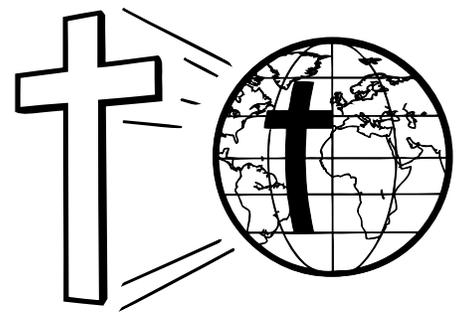


Foundation of Faith



GODS' FELLOW WORKERS

Nighttime Visitors

Spiritual Gifts

Talkativeness

The Devil's Furniture

Your Kingdom Come

In, or out of Service?

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Editorial

We sometimes hear the expression, “too many leaders and not enough followers.” Yes, there are people who always want to be the leader. And if that isn’t possible, then they don’t participate at all.

Among the 12 disciples, this discussion of which one would be considered the greatest among them, came up. Then the Lord Jesus replied: “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves” (Luke 22:25-26).

In the kingdom of God, we have one Lord, one King, one Master! Jesus Christ is the Lord of heaven and of earth! He alone has all power and authority from the Father! The Son of God must be given priority in all things. He alone is the head and the chief builder of His Church. We all have the privilege of being His servants, slaves, and fellow workers. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we belong to His Church, the Church of God, which He purchased through His own blood.

The apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians: “For we are God’s fellow workers” (1 Corinthians 3:9). What a special scripture! We are fellow workers whether our gifts and talents are many or few. Just as our body has many parts, each with different tasks to do, so the body of Christ also has many members, and each member has their tasks, whether they are big or small.

We should be fellow workers and faithful stewards in God’s vineyard. We should not bury the talent entrusted to us, but do what we are capable of out of love for the Lord, for this is pleasing in God’s sight. He desires to testify of everyone:

“Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (Matthew 25:23).

H. D. Nimz

Nighttime Visitors

“I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ . . .” (Revelation 1:9).

It was nighttime. In a large city in the middle of China, a servant of God sat with his Bible before him. For four years he had been working as a missionary in that province without having achieved any mentionable success. The many souls that were still imprisoned in spiritual darkness discouraged him. So he asked God for comfort and strength.

Then, he heard a very quiet knock on the door. Cautiously, he opened it. He discovered a dark figure lying on the ground. He heard a weak voice speaking. “Won’t you come inside?” beckoned the missionary when he recognized a young man who had recently bought a Bible. The missionary offered him a chair, but was astonished that the man could only crawl with great effort and was unable to rise to stand.

“You are in pain!” exclaimed the missionary, when he saw the deathly-pale face that grimaced with every movement. “What happened? Please tell me!” During the course of the conversation, the missionary pulled out a mattress and helped the young man to lay down on it.

“I come to ask you to pray for me,” and then his pale face lit up with joy, “God has shown me His love. He offered His one and only Son for me and gave me His peace. A year ago I heard you speak about this. My friends, however, said that it was not true. I bought myself the Great Father’s book and His Spirit spoke directly to my heart through His Word and it echoed there.”

“And what did your relatives say?” the missionary asked as he took the young man’s hand and thought about his highly esteemed father and brother.

“Oh, they don’t understand me. They wanted to drive this ‘new idea’ out of me”—“And that is why they beat and abused you?”

“Don’t judge them. They don’t know what they do,” answered the young man, who was again overcome by intense pain. The missionary gave him some water and attempted to make his bed as comfortable as possible.

“Before sunrise, however, I must return otherwise they will become angry again. But, now we want to speak about God’s Son again, the One who has done so much for me.”

The missionary sat beside the young man and was astonished at what the Lord had done for this heathen soul in darkness and how godly light had broken through with great power. “Can I help you to find a safe place to stay?”

With a smile, the young man answered: “No, that is not God’s will. My father and brother want to know if my Savior will stand by me. And He promised to stay by me as He stood by Daniel and Stephen.

“The One who was by my side during these two terrible months will not forsake me now! My relatives who know me as a fearful person are surprised that I am remaining faithful. But they don’t know Him, who is my strength.”

Before daybreak, the missionary supported the young man as he prepared to return home and committed him to the Lord. His soul was full of thanks that this young man stood so firm in his faith and that not even the threat of death could shake him.

Days passed; then there was another knock on the missionary’s door during the night and the young man’s servant entered with this message: “My young master commanded me to tell you that he went to be with his heavenly Father and now all is well.” Several minutes of silence followed. “Did he suffer greatly? Was he mistreated?”

With a sigh, the Chinese servant nodded. Then, with an urgent look he placed a finger to his lips, begging the missionary not to betray him.

Eleven or twelve months passed when the missionary was once again summoned by a knock on the door. At first glimpse, he recognized the older brother of the young Chinese man. He had often prayed for him and his father.

“I come to tell you that since the death of my brother I have studied the book of your religion in order to discover where he received this unusual power to remain firm in his suffering. At that time, I read for my own sake.



Now I read it for the sake of the One of which it speaks: Jesus Christ, God's Son, for now I know and love Him. Now I come to tell you that I have decided to follow Him. Now I know who took my brother's fear of death. He said: "If anyone keeps My word he shall never see death" (John 8:51). "O, please teach me to know Him better!"

Now this older brother is a faithful Christian, who serves the same Lord who caused his naturally timid brother to become a brave hero and allowed him to faithfully testify and suffer for Him.

Let us be inspired by this example of faithfulness even in suffering and death!

The Impact of a Tract

A Christian sent a tract titled "Prepare to meet your God!" to a man who was known for his wicked, reckless life.

"Who dares to send me this tract," he shouted, ready to throw it into the fire. But no, he decided to play a prank on one of his friends. Disguising his handwriting, he placed it in an envelope and sent it off.

His friend received the tract, cursing it as "pious nonsense." Ready to rip it up, his eyes were drawn to the words: "Prepare to meet your God!" His conscience was awakened. An arrow from the quiver of God had pierced his heart. He read the entire tract, and when he was done, he

realized that he was a sinner and prayed to God for salvation. Now he thought about all his godless friends.

Again, this tract was placed in an envelope, with good intentions this time, and sent to another godless friend. Amazingly enough, this friend embraced the truth and received salvation.

Both men proved themselves to be active and faithful Christians in their daily walk. Their hearts and lives had been transformed by God's Word and Spirit.

This is how God can bless His Word through an inconspicuous leaflet.

Are we also concerned about the salvation of souls?

Barnabas, God's Fellow Worker

We are thankful that Jesus Christ brought us salvation and gave us the command: “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He chose His disciples for this mission. In addition to the first apostles, we also find others named in the Holy Scriptures. From these, the Lord selected a special worker. We read that the church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch: “[A]nd they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. . . . For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:22, 24).

Who was this man?

Barnabas was a Levite from Cyprus. His real name was Joses. However, the apostles called him Barnabas, which means “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

Specific characteristics of this man

Barnabas was selfless and ready to make sacrifices. He owned some land, which he sold, and “brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet” (Acts 4:37).

As a collaborator of God’s, he had a heart for God’s kingdom and for spreading the gospel. Barnabas’ con-

cern was for the church of the living God. He saw the many lost souls and knew that this harvest was ready for reaping.

In a miraculous encounter with Christ, Saul from Tarsus, a hate-filled persecutor of the church, was converted before the gates of Damascus. Shortly after his conversion, he began preaching in Damascus about Jesus, the Son of God, but the Jews wanted to kill him. Therefore, he quietly fled at night to Jerusalem. However, the members of the church did not believe that he had become a Christian and did not trust him.

Here we once again find Barnabas. He took Saul under his wing, brought him to the apostles, and told them how Saul had found the Lord, had repented of his sins, and was now a true follower of Jesus. Because Barnabas acted as an advocate for Saul, the church in Jerusalem received and heartily accepted him.

I already alluded to Barnabas realizing that the crops were ripe for harvest. He was a man with foresight. After some time, he set out to Tarsus, in the north, from Antioch, even though dangers existed along this road, where Saul had traveled after the persecutions had begun in Jerusalem. We read in Acts 11:25-26: “Then Barnabas de-

parted for Tarsus to seek Saul. And when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

What wonderfully blessed work these two servants of God did. It illustrates what King David said: “As for the saints who are on the earth, they are the excellent ones, in whom is all My delight” (Psalm 16:3).

Even though the gospel had begun its triumphal movement from Jerusalem since Pentecost, a tremendous persecution came over the church of God after the stoning of Stephen. Therefore, a new center was created in Antioch, in the northern part of Syria. This was the starting point for the first mission trip. Here, too, we see in the scriptures the names of some of the teachers, preachers, and prophets mentioned, including Barnabas: “Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon, who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:1-2).

The Holy Spirit was working, and under the guidance of Barnabas, the young Saul from Tarsus became the apostle Paul. The Lord used the older collaborator to work with Paul, whom God had chosen to be His special instrument.

What was the secret godly blessing of this collaborator?

Barnabas had experienced true salvation through Christ. He knew the word of God, had made himself completely available to God, and he was “full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (Acts 11:24).

Barnabas was a pious man. He was honest, sincere, dependable, ready to help, compassionate, and industrious. He was a good person, as the Lord had said: “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things” (Matthew 12:35).

Barnabas led a godly life through a faithful, humble walk. God testified that as His servant and collaborator, he had borne godly fruit. This servant of God had a good testimony and was a blessed influence in his surroundings.

Dear Reader, heaven is full of godly people. Our prayer should be: Lord, help us to serve You with all our heart that we may also be members of this group of obedient servants and collaborators of God.

H. D. Nimz

Bear One Another's Burdens

“Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Gobat, a missionary to Abyssinia, was asked by a professor at a meeting in Strasbourg: “What did you do when you were in a crisis and were distressed?” Gobat answered: “I fled to a lonely location, often in a cave, and let an image of everyone I knew pass before my eyes. I noted their needs and distresses and prayed for them. Often, before I ended my praying, my being occupied with others' needs helped me to overcome my own needs.”

The professor was quiet and deep in thought. At that time, he was going through a period of extreme melan-

choly, and no doctor was able to help him. Then he did as Gobat had done. During the time of his own needs, he thought about the needs and sorrows of others and took these to heart. Consequently, his heart became light, free, and joyful.

He wrote to an emotionally disturbed friend, who had unsuccessfully sought for healing in a clinic for a long time, to tell her what he had heard from Gobat and how Gobat's message had helped him. She also followed Gobat's message and was healed in body and soul.

Dear Reader, would you not also like to try this prescription?

Spiritual Gifts

There is so much work to be done for the Lord. Every child of God is needed and can help with the workload. The tasks are divided and assigned by the Holy Spirit as He sees fit. Discover your assignment and complete your work out of love for the Lord.

The Lord Jesus has not only called us and redeemed us, but He has also chosen us for service. We are to be the salt and light of the world, a blessing among a fallen humanity. From a spiritual perspective, we are not able to produce any godly fruit by relying on ourselves. We need God's help. Indeed, spiritual gifts are an absolute necessity. In 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, Paul writes: "Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually. And God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way."

Spiritual gifts are necessary because the Church cannot prosper through natural gifts alone. All the natural power in the world cannot save from sin or sanctify even a single person. More than human wisdom is needed to proclaim the Word of God effectively and to further the work of the Church of God on earth. The body of Christ, which is the Church, must make use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

Our natural body is kept alive by the circulation of blood within us. The Church, the spiritual body, is made alive through "the love of God [that] has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us" (Romans 5:5). It is the love of God in us that unites us into one body in Christ. Just like the parts of our natural body are enabled to move and to work, so the gifts of the Spirit enable the body of Christ to function and be effective.

There are different gifts in the body of Christ, and they are all to be used in the right relationship to each

other. The apostles, missionaries, and evangelists are the feet of the Church, Christ's body. They bring the message of salvation into new areas. "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who proclaims peace, who brings glad tidings of good things, who proclaims salvation, who says to Zion, 'Your God reigns'" (Isaiah 52:7). They prepare the way so that the gospel can be introduced into places where it has not been proclaimed before. This is needed for the spread of the gospel of peace.

God's prophets are the eyes of the church. Agabus saw that there would be a drought, which occurred in the days of the Apostle Paul. Paul foretold things about the return of Christ and also that a falling away would occur prior to it. Peter described the end of the world and the joys of a new heaven and a new earth. In Revelation, John wrote the history of the Church. He showed how the Church would be victorious throughout time and culminated his vision with scenes of heaven and the home of the blessed.

The pastors and the teachers are the mouth through which God speaks so that His will is proclaimed. Jesus told His disciples to go and preach that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Men and women who have a strong faith, so that healing and miracles occur, are the hands of the body of Christ. Through them, God lifts up the weary, restores the fallen, heals the sick, and cares for the dying. Those children of God who have the natural ability to lead are placed in the body so that they can be stewards to oversee God's work.

Every child of God has his or her place in the body of Christ, His Church, helping the body to function effectively. They are to be willing and ready to do what du-

ties and functions the Lord has set for them, according to the gifts He has given them. Those whose duties are not as visible as others' are still essential and just as important. Blessed is the person who recognizes where the Holy Spirit wishes to use him or her and who is willing to be used by God in whatever capacity He wills. Blessed is the person who does God's will with joy.

We are to earnestly desire the best gifts. The reason for our striving must come from a sincere love for God

and His kingdom. Love for God and for lost souls is the foundation on which the gifts of the Spirit can prosper and flourish.

Dear Reader, examine your environment and recognize what the needs of the Church are. Then put yourselves totally in the hands of God that you may fill the role that God has for you, for the benefit of the Church.

A. J. K.

We are His Witnesses

The New Testament church stayed alive primarily because it did not stop testifying of what Jesus had done for it. On the streets of Jerusalem, Peter fearlessly preached: "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know . . . This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses" (Acts 2:21-22, 32). With these words, Peter declared himself a witness to the resurrection of his Lord and Master. Jesus had called Peter to become a fisher of men. The other disciples, too, were called to teach, preach, and testify for their Lord.

Immediately upon his conversion, Paul committed all of his efforts to serving the Lord and his neighbors. He began this work in the same way that any other sinner must, namely by asking: "Lord, what do You want me to do?" (Acts 9:6) God had asked him: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" (Acts 9:4)

Instead of saying: "Lord, what do You want me to do?" many people today say: "Lord, I want to do something for you but . . ."—"Lord, I want to live for you if . . ." If God calls us, He expects a different answer: "Lord, I surrender to you as a living, holy sacrifice." (See Romans 12:1.)

Even children can be witnesses for Christ. When an altar call was given during a service, an eight-year-old girl approached a big, strong man and asked him to come to the Lord and seek salvation. Sweat beading his forehead, he went to the altar and sought God.

Philip led the eunuch from Ethiopia to the Lord, in a carriage on a hot desert road. He laid out the Word to

this man and then said: "If you believe with all your heart . . ." (Acts 8:37). The following confession of faith was the result of Philip's efforts. Philip was indeed a true witness of his Lord and Savior.

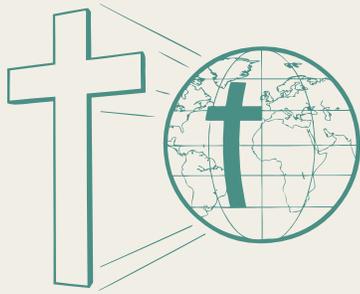
How many opportunities to lead a soul out of the darkness of sin to God have you already missed? Jesus spoke of the field that is ripe for harvest and of the lack of workers. He commanded us to go and win people for the Lord. We are to be a light for Him, as it says in Matthew 5:16: "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven."

Paul and Silas testified to the jailer in the prison at Philippi and as a result he and his entire house became believers. On a different occasion, Paul spoke to King Agrippa. The king was so touched by the words that he answered: "You almost persuade me to become a Christian" (Acts 26:28). He was almost convinced. But everyone who is "almost persuaded" nonetheless remains a sinner and will be lost without sincerely repenting and accepting Christ.

Jesus and His disciples went to the people.—A child of God once witnessed for Christ in a shoe store in the city of Boston. That spoke to a young man, and he sought God. This young man was D. L. Moody, whom the Lord was able to use as an instrument to show many dear souls the way to salvation.

Peter said: "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts 4:20).—Let us also be true witnesses for the Lord with our words and our deeds, be it in the local congregation, in the workplace, in the neighborhood, in our families, or wherever the Lord gives us an opportunity!

F. B.



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

In, or Out of Service?

A song writer once wrote: “Lord I stand prepared to serve you. All my strength is surrendered to you. Yes, for time and eternity I want to serve only You!” Can you say this with full conviction?

We use assorted tools to help us in our various jobs. However, the individual tools are only useful if they have been properly maintained. Some tools have various parts, and each part must be in its proper place in order to function as a whole.

The sons of the prophets came to Elisha and said that they wanted to build a new dwelling place. Their teacher, Elisha, gave his consent, and they enthusiastically tackled the job. As one of the men was cutting down a tree, the iron ax head fell into the Jordan River (see 2 Kings 6:1-6). This tool could no longer be used. The ax was only useful as long as it was attached to the handle. It could not fulfill its purpose lying at the bottom of the Jordan River.

We sometimes come to a gas station and see the label “out of service” on a pump. Sometimes it can be found at an ATM machine or in other places. These “out of service” labels can teach us an important lesson about the Christian ministry.

Many so-called Christians are not standing in service with regard to their testimony. When one observes their life and their relationship to God, one could label them “out of service.” How sad when people willingly step out of the service of their great Lord and King, or if it comes

to the point where the Lord must place them out of service!

Just as the ax must remain attached to the handle to be of service, so the born-again Christian has to maintain a close relationship with God to be useful in His service.

God has an appointed place for each of His people. And it is in this place where we can be most useful to the Lord. Just as a Christian cannot have a relationship with God according to his own terms and still be pleasing to Him, so he also cannot simply choose any place to be of service to God.

The prophet Elijah had once entered a lonely cave at Mount Horeb when the word of the Lord came to him, saying: “What are you doing here, Elijah?” (1 Kings 19:13). One can serve God everywhere, but of what use are we to God if we are sitting in a cave or lying like an ax head at the bottom of a river? In such a case, have we not just gone “out of service”?

Whoever releases the hand and will of God becomes ineffective and profitless, and his life loses its value. Someone said, “Outside of the will of God there is no success; within the will of God there is no failure.” If we step out of our divinely appointed position, we no longer have a



Outside the will of God there is no success; Within the will of God there is no failure!

fruitful ministry, and to God this means “out of service”!

Jesus said to His disciples: “As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me” (John 15:4).

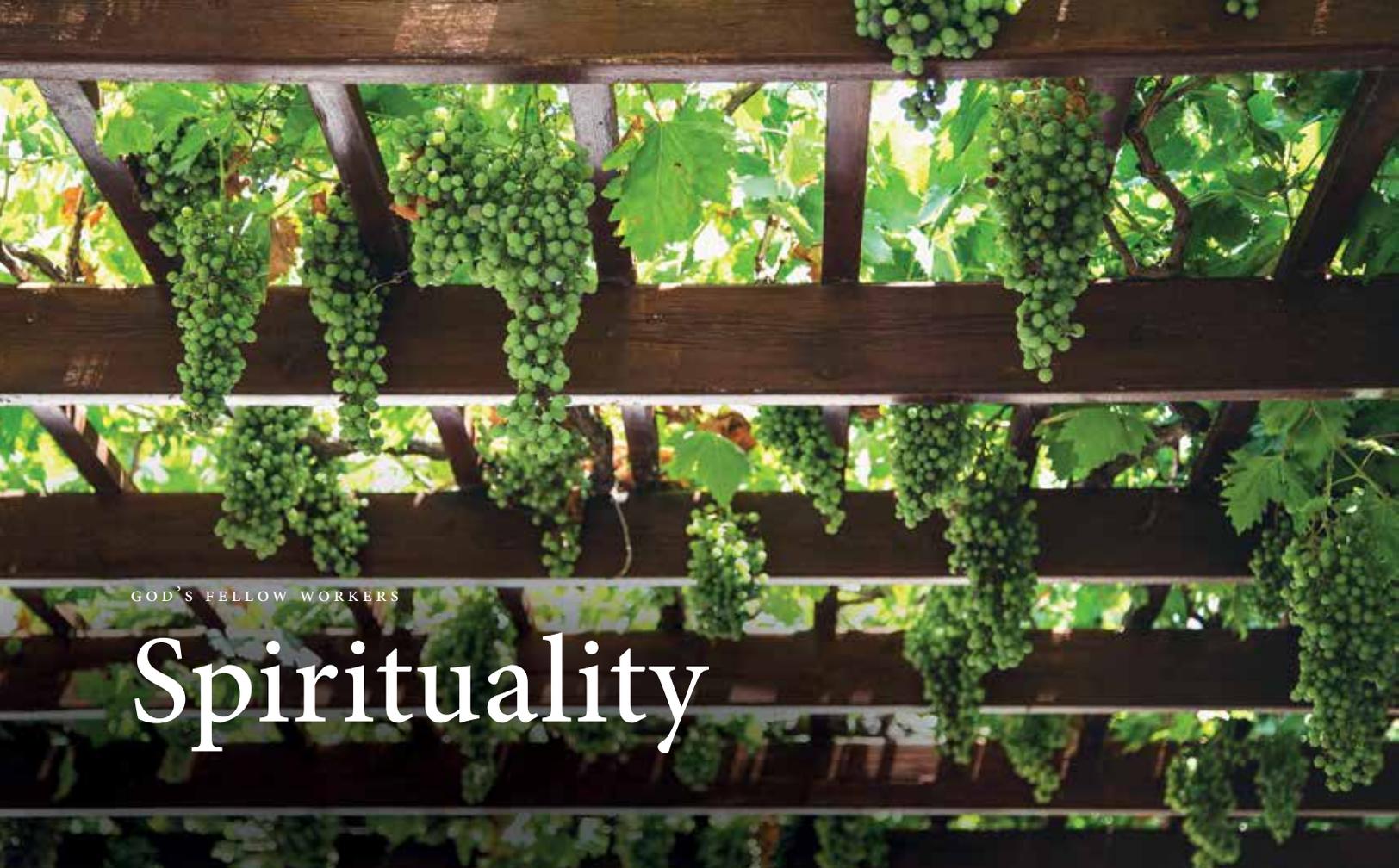
Where and how do we stand? Are we “in” or “out of service”—“in” or “out” of use? As a professing Christian, do you have the right relationship to God, and are you living in constant communion with Him? Or is your position shallow and lukewarm so that you cannot serve God properly and be of any use?

We can use our gifts and abilities in service to the Church and even to our fellow man and yet be “out of

service.” Jesus said: “These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me” (Matthew 15:8). Do we understand the significance of this? The most important thing about an ax is not its handle but the iron head. And the most important thing about us is not our mouths but our hearts.

God must have our heart before He can place us into His ministry and bless us. Give God your whole heart, and serve Him with joy. Then blessings will flow from your life. God can then use you as a useful tool and as a fellow worker in His ministry.

Friedrich Krebs



GOD'S FELLOW WORKERS

Spirituality

In 1 Corinthians 2:10–15, the Apostle Paul introduces us to two types of people who are exact opposites, the “natural” and the “spiritual.” With “natural,” Paul is not referring to the external or physical side; every person has that. With “spiritual,” he is not referring to those who have already been transfigured in eternity. A careful study of this excerpt indicates that when Paul talks about the natural man, he is referring to those who are unconverted, unsaved, and not born again, so all those who do not have the spirit of Christ. Natural people may have high moral standards, but they are spiritually dead, dead to God and the spiritual realm. Natural people may have good character traits and may do many good works, but without faith even the works are dead.

True religion has a spiritual and a practical side. Whoever wants to be usable in a local congregation must satisfy both requirements. Some people are very intelligent and possibly even philosophically gifted, and yet not spiritual. Spiritual is the person who the Holy Spirit has made alive, whose life advocates for God and is in connection with heaven. He is one who lives in

the Spirit, walks in the Spirit, is led by the Spirit, has a spiritual attitude, serves God in the Spirit, fervently prays in the Spirit, sings in the Spirit. The Holy Spirit makes Himself known to the spiritual person and helps him with his weaknesses. To what extent is your life and your experience in accord with this description? In Galatians 3:3, Paul speaks about people who began in the Spirit, but believe they can now be made perfect by the flesh. How many belong to that group today? Paul says they are bewitched.

There is no doubt that the distinguishing mark of Christians is spirituality. The individual church member and the church as a whole can only accomplish their mission if they are spiritual. We live in the age of the Holy Spirit. The church of God, which consists of spiritual people is called the “spiritual house.” Only those who serve and worship Him in the Spirit can be pleasing to God. A dead form of worship will not please God. The measure of our usefulness is based upon our piety and spirituality. It never depends on our natural gifts and ability, but on the measure of our spirituality. In order to become usable

by God, go into the sanctuary, be willing to do God's will and let His Spirit fill you.

Man has at times tried to replace spirituality with something else. Spirituality is not found in religious excitement and commotion. Jesus was the most spiritual person who ever lived. However, I cannot find any connection between His spirituality and sanctimoniousness. He chose to use a hill or a fishing boat as His pulpit. Yet His message was filled with such power and anointment from heaven that the audience cried out, "No man ever spoke like this Man!"

On the other side, there are times when one's spiritual life is proclaimed loudly and publicly. When Jesus, riding on a donkey, entered Jerusalem, His disciples ran in front of and behind Him calling, "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' The King of Israel!" In their excitement, they spread their clothes on the road, broke off branches from the palm trees and spread them out as well. And later, it is said of the disciples, "[they] were continually in the temple praising and blessing God." There are many examples in both the Old and the New Testament of holy manifestations. However, these are in no way proof of spirituality.

Demonstrating zeal, honesty, self-sacrifice, and self-denial is still no proof that spiritual life exists. It is possible to have all that without being spiritual. At times we are at risk of mistaking these things for spirituality. True spiritual and godly people are of course also zealous, honest, and self-sacrificing people. Nor is a correct doctrinal belief a proof of spirituality. It is by all means possible that, despite strict orthodox doctrine and biblical practice, we have no living spirituality.

We now come to the conclusion that spirituality is a result of being filled with the Holy Spirit. We are spiritual if we have divine life in our hearts, if we maintain fellowship with God, if divine love burns in our hearts, enabling us to love with a pure heart and pursue lost souls. Paul calls this power that "which works in me mightily" (Colossians 1:29). True spirituality will also manifest itself outwardly. It will be sensed in conversation. It will be noticed in prayers, songs, testimonies, and sermons. True spirituality makes serving God a pure joy, not a burden. Spiritual people rejoice in the Lord, in His work, among His people. They do not serve out of duty or per force, but because Christ's love compels them.

There are a few definite indicators of spirituality. Spiritual people are alive and active. There are too many Christians whose pulse first needs to be checked to know wheth-

er they are even living. They will show a certain degree of activity, but that is being human. The Christian life—which includes fellowshiping with other believers, prayer, testimony, and singing—brings joy and pleasure to a spiritual person. It flows from an inner source. Spiritual people taste the spiritual gifts, they hunger and thirst for spiritual things. They can "taste and see that the Lord is good" (Psalm 34:8). They are also sensitive to the urging of the Holy Spirit and have a spiritual sense of hearing because they believe, "Hear, and your soul shall live" (Isaiah 55:3).

There are many Christians who are hard of hearing when the Holy Spirit warns them, "Abstain from every form of evil" (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Adopt the following three principles as your own:

1. Avoid drawing attention to yourself through your outward appearance and the clothes you wear. Remember the verse, "Do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31). Avoid whatever you cannot wear to His glory.
2. Do not get involved in something with which you do not want to be confronted when you die.
3. Do not go to places where you would not want to be found when God's final trumpet sounds to call you before the Judge of the world.

Genuine spirituality has certain requirements. It cannot be achieved without a complete surrender and consecration of our lives and possessions to God for eternity. That includes completely surrendering to God's will without holding anything back. We need to daily receive the Spirit in solemn prayer and holy reflection. True spirituality requires a pure life both in public and in private. Sacrifice is essential for "the generous soul will be made rich" (Proverbs 11:25). If Christians tithe and bring other offerings into the house of the Lord, then God always honors His promise: "Try Me now in this, . . . if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing" (Malachi 3:10). We need to live according to our awareness and measure up in every respect. Seek first the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33) and look away from the mistakes and shortfalls of others.

A local congregation that is deeply spiritual will soon go beyond the transient things of this world. For spiritual life to reign in the congregation, spiritual people must congregate. Only congregations with spiritual life can convey the gospel to the world and make the church appealing. A spiritual congregation is like a lighthouse, a soul-saving institution. This congregation pleases God because it honors His cause and models a higher and better life to society.

Talkativeness

“Do not be rash with your mouth, and let not your heart utter anything hastily before God. For God is in heaven, and you on earth; therefore let your words be few.” Ecclesiastes 5:1

Too much talking is very destructive to spirituality. Many people wonder why they do not have a closer walk with God. With some it is because they talk too much. It is surprising to note how much worthless talk there is in the world today.

How many think they must keep constantly talking to be entertaining! They do not know the power and the beauty of silence. Hearts communing in silence exert a power and influence over each other. Our musings are transmitted to other hearts. Often when my wife and I have been driving along some quiet country road or have been sitting in the quiet of our home, she has spoken of the very thing on which I was meditating. Often the thoughts of our hearts exert more powerful influence over the hearts and the minds of our companions than would our words.

It is true that words fitly spoken are “like apples of gold in settings of silver” (Proverbs 25:11), but unless fitly spoken, they become most unsightly, degrading, and ruinous. The most beautiful thing in its place often becomes the most unsightly thing when out of place. Let your words be few and well chosen. “In the multitude of words sin is not lacking” (Proverbs 10:19). In that cease-

less prattle there is an awful waste of real soul energy. The odor of a rose confined in a room is very perceptible and delightful, but in open air it would soon be spent. Words that are gathered in hours of silence burst forth in strength and beauty; but where there is a constant flow of speech, the words run down into weakness. How much shallowness there is in much of the present-day conversation! I do not mean among the unsaved only, but among Christians as well. One word seasoned with grace is worth far more than a thousand graceless ones. Make your words palatable by putting in much seasoning.

There is much to do in these days, by way of visiting and talking to others, so much writing to be done, and so much preaching needed, that, to some, hours spent in silence may seem to be a great waste. It is not if the heart's musing is on proper themes. The ministry of Jesus was a short and busy one, yet He found much time to be alone. He would go apart into the desert and the mountain, and there in deep communings in the Spirit, He would compress within His inner being a holy unction that would burst forth upon the ears and hearts of His hearers in such weight that they would say, “No man ever spoke like this Man.” Elijah was left alone by the brook Kidron. We

may think this was a waste of time. Paul was shut up in prison, but there he gathered force of words that speak to this day. If you would bring flowers to others, you must go into the valley to gather them. To converse with others without first having gathered in your closet vital force into your own inner being is like trying to feed hungry mouths from an empty basket. To give out in excessive talk more than the soul has gathered in its silent communings is a waste of vital force and will bring a decline in spirituality, just as the muscle is weakened by being too severely exercised.

“Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned with salt” (Colossians 4:6). Talk not seasoned with grace is as insipid as food without salt. Our words should be so seasoned with grace that they would assist others into a more heavenly frame of spirit. It is in solitude that we take on a store of seasoning grace. More time is required to do the seasoning than to do the serving. In other words, more time should be spent in secret prayer, in deep meditation and thoughtful reading, than in mingling and conversing. A useful man of God one time said he had learned that about an hour was as long as he could spend in conversation to profit. If you talk more than you pray, your words will run beyond the point of seasoning and be graceless.

Satan, in all probability, will tell you that time spent in reading the Bible, in silent meditation, or in secret prayer is time misspent. He will endeavor to persuade you that you have no time for these. He would send you out in great haste to feed others from an empty basket. Be careful of your words. See that each one is seasoned with grace. Unless they are, they are wasted words. The anointing of the Spirit upon your soul is obtained and retained by reading or in prayer and meditation. You should linger in the closet until this anointing is compressed to the utmost capacity of your soul. It will impart force to your words. The preacher that does but little praying may use great, swelling words; but he is only a sounding brass. Let your words be few. Man shall give account for every idle word. Be careful how you spend the silent hours. If you spend them in idle dreaming or lazily, you will not be fit to go out among men. You will only go empty handed. Improve the silent moments and gather to your soul a bountiful store of grace; then go out and pour it upon the hearts of others.

O saints, avoid multiplicity of words. Some may count you dull and stupid, but it is better that the world should call us stupid than that God should count us graceless.

Speak only such words as are good “for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.” In relating past experiences, be careful that it is done to edification and not just to please. Be willing to listen rather than to speak. If a man does not bridle his tongue, his religion is in vain (James 1:26). Someone has said, “Speech is silver; silence is golden.” Let your words and your thoughts be such as will invite and encourage the Spirit of God to rest upon you and as will keep in your soul an uninterrupted sense of the divine presence.

This was said of a man who enjoyed a walk and communion with God attained by but few: “It was a constant care to keep a deep sense of God’s presence. In order to do this, he was slow of speech and had the exact government of his words. To this he was so inwardly attentive, as sometimes to appear stupid to those who knew him not; though with a few he conversed in a more lively manner when he judged it would be for the glory of God. It was his continual endeavor to draw up his own and every other spirit to an immediate communion with God; and all his communion with me was so mingled with prayer and praise that every employment and every meal was as it were perfumed therewith. He often said: ‘It is a very little thing so to hang upon God by faith as to feel no departure from Him. But I want to be filled with the fullness of His Spirit. I feel,’ said he, ‘sometimes such gleams of light, as it were wafts of heavenly air, as seems ready to take my soul with them to glory.’”

Another said of the same devoted man: “I was intimately acquainted with him for above thirty years. I conversed with him morning, noon, and evening without the least reserve during a journey of many hundred miles, and in all that time I never heard him speak one improper word, nor saw him do an improper action. Many exemplary men have I known holy in heart and life, but one equal to him I have not known—one so inwardly and outwardly devoted to God. So unblameable a character in every respect I have not found either in Europe or in America; nor do I expect to find another such this side of eternity.”

It is our privilege to live as near God as did this man or any other, but in order to do so we must have the same constant care, guard our words, and live in an atmosphere that is wafted fresh from the perfumed fields of heaven.

Charles E. Orr (1861-1933)

Source: http://library.timelesstruths.org/texts/The_Hidden_Life/Talkativeness/



YOUTH PAGE

Jesus Stands Alone

It is said that every human is unique. And that is true. No two people are exactly alike. But above all that have ever walked this earth there is none so unique and one-of-a-kind as Jesus Christ. No one was so pure, so holy, and marvelous as He was. His name is above every other name. His honor and praise echoes to the ends of the earth. He is everything we need to be truly joyful and fulfilled.

“Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John his brother, led them up on a high mountain by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light. And behold, Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him. Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, ‘Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.’”

“While he was still speaking, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!’ And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid. But Jesus came and touched them and said, ‘Arise, and do not be afraid.’ When they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only” (Matthew 17:1-8).

In all the history of humankind, Jesus the Christ stands alone. One day Jesus led three of his most trusted disciples onto a mountain. There Peter and the brothers James and John saw a glimpse of God’s glory as Jesus was transfigured before their eyes. As they looked upon Jesus, His face shone like the sun, and in the brightness of God’s light they saw Moses and Elijah. Never before had great men of faith returned to earth long after death to discuss the plans of God. In Luke 9:30 we read of this event, “And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

On the mountaintop that day, heaven’s gate had opened and touched the earth. Moses and Elijah stepped through that gate and stood with Jesus to discuss his future death in Jerusalem. Moses represented the law and the associated ceremonies of the Old Testament. In order



VERSE OF THE MONTH

Then He said to His disciples, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest.”

Matthew 9:37-38

This month we want to, on a daily basis, earnestly petition our Heavenly Father, who is the Lord of the harvest, for laborers in His work.

Are you already a laborer in His kingdom? If not, then earnestly ask God to make you into a usable, faithful worker—regardless of whether it is in small or great things.

If you are already a laborer, then pray that many of those who are following Jesus would willingly use their gifts and talents solely to God’s glory so that many people would still experience the joyful, liberating message of salvation.

God needs workers who have wholeheartedly dedicated and consecrated themselves to Him.

to satisfy the requirements of the law, continual sacrifices of innocent lambs were offered. Blood had to flow in order to atone for the sins of those bringing the sacrificial animals to the priests. Did Peter and the others marvel that day with Moses at God’s plan, that Jesus would become the Lamb of God and bear the sins of the entire world (John 1:29)? Jesus alone would put an end to the entire sacrificial system of the Law with His once-and-for-all sacrifice on the cross (Hebrews 9:11 – 10:18).

Elijah represented the prophets of old that had spoken of God’s Messiah to come. In the Psalms and in the books of the Old Testament prophets, they had written of the Lord’s future coming to His people; Israel. In their prophecies they would describe in specific detail His birth, many events of His life and cruel sacrificial death, including His ministry of healing and preaching. There was to be no mistaking that Jesus was the Christ who would perfectly fulfill each prophecy in His brief lifetime. Did the three disciples hear Jesus discuss the prophecies of His death at Jerusalem with Elijah that day? Soon every last messianic prophecy of old would be fulfilled in

the life of Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:20).

Heaven’s gate remained open as a bright cloud engulfed them. From out of the cloud they heard the voice of God the Father declare, “This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!” Only of Jesus, God’s only begotten Son, would this statement ever be made from the realms of heaven. Suddenly heaven’s gate closed and Elijah and Moses were gone. The disciples saw no one but Jesus alone! He alone is all that they and the rest of humankind would require to fulfill the law and the prophets, thereby ushering in the New Testament era of grace.

In the presence of God, it is most appropriate to fall at His feet and worship! The glimpse of heaven had left the disciples overwhelmed and terrified. Again, it is Jesus who stands alone in His ability to calm our fears, heal our hearts and usher us safely into the very presence of God, with His touch and His words, “Arise and do not be afraid.”

Harry Klinger,
Hamilton, ON

Experiences with God

We often look for help from other people or try to help ourselves. But God's word says: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5-6). Therefore, I can joyfully agree with the psalmist when he says: "My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:2).

I was lost in sin. Satan made my life hard and bitter and I longed for rest and peace in my soul. Then one Sunday, a fitting message was brought, where it was shown that we can receive forgiveness for our sins through the blood of Jesus. I prayed with the pastor and tried to believe that everything was alright now. But my soul had not come to rest.

In November 2014, we had evangelistic services in Mexico. The Spirit of God spoke to me and this time I broke through and found true peace. I am so thankful to the Lord that I have been serving Him now for almost three years. God redeemed me; I am now free. To the Lord be all glory! Gladly I now sing:

Jesus, the One who my sorrows has healed,
Thou art the One who my spirit hast sealed;
Only Thy glory from heaven revealed,
Only Thy favor can happiness yield.

Thankful in the Lord,

Sara Knelsen,
Via Gracia, Bolivia

"I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)

I thank God that He made me His child and I am able to walk on His path. When I look back on my life, it was not always so.

I grew up in a godless home. My mother was sick for many years and died when I was thirteen. I was away from home during my teenage years and cannot remember anything good about that time. But God was gracious towards me and gave me a loving wife. She was the tool in God's hand. I received salvation at the age of 26, but unfortunately it still took a few years before I could really grasp what this meant.

We had a good marriage, and God blessed us with four daughters. Sometimes I had the thought that one of us would be left behind someday. How would the other make it through? Now, more than twenty years have

passed since I am the one who had to stay behind. I can only say the grace of God is wonderful. Although three of our loved ones have already gone to their eternal home during this time, I can truly say that although God places a burden on us, He also helps us bear it. The blessings of God are greater than anything else. The daily blessings are proof of the presence of our God. I would like to joyfully continue my life's journey listening to blessed sermons and having fellowship with my brothers and sisters in Christ.

Therefore, I can say with the Psalmist: "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever" (Psalm 23: 6).

Werner Kaspar,
Edmonton (CA)



CHILDREN'S CORNERS

In the Lord's Service

In a children's worship service, a pastor encouraged assistance in the Lord's work, and gave advice on various things the children could do for Jesus. After the service, Susie came to the pastor and asked, "What could I do for the Lord?" The pastor, who did not have much time, said to her, "brightly polish your Father's shoes every morning!"

Susie wondered what it would do for the Lord's kingdom if she did that. But she did what she was advised to do and the next morning she brightly polished her father's boots. When her father put on his nicely polished shoes, he didn't know what to say. This hadn't happened anymore since the death of his wife.

During the day, Susie wondered what else she could do for her father. She looked around in the room and

noticed how dirty everything was. So, she took a broom, swept the floor and then scrubbed it clean. Next, she dusted everywhere and straightened everything up. Just before her father came home, she put the soup on the oven to warm. And this is what Susie began to do every day.

Father was so glad about it. He was so happy about his nice home that he no longer went to the bar every evening as he had been doing since the death of his wife. On Sunday, he even went to church with Susie again.

Now Susie understood that one can also serve the Lord and Savior in this manner. And she was glad that through her service she was able to help her Father find the way to Jesus.

Parents Are God's Co-Workers

When parents understand that their children belong to God and that He put them in their care that they would raise them for Him, they will realize their solemn responsibility and raise them in the fear and admonition of the Lord. Children should receive the same gentle, loving care that our heavenly Father gives us. When I was a child and my mother would reprimand and chastise me with the Word of God, I would come to an awareness of myself and know that I had done wrong in the eyes of God.

What a blessed privilege parents have that in the raising of their children they can be God's co-workers! When the Holy Spirit awakens a desire to please God in the hearts of children, parents can contribute greatly in strengthening the resolve of their children and encouraging them to trust and obey the Lord. When parents recognize God's love, longsuffering, and compassion for themselves, it will help them to also show these toward their children.

If children are taught why they have such a strong inclination to do wrong and they are told that Jesus came to save them from all sin, I believe that many a child will seek the grace of God.

I read of a boy who often became so angry that he would go into convulsions. But he had a devout, godly nanny who taught him from the word of God and prayed with him. One day he told her that he would never again have such a fit of rage because he had prayed that God would free him of that. He fully believed that God would

do it. The nanny testified that God had indeed helped him. Yes, Jesus also wants to save the children from their sins.

I vividly remember how the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart in my childhood, and made me sorrow over my sins. I asked the Lord to forgive my sins. When I had prayed for a while, a longing came into my heart to have full certainty that I had been forgiven. I then shared my desire with my mother, but she could not help me because she did not have light over the matter herself.

Oh, that parents in our time would be fully consecrated to God and submissive to Him and that they would realize they are responsible for their children before God! They would then be concerned for the salvation of their children's souls and would lovingly direct them to the Savior.

Many parents often allow their children things which they know will not serve them well in the future. They do not dare oppose their children's self-will to avoid incurring their displeasure. In this way, the bad seed is cultivated even more in the hearts of the children, and it becomes more difficult to raise them for God.

Dear parents, love your children, but make the effort to raise them in obedience to you and to God. Protect them from evil by setting God-ordained boundaries! May God help us all to understand and fulfill the great responsibility that God has laid upon parents!

Emma Talbert

The Million Dollar Inheritance

Dear mother and father, have you ever considered that each of you could leave behind million dollar inheritances for your children? You might smile and shake your head—but this can become reality for you. Let me tell you how I know this.

A long time ago I visited a sweet elderly lady. She spoke with great joy about her son who was a highly esteemed, hard-working physician in a clinic; a very gifted, truly diligent man. “But most importantly,” said the mother, “he is a whole-hearted Christian, something that is far more important to him than the good career and esteemed position that he enjoys.”

And then she added: “One time he made us especially happy as parents when he wrote in a letter that he was thankful for the million dollar inheritance that we had given him. His Christian upbringing is an inheritance that neither moths nor rust can destroy.”—“How happy can these parents be, to have such a son!” I exclaimed. She replied with a beaming face: “Yes, that we are. But, we also know that this is nothing but grace.”

Why do I share this? I want to encourage all parents: Give your children this inheritance that has true value and cannot be lost. Don't allow them to become beggars. Give them the treasure of God's Word that is also found in the hymns of the church. Tell your children the Bible stories and sing with them all the powerful, joyful songs of faith. Most importantly, let your children sense in your everyday lives that you are fed by the riches of the eternal springs. Let them experience how this unending, genuine joy of life is given to you.

Th. Gensingen

O Lord, your Word is a gift so true,
Protect this treasure for me.
It's my inheritance from You,
so full of endless riches.

If Your Word should no longer hold,
on what ground would my faith stand?
There's nothing greater in this world,
than to live Your Word alone.

You are Only the Steward

You are the steward of the life you've been given;
Do not think that you belong to yourself.
Let your desire be for the God of heaven
To be glorified daily in your life.

You have nothing but what the Lord has given;
Your life, your health, your riches come from Him!
Let your goal be, as long as you are living,
That you may honor the Savior through them.

Don't live for yourself but think of your neighbor;
Do good, for that is pleasing to the Lord.
Bring those that are lost to Jesus, the Savior;
Be faithful in all, and trust in His Word.

Walk in love that is pure, upon the straight way;
Be humble and live in awe of your God.

Remember, He will give you grace day by day;
Your life's in His hand, as onward you walk.

The day, it will come when the Lord will require
The talent He gave you, a treasure from Him.
Where is the increase that your talent acquired?
Will you rejoice with the laborers then?

Will you then say like the unfaithful servant,
“I buried my talent and feared Your command?”
Friend, if your love is not real and not fervent,
You won't be placed at the Savior's right hand!

Remember for you, our God gave His dearest;
Christ shed His blood and redeemed you from sin.
Give Him your life and be filled with the Spirit;
When life is over you'll rejoice with Him.

Edeltraut Nimz

The Lord's Prayer

by Gerhard Mielke - Part 5: Your Kingdom Come

In the Lord's prayer, Jesus taught us to pray: "Your kingdom come."

These three words are very significant. First of all it identifies whom the kingdom of God belongs to. It is not my kingdom but thy kingdom, belonging to the Father in heaven. Jesus says: "Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). Thus when we pray "Your kingdom come," and seek His kingdom first, we also have a promise that God will take care of the rest.

Not a physical kingdom

When some people think of the kingdom of God, they think of a future literal kingdom set up in Jerusalem. That is not the Bible's understanding of the kingdom of God. The Pharisees and scribes wanted a literal kingdom. They wanted a Messiah that would arise against the Romans and drive them out of the land of Judah, so that the Jewish nation would rule once more in Jerusalem. In Matthew 1:21 we read "you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." Jesus came not to free his people from the Romans, but from their sins. Before Jesus enlightened the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus, they also had a literal kingdom in mind. They said to him: "the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to be condemned to death, and crucified Him. But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:20-21a). Jesus then opened their understanding. "And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself" (Luke 24:27).

Before the day of Pentecost had come, the other disciples also still envisioned some kind of earthly kingdom. "When they had come together, they asked Him, saying, 'Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?'" (Acts 1:6) In His answer, Jesus focused on something else. He told them to stay in Jerusalem until they were filled with the Holy Spirit. "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). You see, in the Old Testament, God's promise to Israel had been the Promised Land. However, in the New Testament, when Jesus talks about the promise of the Father, He always refers to the promise that the Holy Spirit will come (Luke 24:49, Acts 1:4, Acts 2:33), never to a geographical region.

What does the kingdom of God look like?

Now when He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, He answered them and said, "The kingdom of God does not come with observation; nor will they say, 'See here!' or 'See there!' For indeed, the kingdom of God is within you" (Luke 17:20-21).

I am sure the Pharisees had no idea what Jesus was talking about. His is a spiritual kingdom. That however did not fit into their concept of God's kingdom. It was a paradigm shift they did not comprehend. Paul reiterates this concept. He says: "For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men" (Romans



**“In this manner, therefore, pray:
Our Father in heaven,
Hallowed be Your name.
Your kingdom come.
Your will be done On earth as it is in heaven. Give us
this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, As we forgive our debtors.
And do not lead us into temptation, But deliver us
from the evil one.
For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory
forever. Amen.”**

Matthew 6:9-13 (NKJV)

14:17-18). If we serve Christ in righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit, then we are in His Kingdom.

That his kingdom is not a literal, but a spiritual kingdom was made very clear by Christ's words to Pilate. Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Pilate therefore said to Him, "Are You a king then?" Jesus answered, "You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice" (John 18:36-37).

If we are born again, then God "has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins" (Colossians 1:13-14). Do you see how the Bible talks of two kingdoms? One is the kingdom of darkness, and the other the Kingdom of Light. If our sins have been forgiven, we are no longer in darkness, but are now in the kingdom of the Son.

How does one enter the kingdom of God?

When our sins are forgiven, we are made part of God's family, God's church, God's kingdom. In Ephesians 5:5 we read, "For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God." To inherit the kingdom of God, we need to be cleansed. Our sins need to be forgiven. God must cleanse us. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins

and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). Coming to God in prayer and asking Him for forgiveness on account of the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary, we are born again. Jesus said to Nicodemus: "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). "Nicodemus answered and said to Him, 'How can these things be?'" (John 3:9). Jesus explained that it is through faith in the Son of God, "that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:15).

Some differences between God's kingdom and other kingdoms

Since the kingdom of God is spiritual, it does not pass away like other kingdoms do. David says: "I will extol You, my God, O King; And I will bless Your name forever and ever. Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Your dominion endures throughout all generations" (Psalm 145:1, 13). This shows us that the kingdom of God is eternal and that it has a King, which is the Lord Himself. We are not talking about a democracy, but a theocracy. It is not the majority that rules, but God. The majority does not decide what sin is and what sin is not. God's instructions in His Word are our guideline. In the kingdom of God we do not rule over others (1 Peter 5:1-3), but over sin. Paul writes: "For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace" (Romans 6:14). If that is not the case in your life, then the kingdom of God has not yet fully come to you. Do not just pray: "Your kingdom come," but act upon it. Claim God's victory for your life. Be a part of His kingdom.

Have You Been Converted?

It could be that you grew up in a Christian home and were blessed with a Christian upbringing. You try to live according to the standards of the Bible. That is good, but if you have never experienced a personal conversion of the heart, you will fail in the end and not make it to Heaven. Have you experienced conversion?

Someone writes: “Conversion is not natural. What is natural is the opposite of conversion, for conversion is not only in opposition to the old nature but also supersedes it. Despite baptism, confirmation, orthodox beliefs, and church affiliations, yes, despite many various experiences of godly grace, a person can still remain unconverted. One cannot be converted without it having truly taken place. What I mean is that *conversion* must have occurred in your life, or you have not been converted.”

Without conversion, a person does not walk on the pathway of life that leads to eternal glory. Conversion does not just pertain to an outward change, even though it may be respectable and perhaps even religious. Your heart must be converted or turned to Jesus, the Son of God, in order to find forgiveness, grace, and peace with God. Has that happened to you? Do you truly trust your Lord and Savior?

When John Wesley, who later became an instrument in God’s hand, was on a trip to America, he encountered a terrible storm. The waves rolled over the ship, and even the hardened seamen despaired and feared that they would never see land again, not to mention the passengers, including Wesley. People who had not prayed for a long time cried out to God, and Wesley was fearful, too. In the midst of this despairing crowd was a small group of believers who sat quietly during the storm, praying to the God of their salvation and singing songs of praise and thanks to Him. They knew they were safe in His strong hands, even if death was near. They knew that their lives were secure with Christ in God. Wesley admired these people who trusted their God and who showed no trace of worry and fear. He thought they must have something that he didn’t have and that he didn’t even know about. He himself was fearful of death. He acquainted himself with these brothers who truly believed. After his return to England, he searched for the brothers’ gathering. Be-

cause of them, he was truly converted and received real faith in God the Almighty, who can always help.

In a biography of Ludwig Hofacker, the composer Albert Knapp tells the story of his own conversion. As a student caught up in rationalistic errors, one day he visited his friend Hofacker, who had fallen seriously ill. On this occasion, the mother of Hofacker requested that he read the first chapter of Revelation to her son. “I read this scripture with great reluctance because I didn’t know much about this book other than that there was a dragon that wanted to eat an innocent baby. So I took the Bible and read from the beginning to verses 4-5: ‘Grace and peace to you from the One who is, who always was, and who is coming; and from the seven spirits before His throne; and from Jesus Christ. Jesus is the faithful witness. He is first among all who will be raised from death. He is the ruler of the kings of the earth. Jesus is the One who loves us and has made us free from our sins with His blood sacrifice.’

“I could not read further. It was as if holy trumpets from heaven were ringing in my ears. My revolting unbelief wanted to swallow this feeling that surged in my soul like waves. I couldn’t manage it, for tears flowed from my eyes. Without further excuse I left there, struck by the power of the majesty of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, but also eased by this thought: It must be blessed to reciprocate this godly love that died for sinners.” Hofacker softly said farewell. And God allowed this visit to lead to my eternal salvation in Him, who is and who was before Abraham was, namely in Christ, the eternal Son of God.

Yes, only the Lord Himself can truly convert through His Spirit, and He often uses simple means. With Peter, He used a rooster. “‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the Lord of hosts,” said the Lord through the prophet Zechariah in chapter 4, verse 6. And our Lord can do this in hearts throughout the whole world!

Have You Been Transformed?

Many cannot bear being asked if they have experienced salvation. To them it seems too perfunctory. Furthermore, they have a hard time with people who refer to themselves as saved. To them, such people seem too self-assured and arrogant when they say: “We are saved, we are children of God, we have been born again.” If they would only say that they would like to become children of God, then it would come across more modest and humble.

If you asked me, “Are you married?” I would reply: “Yes, I am.” If you asked me: “Are you saved?” then I would also answer: “Yes, I am.” However, I would feel as though I must add: “By the wonderful grace of God!” But if I have experienced salvation, then I must also state as it is, and not that I hope or wish I was saved.

It was proper for Jesus to require repentance and conversion, for those wanting to enter the kingdom of heaven. He did not do it to make it difficult, He did it because there is no other possible way. Not even the almighty and all-loving God can save sinners without their repentance.

You must come to Him yourself. It must be your personal decision to come to God and begin a new life with Him. Your sins separate you from God. Your entire disposition is against Him. Therefore, salvation actually means a change in thinking or a change in mind, which is usually called “repentance.” Your thinking must be fixed on Christ, who died for you and carried your sins on the

cross. You can bring Him all of your sins and lay them at the cross. Then His forgiveness is certain. For “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

Now you have turned from your sin, and have changed your attitude, for you want to live only with and for Christ. You pray to Him, and He answers you. You walk with Him as with a friend. It is so real to you that you can say: “Yes, I have been transformed, for every day I experience that I walk as a new person!” Have you been transformed?

A student once said: “I am freed of condemnation. I expected that after salvation I would feel suppressed, but the opposite is the case. I am surprised by the awareness of freedom from guilt and condemnation. I am free and have been freed.” His face shone. He had accepted grace.—Is this not precisely what you still need?

This grace that God shows to us is not temporary. Through grace, we are kept safe in the world of sin from evil and wrong, which could stain our conscience. Grace frees and preserves. Do not neglect this preserving grace in your life. Being a Christian can bring you much joy if you are one of those who has found grace and if you remain in grace. It is there for you. Take hold of it. Hold onto it and open yourself to it. Jesus Christ will be with you, for the saving grace of God has appeared through Him.

Special Services 2017

Convention in Swartz Creek, Michigan

SEPTEMBER 2-3, 2017

Fest in Edmonton, Alberta

OCTOBER 7-9, 2017

Proper Worship

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. 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 12:1-2).

Since the beginning of time, humankind has a desire to honor and worship a higher Being. People worship in accordance with their own ideas and the way they’ve been taught. Any given thing can be the object of one’s worship. It may be made of wood or stone, or perhaps it is a political party or a prominent leader within a party who is revered or idolized. Nonetheless, a true child of God, who is “not of this world,” according to the words of Christ, honors God and worships Him, the Creator of the heavens and the earth. This person is set apart from others by having experienced the living God. He remembers a time in his life when he was separated from God by his own sin, but Christ’s mercy reached down and saved him from the bonds of sin and this evil world, and then he entered into a new, intimate relationship with God. Consequently, his worship will be alive and pleasing to God. The glory of the Lord will shine on such an act of worship.

Our scripture speaks of “reasonable service.” This is possible because of Christ’s mercy. The person who has received God’s mercy should commit to a reasonable service to Him. The sinful things of his past life, such as the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, war against God’s love, and it is a reasonable expectation that such behavior must cease. That is why the Apostle Paul said: “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).

Constantly seeking the will of God is part of your reasonable service. First, we must ask: “What is appropriate and right before the holy God whom I serve?” Not everything a person considers right is right. The Holy Scriptures say: “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death” (Proverbs 14:12). Right is

that which honors and glorifies God. The Word of God reveals the goodness of the Lord and proclaims His grace and mercy.

Second, your reasonable service should strive to achieve the Lord’s approval as you worship and serve Him. Because the approval or acknowledgment of other people is not a deciding factor, the question that should always be asked is: “What is pleasing to my Lord?” The validation of God’s approval is what we must seek. In order to achieve this, a child of God will always try to guard against anything that might grieve the Holy Spirit. Your service, after all, is to the Almighty God, and your greatest concern is to remain in His favor.

Third, our scripture speaks of God’s perfect will. What is meant by this? Indisputably, understanding God’s perfect will must be the pinnacle of your worship of Him. The person who satisfies the aforementioned points intuitively knows that in order to measure up to a reasonable service, he must have surrendered everything to God. This includes your spirit, your soul, as well as your body. Scripture says, “present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.”

Jesus Christ personally demonstrated this sacrifice. Speaking of Himself, He says: “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24). By this statement, He refers to the sacrifice of His life, His resurrection, and the result of His ultimate sacrifice. In the letter to the Hebrews, reference is made to His sacrifice as follows: “Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a body You have prepared for Me. . . . Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God.’ He takes away the first [Old Testament offerings] that He may establish the second [sacrifice of His body]. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Hebrews 10:5, 9–10). The pure, holy body of Jesus Christ was nailed to the cross in order to offer redemption from sin to all mankind, allowing each one to become holy before God. Isn’t that wonderful?

However, God also expects the sacrifice of our bodies, not to attain salvation but rather to fulfill a proper

and reasonable service to Him. There is a reason for this. Human desires and petitions often hinder true worship. As long as we have not been placed upon the altar, Godly service will manifest shortcomings. However, once this full surrender is made, the difference in our service will be noticeable. Then the words of the Apostle Paul will also apply to us: “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if

we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s” (Romans 14:8). Have you experienced this? Have you surrendered your body to the Lord? When did it happen? Recognize that your body must be a temple of the Holy Spirit!

Gustav Sonnenberg (1898-1980)

The Devil’s Furniture

The Enemy has a large variety of ways to achieve his destructive goals. Here is a metaphorical description of some of these efforts.

The Back Burner

The idiom of “putting something on the back burner” refers to knowing very well that something needs to be done but procrastinating and never quite following through on it. It is not a matter of denying that something should or must be done, but rather of saying: tomorrow or the day after, but not today!

If procrastinating is dangerous and regrettable in daily life, how much more so with respect to our lives within and in sight of eternity! Nothing makes the devil happier than seeing people procrastinate! As far as he is concerned, people can agree with the message of Jesus, they can be touched, and they can be troubled as long as they do not come to a clear decision. That is why Satan whispers in their ear: You have plenty of time, leave it for later! Enjoy today! Why be so serious while you are still young? There is rejoicing in the devil’s kingdom when someone heeds this voice and misses out on eternal salvation.

The Rocking Chair

A rocking chair rocks back and forth to calm us down and help us sleep. It is no mystery why the devil loves this particular piece of furniture so much. The devil hates clear and consistent decisiveness. He likes for us to waver between earnest and playful, between serious and silly. He is happy if we participate in everything, walking with Jesus in the morning, with the world in the evening, and starting all over again the next morning. That satisfies Satan! The adversary of the Lord Jesus knows very well that this lets us feel safe and secure without leaving his camp.

This gives him another reason to rejoice. That is why the rocking chair can be an instrument of the devil.

The Bookcase with the Bible

Of course, Satan is also aware of common decency and good etiquette. Part of that is having a nice bookcase with, quite naturally, a Bible inside. After all, a proper home must have a Bible. But we rarely or never read most of the books in our bookcase, and this is true of the Bible as well. It has gilt edging, but its pages stick together. The devil is happy to let people buy a Bible and put it in the bookcase. It only becomes a danger to him if they read and study the Word of God. That is why he prevents it.

The Old Harp

It does not require a great leap of imagination to see an old harp on the shelf as well. A little music is part of the good life. But are we not often content with being able to play just a few tunes? We pick up the instrument and just end up harping on the same old string.

The devil allows us to occasionally attend a service, help the poor, and donate to missions. He does not fight us on these simple things. Quite to the contrary, he wants to let us fulfill our religious duties. However, the tunes that we play on that one old string do not hurt him and never change. They calm and encourage us. And so it follows that the old harp is a very useful piece of furniture for the devil as well.

One final question: How does it feel to live with the devil’s furniture? Are we familiar with God’s household, and are we happy to serve Jesus resolutely and decisively? Are we no longer wavering between the two sides? Do we really read our Bible, and does a fullness of truth fill our heart? Where is our home?

Hans Bruns (1895–1971)

O Rise Up and Stand for Jesus!

*O rise up and stand for Jesus,
Raise salvation's banner high.
Let the world see and hear us,
For His kingdom has come nigh.
Since His kingdom lasts forever,
Let us use the Spirit's sword
Till the whole world seeks the Savior.*

*Through the preaching of His Word,
See, the powers of hell are raging
To destroy God's holy plan,
And against our right engaging
Won't allow the truth to stand.
But shall our nation perish
As dark forces overtake?
No, we'll fight for what we cherish;
We must win for freedom's sake.*

*We are few and out of favor
While the enemy is strong;
But we'll follow Christ our Savior
And we'll fight against the wrong.
As the conquered, Christ did conquer.
And in death defeated death.
In the storm He is our anchor;
We'll be true to the last breath.*

*We have heroes in our history,
So in faith let's battle on.
Soon we'll raise the flag of victory,
For the war's already won.
In the worst and darkest hour
Let's look up and never fear;
For the Lord has mighty power,
And "Immanuel" is here!*