



Foundation of Faith

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Rejoice, Always?

How Jan Became Happy

If I Had Known

Experiences With God

**SERVING GOD
WITH JOY**

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SERVING GOD WITH JOY

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

Our lives are like a pilgrimage. As young people, we storm out into the world and often have big plans and many dreams and search for the greatest happiness in the turmoil of the world. What is the result? What happens?

The Prussian king's daughter, Eleonore von Reuss, wrote of her experience in her song, "I've Travelled Throughout the World:"

*Oh, I've seen the people working
And searching night and day;
They're coming and going and yearning
And toiling upon their way.*

*They won't find for what they're searching
In pleasure and fortune and fame;
And burdened with sin and hurting,
The masses return again.*

Each person searches for pleasure, fortune, fame and for acceptance and happiness. Millions of people search for this in vain in the maze of worldly lusts, the places where shame and disgrace ruin hearts and lives.

Years ago, the prophet Jeremiah wrote down God's words: "For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13).

This precious living water is found only in God's wells of salvation: "Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation" (Isaiah 12:3). Yes, that is the Lord's offer: "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

Dear soul, I experienced this too when I confessed my guilt and sins to the Lord as a prodigal son and accepted His salvation in faith. I can testify with the Psalmist, "You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore" (Psalm 16:11). Praise be to God!

H. D. Nimz

True Joy: Joy in the Lord!

Everyone desires joy. Joy is inherent to life just like daily bread. Both body and soul increase in health through joy. Augustine said, “All have one end, which they strive to attain, namely, joy. . . . [but] there is a joy which is not given to the ungodly, but to those who love [God] . . .” Millions of people have this longing in their soul.

Even in Christian circles, we seldom find joyful people, people who joyfully share the Gospel and are true followers of Christ. “More joy, more joy!” This is the call and challenge of Christianity. The Bible reminds us over and over again to have joy. Zinzendorf so rightly stated and admonished, “Christianity has no greater need than joyful Christians.” Ultimately, Christians are the only people who should know, have, and be able to share this true, deep, enduring joy, for the Gospel is the source and the message of great joy. True, genuine Christians should always be joyful people and should share joy with others. Therefore, this serious admonition is directed first of all to the children of God: “Rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16).

Joy is living balsam for body and soul. A writer defines this perfectly: If you searched the entire universe for a cure to many an illness, there would be only one remedy: a golden cup of joy.

Joy makes us healthier, increases creativity, brings happiness, and impels action. Joy gives a deep sense of satisfaction, and permits thankfulness. Joy is not a disposition, mood or mere humor; it is not a fleeting selfish feeling, not a careless optimism, nor sentimentality. No, joy is strength and peace. Joy is droplets from God’s eternal blessedness. Joy is health, a gift from God. Joy is the keynote of the Gospel. Joy tunes the heart strings to a deep feeling of gratitude.

If we would contemplate the many Bible passages regarding joy—there are more than one hundred—it is as if we would hear the angel on the plains of Bethlehem on that first Christmas night saying, “I bring you good tidings of great joy.” It is as if we would be hearing the familiar ring of the gospel bells, carrying the message from country to country, from nation to nation, from heart to heart, to all ends of the earth saying, “Joy to all nations!” As if we heard the singers and witnesses of all time singing of joy: Paul, Luther, Paul Gerhardt, and right into our time, the jubilating testimonies of joyful Christians.

If we would listen for the great song of praise, the stars in the dark night would be exulting the wonderful God and Lord; the springtime would be singing; creation would be praising Him; the church of God from the entire world and nations would be joining in worship in their languages. Yes, as if we would be hearing the redeemed souls singing the great “Hallelujah” on the crystal sea!

Greater and deeper joy. We want to pray for this joy to become apparent in our home, our family, in our circle of friends and neighbors. How the faces will shine and lose their gloom when the sun of joy will greet them! Let there be more joy in our Christian circles. Let there not be a tone of a superficial, frivolous, and facetious atmosphere, which can easily crowd out the Holy Spirit, Who should be living among us. Rather, let the genuine gospel joy be there when Christians greet one another and delight, comfort, encourage, and help one another. More joy toward songs and singing, more joy when listening to the sermon, more joy toward Christians and among Christians. May no one who visits and sits among us ever carry a quiet, inner longing for joy and then leave our congregation with the accusation, as Nietzsche put

The Joy of Faith

it, “Better songs would they have to sing, for me to believe in their Saviour: more like saved ones would his disciples have to appear unto me!”

Let us carry more joy into the homes of the ungodly, lonely, abandoned, and widows—in the hearts of those who have been disappointed, in the lives of those who have turned bitter, to the bedside of the sick, and on the streets of the wretched. Everybody ought to know that we are truly and joyfully serving the Lord.

We need more joy in our personal lives. An ill-tempered, grumbling, shady Christianity exists. Sincere, searching souls will flee from this kind. Christianity that lacks joy and only follows rules is not real Christianity. One who nourishes his soul daily from the strengthening fountain of life, the Gospel, will be a joyful Christian. Pray daily for a joyful spirit.

Let others partake of your joy daily. Give joy to others. We will experience a joyful heart by sharing joy with others. Nourish your soul daily at the fountain of joy. This will all lead to a calm happiness in your faith. Joy is the hidden chime in your soul which makes every day a Sunday. Christians are people who can make it easier for others to believe in God by letting joy beam from their eyes and hearts. Therefore, serve the Lord with gladness, and always be joyful. ■

Once visited a woman who suffered from frequent bouts of depression. Many afflictions weighed heavily on her, affecting her disposition. Darkness often seemed to surround her. When this troubled woman read her Bible, her thoughts focused only God’s words concerning judgment and warnings. His strengthening and comforting promises, however, never seemed to settle in her heart.

Once again I found the poor woman in this pitiable situation as I visited her. After listening quietly and sympathetically to the lengthy report of this tormented person, I asked her, “Have you already prayed today?” “Oh, of course!” she answered. “I do that first thing in the morning.”

“May I ask what you prayed for?”

“I asked for the salvation of my children,” she answered in a muffled tone.

“Do you not have any reason to give thanks to God?”

“What would I be thankful for early in the morning?” she countered with surprise.

I quickly replied, “We should not only thank God for what we have already received, but also for what we expect to receive. Jonah thanked God while he was still inside the slimy prison of the fish. Paul and Silas praised God while their feet were still fastened in the stocks.”

Her interest peaked, the distressed woman listened and then replied, “I have never noticed this in the Bible. I will take note of it.”

“Yes, make sure to thank God every morning for the gifts of His promises He will fulfill. In such thankfulness, there is confidence, joy, and power in faith.”

The next time I visited her, she conveyed to me how she now endeavors to thank God for His promises. The heavy veil of depression had lifted. I could see in her face and eyes that the joy of her faith lived in her heart. ■

Nevertheless, He was Happy

I was sitting in the train across from a man who caught my attention because of his friendly facial expression. Before long, we struck up a conversation. He told me how good his life was. His family life was enjoyable and peaceful. His small business gave him a secure income. He rejoiced that he was gifted with a musical talent and knew many songs by memory, and learning new ones was not a challenge for him. The most exquisite gift, however, was his faith in Christ. Through our Lord Jesus Christ, he had found peace for his soul. For that reason, he could only give praise and thanks for everything that God's grace had done for him.

It was very beneficial for me to meet up with this content person. Who was this happy person? He was a man who had been totally blind for the past 36 years. He only had sight for his first year of life, which he did not remember. Ever since his second year of life, he had been surrounded by total darkness. However, the beam of God's love was shining so brightly in his soul that he could do nothing else but give praise and thanks to God.

Through this encounter, I was reminded of another blind person's response when someone commented that his blindness must be a difficult and tough lot. His response was, "A tough lot? Oh no, I would never want to trade my previous life where I had my eyesight and I was totally healthy, for what I have now. It was only when my outward light changed to darkness that I got to know my Lord and Savior. Since then, I have truly become a happy and content person. What I gave up in outward joy and pleasure is greatly outweighed by what I have received through a personal relationship with my Savior."

My friend on the train shared from the depths of his heart all the benefits he received in his faith as well as in his Lord and Savior. At the same time, his face was beaming with happiness and peace so that no one could ever doubt his testimony. There were powers and strengths prevalent which were stronger than earthly happiness as well as earthly suffering and hardship.

Through this testimony, the blind man, without realizing it, for he was a tool in God's hand, guided the distraught soul of his listener towards the bright shining light of the Gospel. ■



Rejoice!

Who doesn't delight in being joyful? There are many people who don't possess much joy in their lives, even children of God. Looking to the Word of God, we find it is our privilege to be filled with joy at all times. In Romans 15:13, we read, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing." John 15:11 states, "These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." The apostle Paul also encourages us, saying, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4).

Some people say that when they were first saved, they experienced continual joy, but with the many trials and tribulations over the years, this joy has waned. Without a doubt, people who relinquished their burden of sin at Jesus' feet were filled with joy. The prophet Isaiah spoke of this experience when he said, "And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isaiah 35:10).

We could visualize this by imagining two jars, one the "jar of sadness" and the other the "jar of joy." The jar of the sinner is empty. "There is no peace,"

says the Lord, 'for the wicked'" (Isaiah 48:22). But as soon as he comes to Christ, he finds peace. Immediately, the jar of sorrow and sadness is replaced with the jar of joy, often to overflowing. If he endeavors to do what God's Word reveals to him for the rest of his life, his jar will be filled with joy and delight.

We can't expect to thrive and flourish in our Christian walk if we remain just hearers but not doers of the Word. If we are truly doers of the Word, then our jar will be filled with joy. Let's see what God's Word says about this: "My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials" (James 1:2). We should especially note the small word "all." If we can count our trials as "all" joy, then our jar will always be filled to the brim with joy.

Unfortunately, many are not in the position where their jar is filled with the fullness of joy, because they have become spiritually dull. Even when all the blessings of heaven surround them, they still don't feel real joy. These poor souls need reviving by the Holy Spirit.

Dear reader, let's be deliberate in having a close walk with the Lord, searching in His Word, so we too can have this inner joy in the Lord and be a blessing for those around us. V. L. ■



Rejoice Always?

“Rejoice always . . .” (1. Thessalonians 5:16)

“Rejoice!” That sounds good, but, “rejoice always”? If we take a look at our world, at all the problems and needs, who can rejoice always? It seems as if the apostle Paul never thought of those times or experienced them himself. Yet, in God’s Word we see how the apostle had to suffer persecutions, dangers, hardships, needs and disappointments.

The word “Rejoice always” was given to the apostle through the Holy Spirit. But, it is written for believers, and only they can understand it. They are the ones who have found the spring of eternal joy. Christ, Who was “sorrowful, even to death” (Mark 14:34), nailed their fear to the cross, eradicating it for believers.

Jesus said in John 16:33, “These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.” We have a contrast here: “in Me” and “in the world.” In the world you will have tribulation (or fear), not in Me. In this we see the great privilege always rejoicing is for the believer.

However, it is not just a privilege; it is also a command. Sadly, many believers struggle to obey it. Perhaps they are not truly believers, or maybe some struggle more in this area than others. Jesus told His disciples many times that their joy should be complete. It is only complete if it remains

during difficulties, troubles, concerns, and sickness. Those who truly believe know that all things work for good to those who love God.

They can say, “If God is for us, who can be against us? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).

And in Philippians Paul writes, “Rejoice in the Lord always” (Philippians 4:4). Here we can also consider this contrast between “in the Lord” and “in the world.” What is impossible in the world is made possible in the Lord. The source of joy is still available. Christ is the source of eternal joy. The man of God of the old covenant, Nehemiah, already stated, “The joy of the Lord is your strength” (Nehemiah 8:10).

The joy of the Lord is so strong that it can glory even in suffering. The believer sees the blessing that is hidden in trials. He can count it all joy when he falls into various trials, knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience (see James 1:2-3).

The believer who does not doubt the Father’s love, also does not become discouraged when he is chastened (Hebrews 12:5). Though rebuke does not seem joyful at the time, later it brings a peaceful fruit of righteousness. In God’s many promises we find confirmation that a believer can always rejoice.

The three men in the fiery furnace praised and worshiped God. Paul and Silas praised God when they sat in prison. During the great persecution of the Christians they couldn’t stop them from praising when they were led to the stake where they were martyred.

When Jesus tells us, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20), do we still have reason to trust? Some say that Christians are sad people. This is not true! God’s children can rejoice, and this joy makes them strong, so they can live their lives to God’s praise and as a blessing for others.

“Rejoice always.” This word applies to you too, if you feel misunderstood in your family. It is meant for you if you have lost a loved one. Or if you are suffering pain, this command is for you. Yes, it is meant for us all, whether we are young or old, poor or rich, educated or uneducated. Jesus, the Son of Righteousness will give us this joy! ■

R. R. Stefan

My Joy

“But it is good for me to draw near to God” (Psalm 73:28a).

That is my joy. The joys in this world and in the life of most people are few. The pilgrimage through life is difficult for those who eat their bread in the sweat of their faces (Genesis 3:19). If we consider people rushing by us in a big city, we find almost all of them showing the marks of sorrow or worry on their faces. Many and varied are the burdens and the pain people bear, and life holds bitterness of one kind or another for each of us. This has always been the case, and today, nothing has changed.

Already thousands of years ago, a song writer wrote, “My flesh and my heart fail; but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever” (Psalm 73:26).

He found his joy in the Lord. Can we find our joy and strength of heart in God today as well? Dear Reader, do you know this joy? It is a joy that fills the heart even in days of suffering and pain. It is the joy of those who draw near to God.

This is my joy, a joy that only those can understand who have experienced it. When all is dark around us, when there is no ray of hope in sight to brighten our way, when we must part with what we love and hold dear, when our comfort and everything we had hoped for

seems to be crumbling and turning to dust—then, and precisely then—peace and a deep holy joy can fill our hearts. It is the security of holding and being held by the strong hand of God, Who will never let us fall.

Blessed are those who experience this joy. They are never too poor, too forsaken, too sick, too discouraged, too disillusioned for God to be their strength and their joy. Despite the circumstances, He is their comfort and hope. “It is good . . . to draw near to God.” ■



Reason for Abiding Joy

“Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, ‘Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.’ . . . ‘Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’” (Luke 10:17, 20)

Why did the Lord reprehend their joy? Is it wrong to be joyful? Is it wrong when we’re victorious over sin and Satan’s power? Shouldn’t we rejoice when the Lord empowers us to help others escape the enemy’s power? Yes, we should rejoice. In Acts 8:5 and 8, we read about the efforts of Philip in a similar situation as the seventy, when unclean spirits departed from the possessed. Many disabled and lame were also healed, and a huge sense of joy filled the town. We read of the same joy in Acts 15:3 when Paul and Barnabas gave account of the heathen conversions in various churches. It caused joy among all the brethren.

Isn’t the gospel a joyful message for the messenger and for the ones who genuinely accept the message? Even the enemies noticed and marveled at the joy that filled Paul and John. So why did Jesus rebuke the seventy, telling them not to rejoice that the spirits were subject to them? Was the Lord not pleased with the success of the seventy? Yes, He was happy that very hour (Luke 10:21-22) because His life’s mission had begun to reap visible fruit. He obtained co-workers, and His prayers had begun

to be answered: first twelve, then seventy. Satan’s power and reign crumbled, and he was thrust out of men’s hearts. The powerful evil one had to flee from the Almighty One. Yes, that was reason to rejoice and thank God!

Why, then, was He not pleased with the joy of the seventy? Perhaps the One that sees the heart and all things noticed some selfish pride in their joy. Sadly, He often took notice of that very thing in the twelve disciples. They said, “The demons are subject to us in Your name.” And Jesus answered them, “Do not rejoice . . . that the spirits are subject to you.” Next to the Lord Jesus and His name, they seemed to “see themselves,” their own persons. Their joy would have been pure if they only had given God the glory. But since they regarded their own deeds, the Lord criticized them. There was a certain amount of danger that their selfish joy would likely turn into pride. The good Shepherd, who cared so deeply about them, warned them for this reason and said, “Do not rejoice . . . that the spirits are subject to you.” It was the unsanctified condition of their hearts before Pentecost, which is also prevalent

in our day and age. Even today, the eye of the Lord finds this tendency in many who are born-again, not only in self-serving joy, but in other things as well. The Lord repeatedly reminded His disciples of these self-serving tendencies and taught them pure and complete love by His own perfect example and word. He saw their deficiency and prayed for their sanctification, as noted in John 17:20. He still prays this for you and for me. The Lord also gave His life so that all born-again believers would be sanctified in truth. Truth will not only set us free from our committed sins but also from this depraved, self-seeking tendency. Only then can we experience a complete and pure joy in the midst of great blessings and give God the glory alone. It’s what the Lord meant when He said we should rejoice because our names are written in heaven. He wanted to direct the attention of those seventy from “self” to the grace of God.

After the disciples experienced sanctification on the day of Pentecost, we read wonderful accounts of their success in their work for the Lord. Great rejoicing was not only in their hearts but also noticeable in their faces, and they gave God all



Announcements

Convention in Edmonton, Alberta

October 12th - 14th, 2019

A note:

The Foundation of Faith is shipped free of charge to be a blessing and a source of strength and joy for many.

Is there anyone that you know who would appreciate receiving this publication?

We are happy to send the Foundation of Faith

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Please pray for this ministry.

the glory from the bottom of their hearts. Their joy was pure. In 1 Corinthians 15:10, Paul gives account of his achievements in the ministry. “But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.”

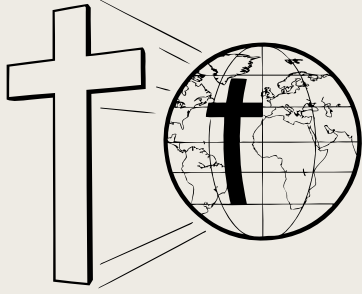
And now I ask you, dear brother and sister: if you are successful (as the seventy were) in your work for the Lord, in your sermons, in answered prayers, divine healing, expulsion of evil spirits, at the conversion of sinners, as well as you as a choir director, singer, musician, Sunday School teacher, etc.—is your joy pure? Is anything that is self-seeking still within? When God blesses you materially, what kind of feelings do you harbor? The nature of your joy can help you determine how you stand before God. Have you experienced sanctification yet? Do you notice any selfishness in your joy? The Lord will caution you to prevent evil fruit from prospering. And He will say to you, “Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this . . . but rather rejoice because your names are written in

heaven.” In other words, give God the glory in all of your success. Fer- vently seek the experience of sanc- tification.

Do sanctified people never have temptations to entertain self-seek- ing motives? Yes, of course! We are human beings and as such will always have to deal with “self.” The Lord was also tempted in this area. Before His spiritual work began, the enemy tried to defile the Lord by tempting Him to act accord- ing to human, selfish desires. He was asked to perform miracles for self-seeking reasons. However, He recognized the devil and the dan- ger He was in and resisted him. He waited for God’s timing and then performed great miracles accord- ing to God’s assignment. He also did them out of the purest motives, in God’s love.

Paul received a thorn in his flesh, lest he slipped into false joy. This kept him humble. We must contin- ue to pray that our own joy might not mix with impure thoughts and that we may always have the joy of the Lord in our hearts. Our greatest joy should be that our names are written in heaven. ■

Salomon Weissburger



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Rejoice in that Day

*But rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings
Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify
God in this matter (1 Peter 4:13, 16).*

Jesus speaks of a mysterious, deep joy in Luke 6:22-23a. What He says about this joy seems almost impossible, or even contradictory: "Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out . . . Rejoice in that day." Are these things not cause for deep injury and sorrow? How can it be possible to be joyful in these situations? But Jesus says, "Rejoice in that day." It is a joy that can't be found in the things of this world, but we can possess it in this world. Rejection, insults, misunderstandings, and hatred can only be experienced in this life. But if we can rejoice in the midst of such bitter experiences, then this joy must come from a supernatural source. And this joy can live in our hearts now. There are some basic facts that describe this joy:

Joy is a true gift of God.

One can't buy it in a small shop nor in a large department store. One can't inherit it from anyone nor buy it at any price because it is a truly great possession. Christ set the price for this joy on the cross, and Isaiah explains it: "The chastisement for our peace was upon Him" (Isaiah 53:5). This peace gives us this joy.

Joy is a true mystery.

Joy can't be explained, but it can be seen and experienced. Joy has repeatedly astonished people of all races and

classes. We read of Stephen, how he was attacked during a sermon, seized, dragged before the high council, and heavily accused by false witnesses. "And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). How could this light on the face of a man be explained in the midst of an unruly crowd? A poet explains it this way: "The inner life of a Christian is illuminated, even though they are persecuted from the outside." Peter also knew the secret of this joy and could testify to his severely tested readers: "Rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings . . . Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in this matter" (1 Peter 4:13, 16).

This joy is a true heart-and-soul joy.

Joy is related to a life with God and is not dependent on the changing of the times or external circumstances. It is not a joy we can make ourselves, but is given from God! It is the highest and, at the same time, deepest joy that exists in this life. Someone said, "What sleep means to the body, so joy is to the spirit." But the joy of the soul surpasses both. Joy's source is Jesus Christ, at Whose coming the angel exclaimed, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy" (Luke 2:10). And we experience this joy through redemption and freedom in Christ, for only the free soul and the pure heart can truly be happy.



How does joy prove itself in everyday life?

Years ago, a wealthy landowner rode on his stately horse and stopped to watch a poor man pounding stones. This man was neither sad nor grumpy but quite cheerful and had just finished singing a song. Puzzled, the proud landowner asked, “How can you sing and be happy while doing such laborious, hard work?” “My lord,” was the answer, “God has given me no other work. Even if I have to earn my bread by the sweat of my brow, the Lord still gives me my daily bread and a joyful heart in Jesus. I would not trade with any king.” Thoughtfully, the landowner rode home. He realized that, in reality, he was poorer than this stonecutter. The desire for true wealth in God was awakened in him.

“Rejoice in that day,” Jesus said. When? When you suffer innocently, when you are wrongly accused, when you are misunderstood and rejected for your faith’s sake. One can also confidently add, when you bless those who

curse you, when you do good to those who hate you, when you pray for those who insult and persecute you, and when you love those who do not love you. And when men say all kinds of evil against you falsely, rejoice and be exceedingly glad (see Matthew 5).

And again, Jesus directs us to the great importance of an innocent and pure heart. This is the possession and the foundation you must stand on in order to be joyful in life’s difficult situations.

Encouragingly, Jesus adds, “For indeed your reward is great in heaven.” He strengthens this joy in us by the unerring hope of eternal glory. He taught us to look beyond this life and keep our eye on that eternal goal when He said, “These things I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full” (John 15:11).

May the joy in the Lord remain our strength until we reach our heavenly goal. There, we will rejoice in an even greater eternal joy. ■

Strength Through Joy?

On the island of Rügen, in its most beautiful bay, lies the city of Prora. It is the site of an immense building complex: the so-called Colossus of Prora, now under protection as a historical landmark. It originally comprised eight apartment blocks lined up in a single row more than four kilometers (2.5 mi) long. The facility was designed to offer some 20,000 people a vacation opportunity surrounded by nature's beauty. However, it was never completed. Construction was interrupted by the start of World War II, and much of what had already been built was destroyed during the war.

The original purpose of this huge compound along with its assorted leisure facilities is of particular interest. It was designated "KdF-Seebad Rügen": Seebad means "seaside resort," and KdF stands for Kraft durch Freude, which translates as "strength through joy." The idea was to structure the leisure activities of the German population in the 1930s, simultaneously monitoring the people and bringing them into line, all to give the German people "strength." On one hand, healthy workers would boost the economy; on the other, the German people would be made stronger and prepared for war. The idea was that healthy "joy" through sports and abstention from immoral pleasures would give workers "strength" and improve their performance. Today, we know that the National Socialists did not have the people's best interests in mind but were rather in the process of plunging them deep into disaster for their own selfish gain. We thank God that this horrible time is in the past, and we should pray for our governments so nothing similar ever happens again. Let's remember that this kind of joy did not have the desired result.

Strength through joy. Doesn't God's Word support a similar idea? In the book of Nehemiah, we read about the Israelites returning from captivity. The reading of the law brought them to the realization that they were no longer living in accordance with God's commandments. This revelation dismayed and devastated them, and the

entire nation began to weep. For their part, Nehemiah and Ezra tried to encourage them, urging them not to stop at this insight but to focus on the Lord and grow stronger in Him. In Nehemiah 8:10, we find the remarkable words, "The joy of the Lord is your strength." And it seems the people took this advice to heart, because they soon started to turn to the Lord, fasting, praying, repenting, and renewing their covenant with God. They returned to God's old laws and commandments and were greatly blessed by Him (Nehemiah 12:43).

In contrast to the National Socialists' ideology, the Israelites' joy in the Lord did have the desired effect, and their faith was strengthened.

Their story is not unique; the Bible reports of one person after the other seeking joy in the Lord and finding strength in Him. Often, they found this joy by simply staying close to God and putting all their hope in Him. This was the case for both Asaph (Psalm 73:28) and David, whose example is particularly powerful. In 1 Samuel 30, we read of him being trapped in a terrible situation. As related in the preceding chapters, the worst thing was that he had, in a sense, brought it upon himself. However, instead of giving up, David sought and found strength in the Lord, his God (1 Samuel 30:6).

Do you want to let this example encourage you? Maybe you, too, have ended up in a situation that seems hopeless, and maybe you, too, have only yourself to blame. Maybe you feel you'll lose no matter what you do. But be assured; if your outlook is this bleak, it's only because you left God out of the equation. He stands by His Word, and no situation is hopeless for Him. Cling tightly to Him, confess your helplessness to Him, and let Him strengthen you.

Do you have joy in the Lord? If joy in the Lord equals strength, a lack of joy among Christians will translate to a lack of strength. May God help us stay joyful and strong!

Niko Ernst, Herford (DE)



Lessons from School (8)

Miraculously, I passed all my exams so far. One of my friends said, “You’re always lucky when you fill in your answers!” Since blessings are known to come from the Lord, this wasn’t wrong, but I still had to smile and explain my best practice: “Well, I study the material I find to be important, and then I pray it’ll show up on the exam.”

But this time in physiology, it wasn’t enough. Even during the exam, I was concerned, and soon it was revealed that I had failed. My friends laughed at my embarrassment. Most of them had failed exams more than once and felt it was no big deal. You simply had to rewrite them at the end of the holidays. But I was sad and ashamed. It had not been my goal to ace the exam, but by no means did I want my studies to be extended because of this or even that I lose an entire semester. I took a considerable amount of books with me on vacation to work on the failed subject. But my mother suggested that I first rest for a week. During this time, one of my classmates wrote me a message asking if we had heard that this year, physiology could be passed with fewer points than ever before? Not only had the threshold been lowered because an above-average number of students had achieved a poor result, but they had also removed a question entirely because it was misleading. About 10 students (out of more than 300) later benefited from this adjustment, and I was one of them. Even in retrospect, God had found a way to turn everything around, so that from experience with Asaph I can say, “the right hand of the Most High has changed [everything]” (Psalm 77:10 NASB), even if humanly speaking, it were already too late. ■

Corinna Kowalski, Hamm (DE)

VERSE OF THE MONTH

“He is a shield to those who walk upright” (Proverbs 2:7)

At some point in your Christian walk, the thought may have occurred to you, “I can no longer manage. I can no longer be a follower.” Usually Satan uses this time of discouragement and whispers, “It looks much better for the others, but for you it’s useless.”

These thoughts may not be without basis. Maybe you have lost your way. A reason for your uncertainty may be that you have lost your focus. Or you may have “slipped up” or “stumbled” in your Christian life and now believe it is impossible to ever reach your goal.

The disciples of Jesus had a similar experience. Horrified, they asked their Master the question, “Who can be saved?” Jesus gave them a confidence-inspiring answer: “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matthew 19:25-26).

Remember that God totally knows your plans and motives. If you honestly and truly pursue God’s plan, then the promise stating that God will protect you and bring you safely to your goal is yours. Never give up!

The Secret

“This is the last book I’m going to leaf through. Will I find it in here?” Bertha asked herself. “I’ve been sitting here for a long time looking for the secret to that happy life I see day after day in Miss Lydia.—And my heart? How miserable and abandoned I feel! She’s not particularly pretty and doesn’t have any special abilities, but always seems so satisfied, always beaming with joy.”

With these words, Bertha buried her head in her hands and cried silently. She had it so good. She had a loving mother who cared for her, and essentially everything revolved around her. She should be happy!

Miss Lydia, who held a slightly lower position in the same company, didn’t have it so easy in life. Her sick mother needed her help so much when she came home tired from work in the evening. Her small salary was not enough to hire a nurse.

“Would I have the nerve to ask Miss Lydia to come over for an hour tomorrow?” Bertha wondered. “Maybe she can tell me what’s missing in my life. Today, she was in such a hurry to leave after work. The sick Mrs. M. in the little attic room on Mill Street is probably waiting for her, seeing as she goes there so often. But I’ll ask her tomorrow.”

So the next day the two girls went out together a short ways outside the city, and Lydia was able to tell her colleague the secret to a happy life.—

“Because the joy we give returns to our own hearts!” These were the last words Lydia was able to express.

Bertha could no longer keep silent. “Now I understand the adage I once learned at school. It’s been so long since I’ve given it any thought. And now it comes so vividly to my mind: “Give, and it will be given to you!”—It’s true, up to this moment, to be exact, I have lived only for myself. I am ashamed to

admit I’ve always looked out for my own good and pleasure and had little understanding for others. But I increasingly felt that I’m wasting away. I no longer want to live this way. I want to do what you do. Then my life will take a different course, will it not?”

Now the moment had come for Lydia to give testimony of the most precious thing in her life. Tears of joy came to her eyes as she and Bertha exchanged ideas. But she bravely suppressed them. She had often prayed for her colleague, and now she could see so clearly: her prayers were not in vain. God had already secretly worked in the heart of her colleague and paved the way. She could see that.

With concise, clear words, as God’s Spirit prompted, she explained to Bertha the salvation her soul obtained through faith in the blood of Christ. It was said so simply, yet deeply impressed Bertha. Her heart was open for it. Worldliness and living for herself faded into the background and lost all attraction, because they had failed completely and could not satisfy her heart.

But now a new world opened to her, of which she had probably known even less than Nicodemus had, who came to Jesus at night to discuss salvation. Yes, to have been born again, to have forgiveness of sins, that must form the foundation, and only then will good works have their proper value. No good works can get us into heaven. Only faith in Jesus can bring life. It is He Who places in our hearts true desire to act selflessly among our fellow men. He who has his pleasure in that has the purest, even the most enduring pleasure, which extends into eternity and makes us understand the word of the Lord Jesus: “Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.” Yes, that is part of a joyful, happy life’s secret! ■

Maria Waurich



How Jan Became Happy

One Sunday, Jan came home from Sunday School deep in thought. Sitting down in a corner, he kept thinking about the story they had been told about a little girl who had died.

Suddenly he jumped up. “Mommy, little Lisa, the girl the Sunday School teacher told us about, was not afraid when she died!” The mother looked up from her work and asked, “Why not?”—“You know, Lisa had a clean heart. The Savior had washed away all her sins, so she knew He loved her very much. And where her Savior is, she doesn’t need to be afraid. Mommy, I would be scared if I had to die. Is the song actually true that we learned?”

*He sees what I do, He hears what I say,
my Savior writes it all down?”*

“Oh yes, darling, everything we do and say, the Lord Jesus sees and hears it all. He even knows all evil thoughts.”

“Oh Mommy, then He knows I lied.” Tears rolled down Jan’s cheeks, and sobbing, he confessed to his mother that

he had lied to her last week and even stolen raisins.

His mother hugged him and said, “Now tell all this to the Lord. Ask Him to make your heart completely white and to forgive you for everything. In Isaiah 1:18 it says, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.’”

Jan quickly knelt and, crying, confessed to the Savior all that he had done and asked for forgiveness of his many sins.

Because the Lord Jesus loves sinners so much, Jan became His lamb too. He was able to believe that the Savior also shed His blood on the cross for his sins. Oh, how happy and joyful he became! He threw his arms around his mother’s neck. “Mommy, the Savior has given me a clean heart and forgiven all my sins. Forgive me, too, for often making you sad.” “Of course, my son, everything is good!”

Dear child, would you like to have a clean heart too? Then follow the example of Jan. Jesus loves you too! ■

I Will Rejoice

*That was the decision, yes, the attitude of the apostle Paul.
And it can also be yours, regardless of which situation you may be in.
Such a life will bless others.*

Is this title appropriate for a senior's page? Isn't it a contradiction to associate aging with joy? You could almost believe that the signs of aging exclude joy. That's not true. The opposite has been my experience with those I've met who are dealing with signs of aging. They are still joyful and seem to exude joy without saying a word. Of course, we also meet others whose joy is missing. Their lives are composed of negativity. If you stay in their presence too long, chances are you may also be infected by this negative virus.

"I will rejoice" is our theme. It is a decision, a good one. You might ask, "How is that a decision?" That's the point. We could acquire the mindset that joy is only possible when all things in life go according to our plans. That means that all my wishes, plans, and dreams are fulfilled, and then, and only then, will I be joyful. Then our joy is a result of life's circumstances. If things are going well, we are joyful, otherwise . . .

Paul wrote these well-known words to the church in Philippi: "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice" (Philippians 4:4). What does "always" mean? I prefer to use other translations to better understand a word or saying. "Always" has been translated as "every time," "no matter what happens," or in a freer translation, "day by day." It could then follow that I should be joyful every day, always, or no matter what happens. Paul demanded much. Most certainly you have noticed that he repeats and emphasizes these thoughts two times. Most importantly, Paul doesn't make joy dependent on our external circumstances but instead demands his readers to be joyful. This, then, is how joy becomes a personal decision.

Paul himself chose to be joyful. We could assume the person who writes, "Rejoice in the Lord," is doing well.

However, the direct opposite was the case. The letter addressed to the Philippians is one of the "prison letters" of the apostle Paul. From this designation, we immediately understand that Paul was not on holiday, relaxing in the sun; because of his faith, he was in prison. Paul was a man tested by many tribulations. Whoever reads the book of Acts and Paul's letters will always find him enduring some kind of trial. Difficulties were just part of his life. In our scripture, he is in prison but reaches for his pen and encourages his brothers and sisters in the faith to be joyful. Worth noting is that before he encourages others to be joyful, he speaks of his own joy. If you have read Philippians uninterrupted, you noticed that "joy" and "joyful" are repeated many times.

Let me tell you of an occurrence from the apostle Paul's life that will more clearly show you his attitude. Wanting to visit him to see how he's doing, we find him in prison in Philippi, along with his friend Silas. They are locked up with shackles on their feet and awaiting their verdicts. They've also been whipped, not for committing a crime, but because they were preaching the gospel. Such a whipping was a gruesome form of punishment. Did Paul have this in mind when he wrote to the Corinthians, "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one" (2 Corinthians 11:24)? Let's look at these two men. What are they doing? What music are we hearing from their cell? Luke wrote, "But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25). Is that possible? Songs of praise in such a miserable situation? They had been mistreated, and unmercifully put back into their cell. Much of their belongings were taken from them but not their "joy in the Lord." This joy in the Lord remained with them, even

in prison. This was the reason for the songs of praise at midnight. It is also noteworthy that all these incidents were used by God to bring the jailer to believe because of the joy of these two men.

We have just dealt with the invitation of Paul for us to be joyful in all situations. We have found that this author is in prison, and we realize he “practices what he preaches.” Over and over, this joy is visible in his life. What we must understand is the source of his joy. He found his joy in God, in his relationship with God, and the grace of God, which is sufficient in all circumstances. This joyfulness must be experienced in order to really understand it. It is joy that the world cannot give. That is how it is. This joy originates from God.

Yet there is one question we cannot simply ignore: What do we do with this scripture, this challenge to be joyful? We must make a decision. The easiest way would be to find excuses and to indulge in self-pity. Remember, we don’t see such actions from the apostle Paul. He and his friend, Silas, sang a song of praise. How many people in the last several hundred years have been blessed by their singing? People have chosen to change their behavior because of Paul and Silas’ joy, and have gone their way encouraged.

And us? You and I? What do we want to do? Of course, I can only answer this question for myself. I have decided to be joyful! I want to be joyful. The longer I ponder this question, the more reasons I find to be joyful here on this earth. In the future, when I have reached my goal, I will be filled with “joy inexpressible and full of glory” (1 Peter 1:8).

Before you put the *Foundation of Faith* aside or go on to the next article, why don’t you

also decide to be joyful? This may not change all of life’s situations, but your approach to them may be helped and be your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Who knows; maybe your behavior may be a blessing to others just as it was in Philippi for the jailer. That would be desirable, wouldn’t it?

Let’s recall the verse together one more time so we don’t forget: “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). ■

Harry Semenuk



On the Road of Salvation

Part 8

The Council of Balaam

Ron Taron

God's Plan of Salvation in the History of Israel

“Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the LORD was aroused against Israel. Then the LORD said to Moses, ‘Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the LORD, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the LORD may turn away from Israel’” (Numbers 25:1-4).

“Look, these women caused the children of Israel, through the counsel of Balaam, to trespass against the LORD in the incident of Peor, and there was a plague among the congregation of the LORD” (Numbers 31:16).

Balak, the Moabite king, had called Balaam to curse God's people. Balaam saw himself as the man whose eyes God had opened, but when he asked God whether to go to Balak, He forbade him to curse Israel. However, the ever-increasing bribes Balak offered Balaam induced him to seek a compromise. God finally had to halt him in his tracks by a speaking donkey, after which he went and blessed Israel. But in his heart, Balaam desired to reciprocate Balak's largess and counseled him to invite Israel to the Moabites' celebrations and feasts.

When Balak did that, it didn't take long and Israel had once again sinned grievously against God. The men of Israel came to the feasts of Baal of Peor and fornicated with the daughters of Moab, who brought them to the point of worshipping their god. Soon “Israel was joined to Baal of Peor.” Once again, they turned from the true God and joined their hearts to a terrible idol.

How did Israel fall so far?

1. They fell into the council of Balaam. Balaam's advice effected compromise and consorting with the enemy. How is it possible to befriend one's mortal enemy who has only one goal, and that is to destroy you? And then to do it under his conditions? But isn't this exactly what many Christians in our time do? They enter into compromise with the world and with sin, “fornicate” with it and give their hearts to the “Baal-god” of the world!

2. Balaam knew that a nation blessed by God was invincible. The stronger the enemy, the more they would cling to the almighty God. The greater the danger, the more they would trust in God. If they would realize their helplessness and cry to God, He would respond mightily and begin fighting for His people. Looking back at the history of God's people, we see that in times of greatest danger and persecution they made the greatest spiritual gains. All the plots, onslaughts, and attacks of the enemy must fail where God is fighting for His people. They are simply blessed by Him and are under His protection.

3. How can one defeat such a people? The council of Balaam had the intent of separating Israel from their God. Balaam knew that only if the undefiled, transparent relationship of Israel to God was corrupted could God's people be conquered. They would unknowingly need to be brought to a point where they defiled themselves before God. How could this be accomplished? “Invite them to your feasts. First befriend them. Gradually, they need to become accustomed to your way of living. Of course, they won't participate with all your practices at the beginning . . . but ever so slowly. Offer them your purest and best wine in a gesture of friendship. Then your loveliest daughters, first for just a little alcohol-fueled flirt. And from there, they won't even notice how far they'll fall!”



4. God's people cannot be conquered from without; they must themselves take the first step away from God. No power on earth, nor the whole power of hell can tear a child of God out of His hand. "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:27-29). But if Satan can bring us to the point where we willingly leave the protection of our heavenly Father and follow him, then we will suffer a terrible fall.

5. The council of Balaam entices the fleshly lusts and desires of man. "Why don't you come along to our party? Just once, enjoy what the world offers. Join your friends in the stadium, the movie theater, or in a bar. Sure, there might be a few objectionable things there, but it's not all bad either. You don't have to participate in anything that offends you. After your long journey in the desert, after many weeks or years of self-denial, you deserve a little fun. Just come and enjoy it!"

Did Israel immediately begin with adultery back then? No, things began with just a little "innocent" flirt, and those Moabite girls were so interested in hearing of their experiences as God's people. They were just having conversation and could even witness to those lost girls. It was all so harmless!

The Israelites didn't immediately begin sacrificing to Baal of Peor. When this part of the feast came, they didn't participate. But at some point, the roasted meat on their plates smelled and tasted so good, though it came from sacrificial animals. But quickly their initial squirming in discomfort abated, and then disappeared entirely. Totally unaware, the Israelite men were weakening as their

standards began to change. They could hardly wait for the next invitation to a neighborly feast! Their focus had shifted from almighty God to the pleasures and lusts of the world.

6. The intent of the council of Balaam was assimilation and association with the world, with those who were the enemies of God and His people. James writes, "Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God" (James 4:4).

The Consequences of the Council of Balaam

Israel lost their spiritual discernment and vision. Incredibly, they no longer seemed to see anything wrong with adultery and idol worship. How many Christians take part in exactly the same type of events by means of their television or internet connection? And often they're indignant when someone dares to remonstrate against such entertainment. The idol worship of the world has their heart in bondage. Where do you stand, dear Reader?

To follow the council of Balaam is a certain recipe for disaster. It will rob you of the power to have spiritual victory. It will cost you the precious presence and nearness of God, as well as His blessing upon your life. In Israel's time, those who were drawn in by the council of Balaam lost their lives there in the desert. They did not reach the Promised Land. God's Word doesn't say in vain, that we have "escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:4). I pray God would open our eyes so we would take the danger of the council of Balaam seriously. On the Day of Judgment we want to be found worthy to stand before God! ■

A Cheerful Giver

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

In this text, the apostle is not just interested in raising funds, but also in reminding us to give willingly and cheerfully. May these words encourage those of us who have a tendency to draw back when a new opportunity to give or a special occasion to help arises. May we be encouraged to be cheerful givers.

God Himself is the most cheerful of givers.

God is love. His whole essence consists of giving Himself. He is Truth, worthy of worship. The angels around His throne bask in the glory of Him who gives light.

See how the fields are covered with abundant fruit during the late summer and in the fall! The Psalmist declares, “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:15-16). Those whom the Lord supplies with food are innumerable. Not only are hundreds of millions of people fed every day,

but animals are also cared for. God even hears the cry of the ravens. Let us praise the generosity of our Creator with every morsel of bread we eat. Wherever there is poverty and need, the heart of our God is moved with compassion. He seeks to save and heal. God supplies the need of His creation without expecting thanks or being rewarded for it.

The Most High is generous even to those who are unthankful and not worthy of His love. “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). The same can be said of the Son, who portrays the glory of the Father. He is compassionate, and as the King of peace, He walked upon this earth. Often not even having a bed to lay His head on, He accepted the gifts of others and offered refuge and help to the destitute. The poor were not forgotten. In the desert, He fed the hungry multitude with a few loaves and fish, not letting what was left go to waste but gathering it in baskets.

How shameful it is for those who call themselves followers of Christ to have greed! All that we have is a gift from God. He has supplied our needs. We desire to be good stewards of what God has given us, and we wish to use what He has entrusted to us to help others. We want to be cheerful givers.

God rewards a cheerful giver.

The generosity of God’s people will not bring them to ruin. If we are faithful with what God has provided, and use it according to His will, then He will entrust us with more. If you are compassionate, then God’s compassion will be upon you as well. “He who gives to the poor will not lack” (Proverbs 28:27). This isn’t just a cliché but a fact. “There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right but leads to poverty” (Proverbs 11:24).

There was a man who was very miserly in order to save a good amount for his retirement. He had invested his money in a bank that failed, and he lost a huge sum of money. Five years before this financial failure, he was moved with compassion and bought a small farm for a homeless family who could not afford to pay the rent. Later, however, they had a number of good harvests, and they were able to pay him. The money he took from his investment to help others was, in the end, his best investment.

Some stingy people may find themselves cursed due to the way they treat others in order to get ahead. This can take the form of unfaithful employees or ungrateful children sometimes causing them great financial harm. Alternatively, there are those who are compassionate, whom God rewards with health

If I had known

in the family and the means to care for their children so they in turn can also help others. And even when compassion is not rewarded during one's lifetime, it is still true that "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully" (2 Corinthians 9:6).

Let's test this premise by putting it into practice, not for selfish gain in order to profit, but out of genuine compassion. Otherwise, it may work out badly. Let's be generous out of love for our heavenly Father, Who daily blesses us richly with undeserved benefits. As Paul encouraged the church in Corinth to regularly lay aside a collection for the poor in Jerusalem, so let us find opportunity to contribute whenever we experience a special blessing from God. This will give us a cheerful heart, and God loves a cheerful giver!

Let's sow with thanksgiving and accompany each gift with a blessing. All we have comes from God, so let it be used to His glory. Let's give our gifts with the understanding, "What has come from God's hand, we commit into God's hand." Giving in this manner is unselfish and without ulterior motives. It connects us with God and with other people. It produces fruit for eternity. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). ■

R. V.

Years ago, the owner of a farm in Holland had a sign posted out front that said, "If I had known." What gave him this idea? Did he look to the future as if he was having a vision about the bailiff who would one day auction off his land in a bankruptcy sale? Or did he hear the thunder crash and see the lightning strike that would cause his building to go up in smoke in just a few minutes? Somehow this farm vanished over the years, along with the gold inscription posted out front.

This painful lament can often be heard today. Not as an inscription on a house, but in regard to someone's life. Maybe this is the case for you too? Maybe you also call out, "If only I had known what would happen to me tomorrow, or the next day, or in this year!"

How many people have been so uncertain about their future that they turned to fortune-tellers or spiritists? Others attempted suicide because the uncertainty of their fate was a living hell for them. Not only your life on earth is uncertain. At the end, death threatens and the grave awaits under the inscription, "If only I had known!"

Are we so unaware that we are condemned to enter the grave with a big question mark? Is there no evidence? Can no one be found who can say, "I know what is coming!" Do we really have nothing else to say than what Socrates said, "I know that I know nothing"? No, thankfully it isn't so. Already in the Old Testament, a man like Job could proclaim, "I know that my Redeemer lives"! Jesus Christ, God's Son, took the place that each of us sinful people have earned.

We couldn't stand in the presence of a holy and righteous God. But, He carried out His judgment on His Son on the cross of Golgotha so that we might receive life by believing in His death and resurrection. Don't hesitate any longer, but go to the Lord Jesus in faith with your sin and debt. Christ cleanses through His blood. Then you will also proclaim, "I know that my Redeemer lives! And by His name, I have received eternal life!" Then the "If I had known" will vanish from your life. With the apostle Paul you will testify, "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God" (Romans 8:28a).

And in light of your death, which will simply be followed by wakening in heavenly glory, you may say, "For we know that . . . we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). ■

Experiences With God

“So [Jesus] spoke this parable to them, saying: . . . [W]hat woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp, sweep the house, and search carefully until she finds it? And when she has found it, she calls her friends and neighbors together, saying, ‘Rejoice with me, for I have found the piece which I lost!’” (Luke 15:3,8-9).

We have a Heavenly Father who proves His loving kindness in immeasurable ways. I experienced this in a special way once again this past week. One evening, I realized I had misplaced my cell phone and concluded I must have left it in the shopping cart when I had bought groceries that afternoon.

I tried all the obvious means of trying to locate the phone and had inquired at the grocery store to see if anyone had found it, as I continually prayed for help from God. I knew it was an act of carelessness on my part and told God all that in my prayers, admitting that it would be a natural consequence if I wouldn't get it back.

Shortly before closing time, my husband and I biked back to the grocery store to search the area where I had returned my cart that afternoon. The carts had been moved to another area as other shoppers had used them, so I lost hope of finding my phone. An employee, as well as my husband, were calling my number to locate the phone, but without success. I searched among the carts and quietly prayed... O Lord, if it is here, you can open my eyes.”

It was only moments after this prayer, after we had decided that the search was in vain, that we found the phone in one of the carts!

As we marveled at the miracle we had just experienced, my husband remarked. “If God cares to give back a lost cell phone, how would He not answer our prayers for the many lost sons and daughters?”

This assurance brought a joyous anticipation of the time when God will fulfill those promises. We stood in front of the grocery store and wept tears of longing and joy, our hearts strengthened to carry on trusting. ■

Bettina Taron, Steinbach (CA)

As our age increases, so do our physical ailments or afflictions.

Some minor aches and pains come and go. Since March, however, as I lay on my side at night, I often suffered severe pain in my right knee. The pain was so intense, it kept me awake. For this reason, I sometimes took pain medication at nighttime.

During the Easter conference, I allowed myself to be anointed according to James 5. The brothers prayed for me on April 21, 2019. I thank God with my whole heart, that since that day I no longer have felt the severe pain in my knee that once kept me up at night. ■

Herbert Kowalski, Hamm (DE)

Joyful Hours of Prayer

Few people know the indescribable joy of leaving the noise of the world behind and stepping into the presence of God. Only the soul that has discovered the mysteries of prayer and that has forgotten what was behind and looks with clarity on the things that lie ahead knows of this. Only such a soul will recognize that temporal and earthly things fade. Such a soul will see heaven and the future in a brighter, clearer light. In such a heart, the sadness of this world makes room for comfort which comes only from above. For such a soul, the veil of mortality is lifted, and the picture of God's perfection is revealed clearly and comprehensibly.

Our hearts and lives must be pure so that the hour of prayer can be precious. Only those who are raised in the light of a holy life through the grace of God can find true joy in prayer. In turn, one is equipped through prayer to live a life that is pleasing to God. Only a pure heart that is filled with genuine love will hear no other voice in the secret place than the Lord's. Only holy souls can rest in God. When they step into the depths of the mysteries of prayer, they receive a deeper understanding of God's nature.

In the hour of prayer, a soul finds the rest for which it seeks and balm to soothe all wounds. In the hour of prayer, God wants to prepare an abundantly set table with heavenly food for the soul, which satisfies its hunger and thirst. Oh, how many poor souls are in this world who have not yet discovered the joy that can be found in communion with God! Nonetheless, there are those who have learned to free themselves of all worries, hindrances, sorrow, and grief in order to savor the joy of prayer. Therefore, we also want to pray, "Lord, teach us to pray." ■

Rejoice!

Rejoice when you suffer for the Lord,
And when you bear a heavy cross.
Rejoice, though you're hated by the world;
Count it for gain and not for loss.
Rejoice, let not your heart be troubled;
Continue on the narrow path.
Oh, let your striving not be muddled,
Until you reach your home at last.

Rejoice when slanderers assail you,
When those supporting you are few.
If without cause, some will blackmail you,
Oh, trust the Lord, for He is true.
If Jesus Christ does not condemn you,
And you are free from evil thoughts,
Then Jesus calls you blessed when you
Are falsely slandered here for God.

Rejoice, though godless fools are speaking,
When they look down on you with scorn,
If what you've built for God they're seeking
Now to destroy and make forlorn.
God sees the heart, He knows your anguish;
He looks upon His child with love.
He will not leave your soul to languish;
He blesses you from heaven above.

In the Hands of the Master

We are all like musical instruments. We have wonderful possibilities and abilities, but just like a musical instrument, we require the hand of a master to bring out the best. If we are not touched by this Master's hand, the music of our lives will not be beautiful, and no one will be drawn toward it or gladdened and blessed by it.

Many years ago, an organist didn't want to allow a stranger to play on his organ. This man begged him for permission to at least put his hands on the keys and elicit a few tones from the organ. Reluctantly, the old organist allowed it.

But the fingers of the stranger had barely touched the keys when the organ began to play music like never before. The old organist was highly astonished and immediately realized that the organ was touched by the hand of a master. When he asked for the stranger's name, he answered, "I am Mendelssohn."—"And I didn't want to allow you to play on my organ!" the old organist accused himself.

Another narrative states that one time, an old violin in London was being auctioned off. The man who was leading the auction and who offered the violin for sale said that it was an old and very valuable instrument that came from Italy. Then he handed the instrument to a musician whom he recognized in the crowd and requested him to play it. He played as best he could. But no one was impressed, and very little was offered for the violin.

Then a stranger pushed his way forward, an Italian, who asked to see the instrument. After he had carefully examined it, he put it on his shoulder, took hold of the bow, and began to play. Everyone suddenly stopped, for the music they were hearing was not comparable to the music of the previous player.





They could hardly believe it was the same instrument. Every listener was touched by the music.

It was the great master, Paganini, who had the violin in his hand and who was playing it. When he stopped playing, high offers were made for this instrument. In the hands of the first player, it seemed that the valuable, old instrument was no more than a regular violin, and no one knew what a treasure could be obtained.

We people are like this valuable instrument, but unless we give ourselves into the hand of the Master, the capabilities that are slumbering within us will never emerge. Who is this Master to Whom we must give our lives so that it can be beautiful, pleasing, and beneficial for others? It is Jesus, the greatest of all masters. He is the One Who has bestowed beauty on the whole world. We ourselves owe thanks to Him for our lives and all things. Observe the stars in the heavens, the moon, the high mountains in their beauty and grandeur. Listen to the song of the birds. Can't He, who has made all these beautiful things, also make your life beautiful and wonderful?

You are the crown of creation. You have much more value in God's eyes than birds, flowers, or anything else that you see in nature. God made all of this for your sake. He spilled His blood for you to purchase salvation, righteousness that had fallen away when man sinned. He wants you to give up the sin that makes you so unhappy. He wants to redeem you from sin and make you truly happy. He desires to do the best for you and to make the best out of you, but in order to do this, you must submit your life to Him. You must submit yourself into His hands.

Dear Reader, remember that your life will be unsuccessful if you do not hand it over to Him. It is His great love for you that causes Him to pursue you. He asks you to come to Him so He can give you peace in your heart and true rest. You need Him if you want your life on earth to be successful and truly happy. Yes, you need Him if you don't want to die in your sins and be lost forever in eternity. So turn to Him and say, "Here I am, Lord. I submit to You; take me in Your hands." No one has ever regretted it. ■

Joy *Quotes from the Bible:*

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. For with You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.

Psalm 36:8-9

Most assuredly, I say to you that you will weep and lament, but the world will rejoice; and you will be sorrowful, but your sorrow will be turned into joy.

John 16:20

My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise You with joyful lips.

Psalm 63:5

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Philippians 3:1

Your words were found, and I ate them, and Your word was to me the joy and rejoicing of my heart; for I am called by Your name, O Lord God of hosts.

Jeremiah 15:16

And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

Isaiah 35:10

And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy.

Luke 24:52

My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials.

James 1:2