: “Are you still sleeping? It is enough! The

hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners” (Mark 14:41). They were also in great danger themselves. A sleeping person does not realize the dangers around him. This is the situation the disciples found themselves in, in Gethsemane.

And what about us? Today we can truly speak of a slumbering Christianity. The good times in which we have been able to live for decades are a threat to us becoming spiritually weary and apathetic. Hence the exhortation to be vigilant today!

In the parable of the ten virgins, Jesus said: “But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept” (Matthew 25:5). This has been attributed to spiritual weariness and decline in their lives. When the joy in following Jesus declines, the love to God grows cold, one’s prayer life is neglected, then the interest in one’s life of faith has already disappeared. Anyone who drives to church on a Sunday morning will notice that the parking lots around the churches have become noticeably emptier. This shows us that interest in attending church has decreased substantially. King David prayed: “Help, Lord, for the godly man ceases! For the faithful disappear from among the sons of men” (Psalm 12:2). David was deeply



grieved! The faithful were the minority in the land since many had turned away from serving God. We see this trend in our world today. It would be wonderful if some of our government officials today would be as deeply grieved over the lack of faith in our country!

The decline in faith, as we see it today, is not just fueled by disinterest or lewdness, but also by unbelief, annoyances, bitterness, envy, hostilities and other things. These are the “weeds,” the seeds of the enemy! Jesus clearly stated: “But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way” (Matthew 13:25). When he sowed the seed, he went away satisfied, knowing the seed would surely come up. Have we noticed that even when there is drought, weeds still flourish?

We see this carried over in the spiritual realm. A slumbering Christian or a slumbering church does not notice anything. They usually only wake up when the weeds have taken over and they are standing in the middle of spiritual devastation. The foolish virgins apparently had no concern regarding their lack of extra oil, which highlights their spiritual deficiencies. They only woke up when their lamps went out, and they were not ready to meet the bridegroom! Yes, spiritual sleep brings misery and makes us miss the highest goal. The angel of the church in Sardis was told: “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die” (Revelation 3:2). When a church is being lulled to sleep and spiritual weariness

noticeably creeps in, it can often be traced back to the family!

One sunny summer day a father took a walk with his young son. In a large meadow, under a shade tree, they stopped for a rest. The father fell asleep. Suddenly he woke up and noticed his son was gone. He started calling him but received no answer. Trembling, he climbed a hill to get a better view of the surrounding countryside. He kept calling, but the hoped for reply did not come. Then he saw a ravine. Quickly he walked over, peered over the edge and saw his son lying on the rocks below. Horrified, he climbed down and took the lifeless body of his son into his arms. Overcome with guilt he asked himself: “Why did I not stay awake? How could I carelessly fall asleep and allow this to happen?”

Today, many fathers and mothers are “sleeping” without care while their children are in great danger! Many sons and daughters are at great risk for being tempted and falling into sin while their parents are completely unaware. “They were tired and fell asleep,” our Lord said. O, would our slumbering Christianity allow itself to be awakened again by the Holy Spirit! And would this divine wake-up call lay hold of our families and the church! Jesus said: “And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mark 13:37). This, dear soul, is meant for you and me!

Friedrich Krebs

How to Overcome Crises of Faith

A crisis of faith is an experience in life in which a person may either fall or emerge matured and blessed. The Bible records crises of faith of many men and women. We not only learn about the crisis itself, but also how it was handled, and above all, how the affected people found their way out of the crisis. That is naturally fascinating for us readers.

Moses once experienced great difficulties merely for staying true to God's commands (Exodus 5). His faithfulness initially brought only a worsening of the situation. Such events can lead to a crisis of faith and even Moses could not simply shrug it off.

Joshua experienced a difficult crisis of faith when it appeared that his faith no longer worked. His experiences were suddenly contrary to God's promises (Joshua 7). Joshua's foundation had suddenly crumbled. Where was God? What was wrong? Why were his prayers no longer answered? Why did it seem that his decades-long beloved faith no longer made sense?

Job found himself in a crisis of faith after a series of severe catastrophes (Job 3:25–26). The greatest difficulty for Job was the assumption that his prayers were no longer answered. Why was this? How was he to bear this? (Job 30:20). Job especially suffered due to distress of his spirit. His spirit, his mind, and his soul all cried: "I cannot bear this any longer, I am done!" (see Job 7:11)

Do we know of times in our life where our spirit and our mind loudly cry: "I cannot bear this any longer," where we, similar to Job, are suffering due to the distress of our spirit? During such times we are more vulnerable than otherwise and more prone to true crises of faith. Due to extreme suffering, Job fell into a deep crisis of faith.

Shortly after his conversion, Paul experienced a crisis of faith because the church did not believe he was a disciple and remained wary of him (Acts 9:26).

Even though Paul's heart burned with love toward God and the church, the church was suspicious and rejected him. Paul was deeply disappointed. Had his con-

version not been as true and sound, he may have easily given up the faith at this point. This was not the only time Paul was severely disappointed (2 Timothy 4:16–17).

All of the people that we briefly studied found themselves in a crisis of faith at a certain point. However, not a single one of them was truly harmed or spiritually fell at the time. This was partly due to the inner position each had during the crisis:

- Moses overcame through earnest prayer
 - Joshua cleared out the obstacle of sin
 - Job remained patient and steadfast while his spirit was in distress.
 - Paul kept his focus on the resurrected Christ
- There was another reason why none of these fell:
- Psalm 31:7: "You have known my soul in adversities."
 - Psalm 94:18: "If I say, 'My foot slips,' Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up."

The reason why none of them fell and why we also do not need to fall is God's faithfulness, His fatherly love and His all-sufficient grace. God pays attention to the adversities of our soul and ensures that we can emerge from such times blessed and strengthened. More blessed than before and more able than ever to be a help to others.

To be a help to others? Yes, God allows us to go through crises of faith while serving Him so that we may gain the depth and maturity to support others in crisis and to be a help to them. Countless generations have found direction in one man, who went through such difficult crises that he could honestly say of himself: "My feet had almost stumbled." Who does not know Asaph, his crisis of faith and his breakthrough to a deeper faith (Psalm 73)?

Asaph's crisis of faith was due to facts that he could no longer understand. Disturbing facts that contradicted his faith. How could the carefree and successful lives of obviously ungodly people coincide with God's righteousness? Asaph could not deny this fact and it was un-

settling. This alone would not have bothered him had it not been for a second, more disturbing fact: his own, at times, incredibly difficult life. That struck at the foundation of his faith. He agonized over this unexplained “Why.”

Despite all the drama of Asaph’s crisis of faith, he nevertheless was not crushed, and has to this day been a blessing to countless people. For no matter how difficult Asaph’s situation was, he had advantages on his side. Advantages that we can have as well.

a. The faith at issue was his own. His faith was not something he had simply adopted from his parents and environment, something he had merely copied. That we can take from the context.

Asaph believed God, because he made an independent, personal decision to serve Him and to believe His Word. After considering all possible options, he clearly and without doubt decided to follow God. He did so with assurance that this was the right decision and it outshone all other options.

That was the nature of Asaph’s faith and it was a great advantage for Asaph during his crisis of faith. His faith was indeed under fire, but it was true and deep and that paid off in the end.

b. Asaph had yet another advantage: His faith had not become hollow over time. That can occur when other things gradually become more important to us than our relationship with God.

It was not that Asaph’s zeal for God had once ruled his life and then other things gradually took over.

A variety of things can cause someone to drift away from their faith by taking over an ever increasing part of his life. The faith that once played a major role is moved further and further into the background.

That was not the case with Asaph. His faith had not, over time, been displaced by something else. His faith was deep, true, and remained alive. This was a powerful advantage during the time of his difficult crisis.

c. The third strong advantage I will call “Asaph’s Life Jacket.” When a ship sinks, the people aboard can survive if they have a life jacket. It provides possibilities that otherwise would never exist.

Asaph’s lifejacket was the strength he found while in the sanctuary of God (Psalm 73:17). His agonising questions were answered, his stumbling feet were once again sure and his distraught soul found deep peace in God’s sanctuary, there where you take special time to approach God. Here God opened his eyes to the important puzzle pieces that had eluded him. Puzzle pieces that explained the whole picture, that stilled his mind and that once again brought rest to his soul.

Here he once again found God’s peace, peace that is mightier than the greatest crisis and more convincing than the strongest doubts (Philippians 4:7). However, this peace is not laying around on the street. We only find it when we take the time to draw near to God (James 4:8).

When reason fails and we can find no other explanations, then God’s peace can carry us, protect our life with God and more than compensate for everything that is difficult and not understood.

After spending some special moments in God’s presence, Jacob once said: “I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved” (Genesis 32:30). We can experience the same. That is one of the many reasons why it is vital for Christians to have daily devotions, where they take the time to draw especially near to God.

This is where our faith develops deep roots, here God makes our soul well, here the life jacket is produced that was so crucial even for Asaph.

Asaph’s life jacket reminds us: Take time for God, take time for prayer. Also take time to study God’s Word. God’s Word has a great pastoral depth that provides us with many examples of how to overcome crises of faith and attain a new depth in God’s service.

Christian Ress,
Herford, Germany

Just One More Opportunity

One evening as I was about to walk through the door of my house, I saw a young man, whose family I had known for many years, hurrying towards me. “My brother George is dying and is so scared of death!” he said with a trembling voice. Then he added: “Please come right away, the doctor said that he would not make it through the night.”

Immediately I went with him. His mother was waiting for us at the door. With tears running down her face she cried: “My poor dear son, my George! He is still so young and is already going to die. While he was healthy I begged him so many times to think of the condition of his soul. And now I am afraid it is too late!”

Silently, I followed her into the semi-dark room where the young man was lying. He had difficulty breathing, his eyes were half closed, and he seemed not to notice what was going on around him. His sister was sitting next to him on the bed and moistened his dry lips. Suddenly he opened his eyes wide, looked around confused and whispered “Where am I?”—“You are at home with your mother, dear George,” his mother said quietly while gently caressing his hand.—“And I am very sick?”—“Yes, my son, you are very sick,” she replied.

With a look of inexpressible fear he looked at his mother and said: “Mother, I won’t die, will I? O, I can’t, I can’t die!” and his head dropped back on the pillow and he lost consciousness. When he came to, his mother said: “Mr. M. is here!” His gaze fell on me. “What should I ask God for you, George?” I asked. “O pray that I have one more opportunity, only one!” He sank into unconsciousness again.

We knelt down beside his bed and I prayed to the Lord asking Him to restore George’s health and to grant his wish to get one more opportunity to receive salvation for his soul. While we were praying the poor young man

mumbled with a broken voice: “Not die . . . I cannot die . . . one more chance . . . just one more . . . !”

Days passed, where George hovered between life and death. Then there was a turn for the better. He began to recover. His strength began to return and soon he felt well enough to stand up.

The whole family rejoiced! God had heard our prayers and granted George the desire of his heart. But with the return of his health, the seriousness of his soul’s condition, that he had seen so clearly on his deathbed faded more and more. He was afraid to die without the Savior, but not afraid to live without Him. He was grateful for everything that had been done for him during his illness, but now he didn’t want to hear about the solemn hour on the threshold of eternity where he asked God to give him just one more chance to get right with Him.

When he had fully recovered, he continued his careless life as before and decided against the will of his mother, to become a sailor. Once again I tried to stir his heart and conscience. “So you really want to go to sea, without God, and without the consent of your mother? Don’t be deceived, God is not mocked!”—“O,” he answered, “I have not abandoned my plan to get right with God. But right now I want to go to sea. When I am back we can talk about this again.” He shook my hand, and soon boarded a ship and sailed away.

After a few days his mother received a letter, not written by the hand of her son, but by the master of the vessel which her son had boarded. During a maneuver in a storm in the Bay of Biscay, George had gone overboard and could not be rescued. His last chance to accept salvation was gone forever. Of course, he had thought to become a Christian sooner or later, but where was he now?

Dear Reader, use the opportunity you have now, to get right with God. Tomorrow may be too late.

The Dangerous Door

“Oh, Will, do tell us a story! There’s still enough time before the school-bell rings.” Harry, Kate, Bob, and little Peace crowded about their older cousin until he declared himself ready to do anything they wished.

“Very well,” said Will. “I will tell you about two dangerous doors I have seen.”

“Oh, that’s good!” exclaimed Bob. “Were they all iron and heavy bars? And if someone went through, did they shut and keep them there forever?”

“No; the doors I mean are pink or red, and when they open you can see a row of little servants standing all in white, and behind them is a little lady dressed in crimson.”

“What? That’s amazing!” cried Kate. “I should like to go in myself.”

“Ah! It is what comes out of these doors that makes them so dangerous. They need a strong guard on each side, or else there is great trouble.”

“Why, what comes out?” said little Peace, with wondering eyes.

“When the guards are away,” said Cousin Will, “I have known some things to come out sharper than arrows, and they make terrible wounds. Just lately I saw two pretty little doors, and one opened and the little lady began to talk like this: ‘What a stuck-up thing Lucy Waters is! And did you see that ugly dress made out of her sister’s old one?’ ‘Oh yes,’ said the other little crimson lady from the other door, ‘and what a turned-up nose she has!’ Then poor Lucy, who was around the corner, ran

home and cried all evening.”

“I know what you mean,” cried Kate, turning slightly red.

“Were you listening?”

“Oh, you mean our mouths are doors!” exclaimed Harry, “and the crimson lady is Miss Tongue; but who are the guards, and where do they come from?”

“You may ask the Great King. This is what you must say: ‘Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips’ (KJV). Then He will send Patience to stand on one side and Love on the other, and no unkind word will dare come out.”

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The Beautiful Way



If You Would Believe

Part 11

Compiled by Hartmut Sonnenberg

The Wholesome Three

During the war, our parents were under threat from the Nazi regime for continuing to spread the Gospel. At a hearing, a confident Nazi mocked: “Following our victory in the war, the Bible will be found only in a museum! It’s too late to reprogram *you*, but your children will no longer believe these fables.”

All three predictions were not fulfilled: The Nazis did not win the war, and at no time in history has the Bible been more widely distributed than today. And thirdly, their children still eagerly read the Bible, attempting to do everything written in it, as father’s inscription in his first personal Bible reads:

“Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.” (Joshua 1:8 NIV)

Our parents repeatedly encouraged us to study the Bible every day. “And if the time should come when the Bible is taken away from us,” mother emphasized, “then it is important to have memorized Scripture. In the last two World Wars we lost everything we owned, yet no one could take from us what we had learned. So children, study and learn diligently! Whatever it takes, we will support you in your studies.”

In addition to daily Bible study, father emphasized the need for intimate prayer. He was in the habit of praying out loud in his personal devotions. “When I pray out loud, it helps me to focus my thoughts,” he explained. Consequently, on occasion we were privy

to his private conversations with God. Overhearing his private prayers awakened the desire to commune with God as he did. Often father spoke of a concept he called “praying through.” That meant either that God had unmistakably revealed the specific outcome, or that God had given an inner peace, knowing that the prayer was heard and God would execute the outcome in accordance with His will.

But not always is God’s answer in accordance with the request. Father recounted his experience with intercessory prayer for a sister on the brink of the grave. Earnest prayer ascended to the throne of God for her healing. Yet, her condition remained precariously unchanged, which led to further intense prayer and fasting. One day God specifically answered, “It is not my will that the sister be healed.” Shortly thereafter, resting in God’s will, the sister went home to be with the Lord. “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven” (Matthew 6:10).

Prayer reached into everyday occurrences. On a visit to California in the summer of 1973, father assisted the youngest son with the conversion of a van into a motorhome. The challenge was to precisely cut and install a one-piece backsplash around the kitchen sink, with the radius at the top significantly sharper than at the bottom, and left and right the splash had to fit exactly—a complicated undertaking for laypersons. The installation was successful, and father asked, “Tell me, my son, do you pray before you undertake



a challenging task such as this?” Pleased by his son’s affirmative response, he answered, “That’s good, my son! Continue to do that. I have practiced that all my life.” Praying on all occasions!

Matthew 19 gives an account of a young man asking Jesus, “What do I still lack?” Similarly, in the context of Bible study and prayer one might ask, “What do I still lack?”

Hebrews 10:24-25 stresses the importance of not giving up meeting together. Church attendance was never a decision to be revisited each time. It was simply taken for granted. Whenever possible, we would attend the services.

One Sunday morning I overheard how father responded to a dinner invitation for the following Sunday. He said, “We would be pleased to accept your kind invitation, but with one condition: that the preparations do not keep anyone from attending the service.” Our parents illustrated the importance of regular church attendance with a common analogy: A coal removed from the fire soon extinguishes, but placed back with the other coals, it again begins to glow.

One Wednesday evening, the youngest experienced quite an unexpected outcome in regard to church

attendance. It was during final exams, when he was in inner conflict: Should he continue studying or get up and go to church. It would be the first time that he would skip a church service in his four years of study at the University of Alberta. He shared his battle with his mother, who suggested that maybe this time he should stay home to study. Scant minutes after the parents had locked the door on their way to church, the doorbell

rang. There, in the open door, stood a persistent life insurance agent who planted one foot on the inside of the threshold, followed shortly by the second foot. Now inside, he was unwilling to leave until the student reluctantly put his signature to a life insurance contract from Canada Life. The scent of the agent had not yet dissipated when mother and father returned from the prayer meeting. He had stayed home—yet gained nothing!

The wholesome three:

- Daily Bible study
- Earnest prayer on all occasions
- Regular church attendance

The Wholesome Three: Daily Bible Study Earnest Prayer On All Occasions Regular Church Attendance

Christians in Battle

“Watch, stand fast in the faith, be brave, be strong.” (1 Corinthians 16:13)

Be Watchful

The apostle calls to us: “Watch!” The life of a Christian is portrayed in the Holy Scriptures as a military campaign and continual battle. In this battle, it is essential for a Christian to be watchful and sober, for the enemy is very cunning and threatens our soul. We must take God’s word to heart: “Do not love the world or the things in the world” (1 John 2:15). We must lead a life of continuous and strict denial of world and self in order to fight the world as our enemy. Therefore, always be watchful!

Stand Fast in the Faith

The apostle further exhorts “Stand fast in the faith!” If the preparations for the battle have been completed, then the battle itself must be carried out as well. The great task we have been given is to victoriously cause the enemy to retreat. The powerful ally which allows us to meet this challenge is faith. It is full of strength that can conquer the world. Living faith is not only an affirmation of the Gospel of Christ, but also a living, convicting, and experiential matter of the heart. Faith is spirit and life. It grasps and holds fast to the blessed life and ministry, to the suffering and death of the crucified and resurrected Christ, Whom the Apostle Paul praises: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!” (Philippians 4:13).

Be Strong

“Be brave, be strong!” It is precisely in our time that we need steadfast strength. To oppose the evil trends

that steadily press onward, a sustaining power, a sacred bulwark is required. We possess it if we hold fast to the unadulterated Word of God. Then we will fulfill our life’s calling despite all hostile predominance. With God, a Christian is strong, a hero, and will always be victorious. Let us stand fast on the eternal rock of salvation, Christ. Let us be brave and steadfast, not subdued by any doubt or uncertainty of victory. It is imperative that we meet the enemy confident of victory in order to conquer him.

“God is my strength and power!”

This was an answered prayer for David, who experienced it in countless situations (2 Samuel 22:33). He lived in uninterrupted communion with the Source of strength and acquired help when he needed it.

We too can experience wonderful answer to prayer, where God unexpectedly helps us in the onslaught of adverse conditions, so that we profess in amazement: “God is my strength and power!” It is even more precious to experience God’s strength in the most difficult battle of all: the battle against sin.

Have you ever truly begun to ask God for the armor that He provides for His children for this battle? It is God’s armor, not our own that we are allowed to wear. It comes directly from the armoury of the Lord of Hosts. He Himself is the Truth with which we are to gird ourselves and that sets us free. His righteousness is our shield. Confidently place the helmet of salvation on your head, believe in victory and fight in His strength!

When Satan Joined the Church

Many people do not give Satan his due credit. Satan is second only to God in intelligence and power. He has only one purpose and one single goal in mind: to hinder God's plan, to impede God's business on earth, to corrupt, and to destroy. This has been his sole ambition and intention throughout the ages.

In the days of the apostles and first churches, Satan attacked the church through great and mighty persecution, but he was not successful in hindering the work of Jesus Christ or destroying those in His church. On the contrary, it has aptly been said that the blood of martyrs became the seed of the church.

Satan then changed his approach. He, the old snake, thought up a new method: he joined the church. He introduced many false teachings and through them caused division. He understood in a masterful way how to manipulate the weaknesses of people in his favor and for his purpose. Throughout time, he has been working to erode the church from the inside, to rob it of the message of Jesus Christ's saving power and grace, and to offer the church any kind of substitution for it.

The devil has no objections to people being religious, as long as they dismiss the saving power

of Christ's blood. He has no objections to people being "good" or even "pious," as some say, as long as their "goodness" and "piety" leave them in their sins.

It was not drunkards or prostitutes who crucified Jesus; no, it was the religious people of the time. It was the spiritual leaders who went after Jesus and who would not rest until they had brought Him to the cross. Is it not also similar today? Our greatest danger often lies with those that are religious and pious, indeed, leaders in spiritual matters —yet without Christ. The anti-Christian influences of today's modernistic unbelief are already deeply entrenched in church organizations.

God help all His children to acknowledge that we are responsible to the Lord Jesus Christ and that everything revolves around Him; that in no other name is salvation, healing, or rescue, but in the name of Jesus. He spilled His blood for our salvation. Yes, He bought us with His own precious blood. May He give us the gift of discernment to test the spirits and recognize the "wolf in sheep's clothing." Let us be faithful to the Lord and be alert and pray, even in these days of decline and disbelief!

Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany

August 20 – 27, 2016

“I was so glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’ . . . Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek your good.” Psalm 122:1,9

It was a great privilege for us to attend the camp meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany. As children, we often heard our parents reminisce about camp meetings they attended, however for us it was something unfamiliar. During this week a large suitable conference center located in the heart of the Swabian Alps was available for this purpose. This venue was in a quiet part of rural Blaubeuren surrounded by small farms and a vast countryside. Conference facilities, catering, and accommodations were offered for the guests. Here we experienced a time of rest and refreshment for our soul.

While at the camp meeting we were able to gather together with other Christians in an undisturbed environment. We met many new faces and had uplifting conversations. Every morning we gathered together for morning devotions and prayed for the Lord’s blessing. We also praised God for His great love and presence among us. This was truly a time of spiritual edification under the leading of the Holy Spirit. We heard the Gospel and sang songs together. The biblical doctrine was portrayed and brought near to our hearts by several brothers. Our motto from Philippians 2:5 “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” was a constant reminder to us. Through one sermon entitled “Sanctification in Daily Life,” God revealed to us certain points where we needed to do better and were able to make a new commitment.

On Thursday we studied the special theme: “Divine healing.” Several souls were inspired to obey the biblical truth found in James 5:14-15, which was then put into practice during the service. The needs were brought before the Lord as individuals were anointed and prayed over by attending pastors. We as the congregation sup-

ported them in quiet prayer. God gave His blessing and healed according to His will.

Not all services were formatted in the same manner. On two days, in the afternoon there were separate services for children, youth, seniors—and then all others formed the fourth group. In this last group we were called to examine our attitude towards the local church. The truth that Jesus Christ is the foundation of the church was reinforced. During the second service we were encouraged to sincerely consider what type of inheritance we could pass on to our children. The most profitable inheritance is the pure truth of the gospel and the treasures that we lay up in heaven. As parents, may God help us to ponder on these important messages. In other services, many brothers and sisters testified and thanked God for His goodness. This was very encouraging and rewarding.

In the evening, after a day of bountiful spiritual blessings, many brothers and sisters gathered together and sang with joyful hearts in either the German or the Russian language. Since the weather was very warm, our physical bodies were refreshed with watermelon and tea.

Through the message of the last service, we were encouraged to “Stand firm for Christ” in the doctrine and in our service for Him. We were richly blessed through these services which have made us think about our personal lives and ask Jesus to help us serve Him in all truth and obedience. May God be glorified for His priceless blessing. We can truly proclaim: it was a holiday for our soul—all inclusive!

Irwin and Carol Kakoschke, Wetaskiwin, Alberta



More photos, reports and sermons can be found at: www.lagerversammlung.de

Prayer Week Topics 2017

Through the testimony of the Bible, we can clearly see that Jesus, as the Son of God, was continually focused on doing the will of God and maintaining an untarnished relationship with His Father. Statements like: “I must be about My Father’s business” (Luke 2:49); “I have come to do the will of Him who sent Me” (John 6:38); “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30) confirm this. This is exactly what our position and relationship to Christ and to God the Father should be like. The following prayer themes steer us in this direction. May the Lord help us to reflect on this and give us His blessing!

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener CA

MONDAY, JANUARY 2ND, 2017

I. OUR FAITH AND OUR HIGHLY PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

1. The Bible speaks of a “good conscience toward God” (1 Peter 3:21). How valuable this is!

But every fault and every wrong destroys this wonderful, peaceful relationship. – Isaiah 59:2

2. Revelation 2:1-7 speaks of a church without love. How is our love toward God and His Word?

3. Casualness and indifference are the precursor to inner decay. Compare Luke 18:1 and 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

We pray: (Earnest times require earnest prayer. Daniel 6:11.)

a) For noticeable deepening of faith and greater love to God in our personal service to Him.

b) For those who have possibly stumbled and are visibly “straining at rowing” Mark 6:48.

c) We intercede especially for those who are imminently dying in a spiritual sense. Revelation 3:2.

TUESDAY, JANUARY 3RD, 2017

II. OUR STANCE TOWARD THE WILL OF GOD

1. Is it really our sincere desire and prayer to live and act in accordance with God’s will?

2. Does the will of God actually still occur in all decisions and areas of our lives?

3. Jesus prioritized the will of God as most important with His disciples and before all the world.

He Himself could say: “I have given you an example” (John 13:15). (See Matthew 26:39-44.)

We pray:

a) For a clear and deep recognition of God’s will in all personal situations and life’s questions.

b) For grace and courage, and for the steadfast resolve to remain submissive to the will of God in all circumstances, difficulties, trials, and hardships. In this is our victory!

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4TH, 2017

III. OUR PERSONAL STANCE TO THE CHURCH (as well as the local congregation)

1. The local congregation is the place where God's glory should dwell. Psalm 26:8. (We should think about this.)

If the Holy Spirit rules there, the church will please God and be a "beloved habitation" of the children of God.

2. T. Dwight testifies: "For her my tears shall fall; for her my prayers ascend; to her my cares and toils be given, till toils and cares shall end." This is an exemplary attitude toward the church!

3. Jesus also speaks of the "desolation of the holy place." Matthew 24:15. This can appear suddenly, "standing where it ought not" Mark 13:14. Grievances of this kind are clearly shown in Revelation 2 and 3.

We pray:

a) For the elders and servants of the congregations and their great responsibility in the service of the Lord. THEY are the first to be taken to task in regard to grievances that arise (according to Revelation 2 and 3).

b) For a pure faith and a spirit of prayer in all congregations.

c) For timely recognition of potential grievances. Even then, a personal attitude that is God-pleasing is important and necessary. And the standard is the WORD of GOD in all things!

THURSDAY, JANUARY 5TH, 2017

IV. OUR MISSION FIELDS

1. The work in other countries, among other languages and customs, can be very difficult. People let themselves be diverted, for example, by their own opinions, views, or even false teachings. But whoever wants to recognize the truth must be ready to separate himself from these errors!

2. From the New Testament, we know what the apostles went through in the mission fields. Similarly, many missionaries never returned home again after great troubles, struggles, and sorrow.

We pray:

a) For growth and fruit from the laborious sowing of the Word of God in all mission fields.

We think of the brothers and sisters and their work in the Philippines, Africa, South America, Mexico, and Kazakhstan.

b) For all peoples and nations who still have not encountered the light of God's truth.

c) For the increasing darkness and godlessness in our country. Our LORD can certainly still save people from the thick walls of unbelief.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 6TH, 2017

V. OUR FELLOW MEN and BROTHERS and SISTERS IN CHRIST WHO ARE FACING DANGER, DIFFICULTIES, AFFLICTIONS, and SORROW

1. Note the special reminder Paul gives to Timothy in 1 Timothy 2:1-5.

2. We want to thank God especially for the value of *intercession*, and want to practice it.

3. The fact that Jesus is really still the same today and will remain the same forever (Hebrews 13:8) should give us strength and courage to pray without ceasing. Colossians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:17.

rently seems hopeless. We think of coming trials, discouragement, etc. (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).

b) For those who are in great inner trouble and who are in danger, for example, of unbelief, doubt, an inner hardening of heart, or those who have consciously chosen to be eternally lost. However, read James 5:19-20.

c) For the many sick in our circle of acquaintances and family, and in all congregations, both within our country or abroad. We especially pray for the "tender mercy of God" for those who have been sick for a long time!

We pray:

a) For all who are despised, threatened, oppressed, and persecuted because of their faith and whose situation cur-

The Time Is Short

This time will pass, the end draws near,
each one gets some reward;
all those who live unrighteous here,
reject the teachings of the Lord
can not expect but dread and fear
when words of judgment they will hear.

The time will pass, earth's treasures fade,
eternity draws near;
there is a joy beyond the grave
for all God's people here.
There'll be rejoicing, not dismay
For those who've walked the narrow way.

The time will pass, the end will come,
so let us watch and pray.
With hearts and hands, God's will be done,
Live holy ev'ry day;
Then after time, you too will see
God's glory in eternity.

The time will pass, it won't stand still.
So with the end in mind,
Let us be true to do God's will
And leave all else behind.
Let's rest in God, let come what may,
So that we'll see His face someday.

E. J.