



Foundation of Faith

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FOUNDATION OF FAITH

Editor

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

Editorial Team

John Reimer

Harry Semenjuk

Ron Taron

Hermann Vogt

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Questions and suggestions can be sent to:
contact@foundationoffaith.cc

Please address all other correspondence
and subscription requests to:

Christian Unity Press
5195 Exchange Drive
Flint, MI 48507
Tel.: (810) 732-1831
or email us at
cupress@thechurchofgod.cc
www.christianunitypress.com

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Editorial

Dear Reader,

Isn't God's Word wonderful? It shows us how He leads people from darkness into light and from unbelief into faith.

The Heavenly Father gave up what He held most dear, His one and only Son, Jesus Christ. By sacrificing His Son, God bridged the chasm that separated us from Him, making a way into the kingdom of God for sinners who repent and turn to Him. In the words of Jesus Himself, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15). The command to repent is clear, but what does it really mean?

There is a lot of confusion about the subject of repentance. However, we can be certain that repentance leads to salvation; it changes our mindset, draws us nearer to God, and helps us return to His presence.

The parable of the prodigal son shows us the human side of repentance, the acknowledgment and confession of our own guilt. The son returns to the father, who absolves him of all guilt and sin, granting him peace and assurance of salvation. The father, on the other hand, shows us the divine side of repentance. God, in His mercy, grants us salvation through our faith in the cleansing blood of Jesus Christ.

In His Word, God said, "I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezekiel 33:11).

Dear Reader, for many the word "repentance" evokes a negative reaction. In its true sense, however, repentance is God's invitation to enjoy all His divine blessings, a new life in Christ, communion with God, and eternal salvation.

Yes, repentance and salvation are part of God's wonderful plan for everyone, including you.

H. D. Nimz

Courage to Be Honest

One day, a retired civil servant from a distinguished family came to my father looking for a job. Physical labor would have suited him best, but his strength was no longer sufficient for that.

A New Line of Work

My father, who ran an institution for disabled people in the Bethel district of Bielefeld, thought about how he could employ him. It turned out he knew a lot about foreign stamps. As such, the plan was made to collect these stamps and sell them to raise funds for the organization. My father asked friends in town and abroad to send him used and new stamps.

His request was not ignored, and soon, letters and small packages with stamps, postcards, and envelopes arrived from all around the globe.

Since my father often included us children to help with opening and processing his mail, I gained some insight into the tasks of his new employee in the stamp department. I already had a small stamp collection, so the shipments my father received were doubly appealing and interesting to me.

The “Exchange Business”

It often happened that the incoming stamps could not immediately be forwarded, since my father wanted to respond to the letters enclosed with the gift and express his gratitude for the stamps. For this reason, he shoved the letters into a specific open shelf in his desk.

I knew this shelf well, and used the lunch hour, the time when my father was resting, to explore the contents of the letters and look at all the stamps.

I can still see some of the stamps from South Africa that especially caught my eye. I didn’t dare simply take them. But what if I secretly exchanged them? So, I estimated their value, placed some of my stamps into the envelope, and took the triangular stamps for my collection.

I can’t recall how often I repeated this exchange process with other stamps. I just know it was then that

my peace vanished. I tried to escape the unsettled feeling by replacing the confiscated stamps with some of double or triple value. It was useless.

It came to the point that I could not stand to even look at my collection. I found it disgusting. I found an opportunity to discreetly hand it over to the small stamp venture that was flourishing under the direction of the new employee.

Even that didn’t help. Over and over, I heard a voice in me say, “You have to tell your father. It’s written in the Bible, ‘He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy’” (Proverbs 29:13).

“My Dear Son”

For years, I fought against my conscience. Often, I stood at my father’s door with the intention to just say it. But at the last minute, my resolve always shattered.

Finally, I made the decision. I was already an adult. My father was sitting at the same place where I had secretly sat when I rifled through his stamps.

After my confession, he looked at me with an expression of deep joy and thankfulness. Then he kissed me and exclaimed in a joyful, loving way, “My dear boy!” Then all was right. I left with a heart filled with gladness, courage, and confidence, because confession brings joy, peace, and contentment. An unrepentant heart, on the other hand, results in regret, despondency, unrest, and lack of peace.

All those years would have been so much easier if I had had the courage to be honest and believe in the goodness of my father, which I had witnessed every day.

How much more than others does our heavenly Father wait for the moment when we come near Him with a repentant heart. That is the way to escape the approaching Day of Judgment. ■

Friedrich von Bodelschwingh (1877-1946)

On the Lamb Our Souls Are Resting

The words of the German song “Auf dem Lamm ruht meine Seele” (translated as “On the Lamb Our Souls Are Resting,” but commonly known as the hymn “In the Cross of Christ I Glory” in English) were written through an experience that changed the life of the author.



As a student in Bonn, Julius Anton von Poseck stood among the spectators who waited eagerly for the great procession on August 15, 1848, on the occasion of the 600th anniversary of the Cologne Cathedral. For some reason, he left his good vantage point, which was taken over right away by a young girl. Immediately afterwards, a large stone fell from the cathedral’s facade, killing the young girl on the spot.

This shook Julius Anton von Poseck so much that he immediately went home, fell to his knees, and cried out, “O God, why was I spared, and why did another person have to die?” This experience led to his conversion. His sister persuaded him to listen to the sermons of Pastor Krafft in Düsseldorf, and after a short time, he came to a complete certainty of salvation.

The words of the song “On the Lamb Our Souls are resting, what His love no tongue can say; all our sins, so great, so many, in His blood are washed away” lay on his heart when he stood at a church in Essen-Werde in 1850. There, he had seen a lamb carved in stone at the top of the tower. It was explained to him that many years ago, when a roofer had repaired the tower roof, the hook on which his ladder hung broke off. However, during the terrible fall down below, he miraculously fell onto a small sheep grazing on the lawn below. The sheep was crushed by the falling

man, but he escaped with his life. In gratitude for his protection, he had the lamb carved in stone and mounted in the masonry of the tower.

The image of how his life had been spared when he was a student, since someone had died in his place at the Cologne Cathedral, brought these words of thanksgiving and

adoration from his heart for the King of heaven and earth, Who had borne the punishment of his sins there on the cross as the Lamb of God. Through Jesus’ death, he too was granted forgiveness, salvation, and deliverance.

On the Lamb our souls are resting,
What His love no tongue can say;
All our sins, so great, so many,
In His blood are washed away.

Sweetest rest and peace have filled us,
Sweeter praise than tongue can tell;
God is satisfied with Jesus,
We are satisfied as well.

Conscience now no more condemns us,
For His own most precious blood
Once for all has washed and cleansed us,
Cleansed us in the eyes of God.

Filled with this sweet peace forever,
On we go, through strife and care,
Till we find that peace around us
In the Lamb’s high glory there. ■

Niniveh, an Example of Repentance

A true example of repentance is found in the narrative of Nineveh. The people to whom Jonah was sent to preach reacted to his message. Jesus says, “they repented at the preaching of Jonah” (Luke 11:32). Although it was a godless, heathen city, their humility was manifested by the fact that they repented upon hearing a single sermon delivered by a foreign prophet of God. Maybe they had heard about his experience with the great fish. If so, his message would have been all the more pertinent and more willingly accepted.

They “believed God” (Jonah 3:5), and are praised for believing. They realized they were accountable to God and needed to submit to His judgment, and understood the message of what God demanded of them. They brought word to the king. Then the king and all his subjects humbled themselves.

The king put aside his crown and exchanged his royal garments for sackcloth and sat in dirt and ashes. In this manner, he showed his unworthiness before a righteous God Who could dethrone him. The king called for a fast that all people and animals were to undertake. They cried out to God and turned from their evil ways, from their crimes, briberies, and godless living. That is what God desired and why Jonah was sent to them.

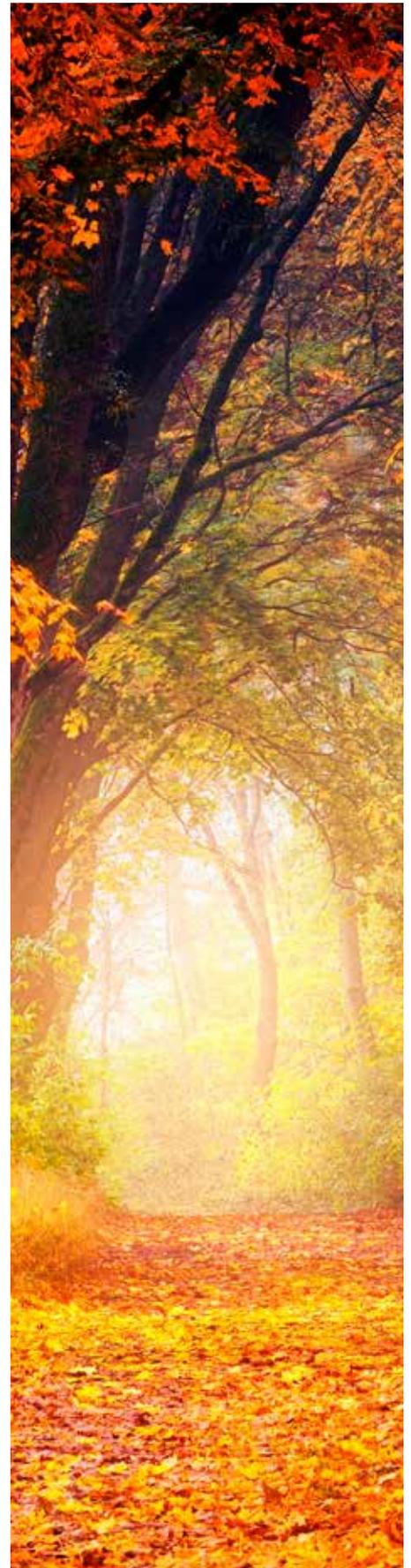
As far as we know, they were given no promises but only the

threat of destruction, which was to take place within forty days. But they believed God would be merciful, and therefore said, “Who can tell if God will turn and relent, and turn away from His fierce anger, so that we may not perish?” (Jonah 3:9). They could only hope for mercy, in a similar manner to the prodigal son, who came back to his father with the intent to plead for mercy.

God spared them, and had mercy on them. Why? Was it because He saw their tears or because He heard their cries? No, the Bible says, “Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it” (Jonah 3:10).

No doubt, God saw their tears and heard their cries. But that could have been superficial and only due to the fear of destruction. However, when God saw that they turned from their evil way and had genuine godly sorrow, He was merciful.

Jesus called this repentance. It includes turning away from all evil ways. Repentance means to believe God’s Word, humble yourself, confess your sins, turn from them, and clear up the wrong done as far as is possible. Clearing up past wrongs makes way for a pure life in the future. Whoever repents in this manner will experience God’s mercy and will never regret having repented. ■



What is True Repentance?

T rue repentance was made possible through Christ's atoning work. Every sinner can come to Him and be cleansed of all guilt. But forgiveness must always be preceded by repentance, and for this reason "[God] commands all men everywhere to repent, because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man, whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:30-31).

This command to repent must be obeyed by everyone seeking forgiveness from sin, for no one in this life will be able to stand before the judgment seat of God if he has not truly and sincerely repented. Whoever has repented must also turn away from all sin. As long as the door of grace is still open and the Son of God, as our intercessor, sits at the right hand of God, all are urged to repent. And all have the wonderful opportunity to obtain salvation. But this time of grace is quickly coming to an end, and soon all people must appear before the judgment seat of God.

True repentance has five elements we will briefly consider in the light of God's Word:

1. Knowledge of Sin

All preaching about repentance and salvation in Christ is incomprehensible to the soul that has

not yet recognized its sins. This is the first requirement before a soul can be brought to repentance, and is brought about by the Word of God, under the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

The state of a person in sin is compared visually with that of a "sleeping" or "dead" person. That is why we read, "Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light" (Ephesians 5:14). Sleeping in sin is dangerous. Persisting in sin dulls our conscience, so it is essential to first grasp the seriousness of our sin. Once our soul is fully awakened by the message of the gospel, we realize our terrible condition and are seized with fear.

2. Godly Sorrow over Sin

"For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted" (2 Corinthians 7:10). This sorrow is a sorrow of the heart that has despised and trampled God's holy and righteous law.

3. Confession of Sin

"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). "He who covers his sins will not prosper" (Proverbs 28:13a). All sins must be confessed to God, but where we have sinned against someone else, we need to confess and make restitution to the best of our ability.

This does not mean that all known errors need to be listed individually. True repentance involves more than just saying many words.

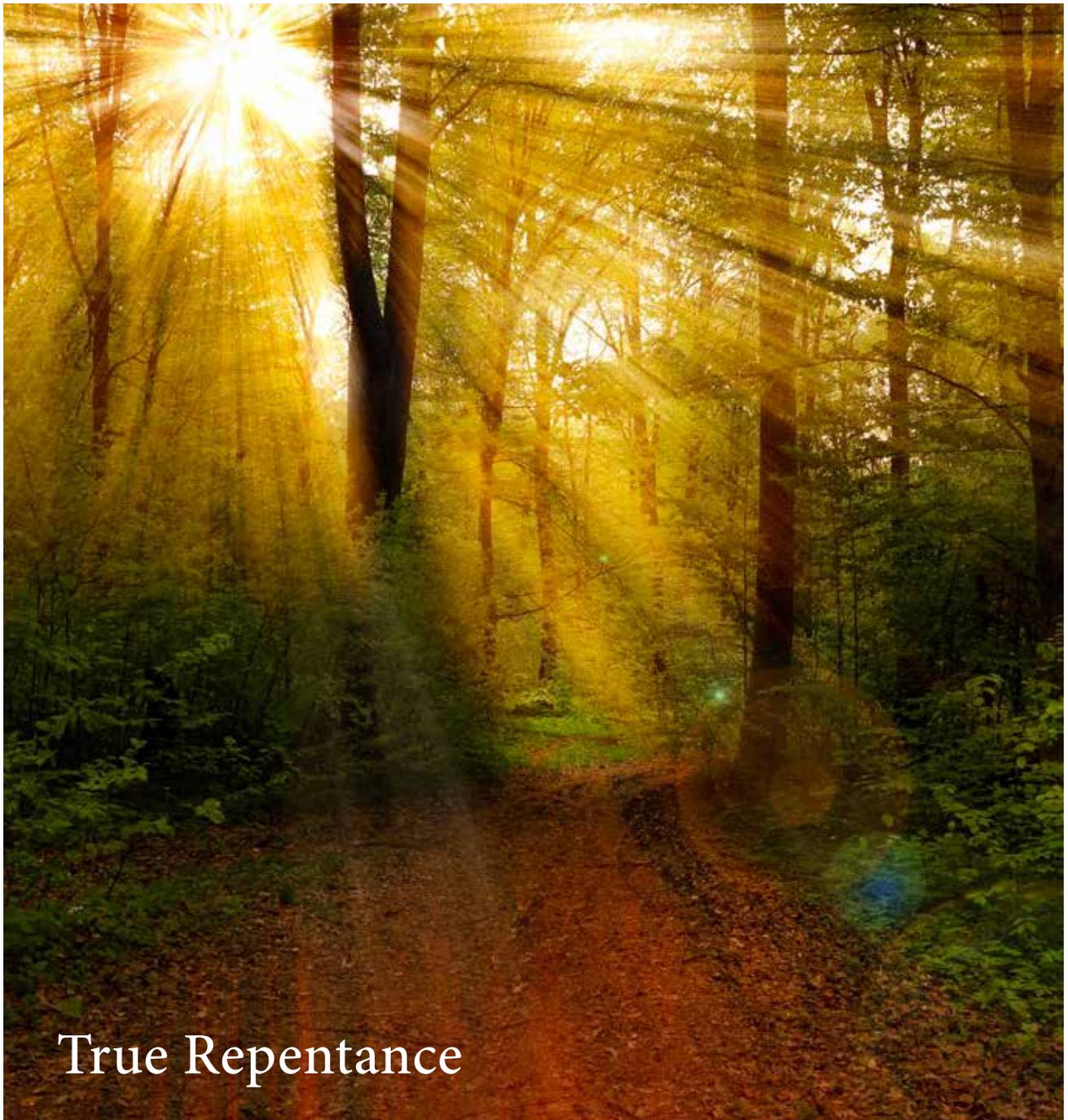
4. Restitution

Restitution is an important part of true repentance. Ezekiel says, "If the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen" (Ezekiel 33:15). When Zacchaeus recognized his sin, he was ready to make amends for the injustices he had committed unto others. He said, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor, and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8). If someone has committed fraud or something similar, he must make it up as well as he can. All God expects of us is to do our best.

5. Forsake Sin

"Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon" (Isaiah 55:7). Many other scriptures teach us that the sinner who sincerely repents must forsake everything wrong and sinful.

Through true repentance and living faith, we can be forgiven. As soon as we grasp the hand of God in faith, the Spirit of God will testify to our spirit that we are children of God. ■



True Repentance

By repenting and turning to God, a new life begins. Repentance involves leaving behind the old, and beginning something new. A person who realizes life without God is a mistake remembers the depressing burden and weight of past sin and is thankful that a change has now come. Repentance starts a new life with God. Peace displaces anxiety. Joy replaces sorrow. Salvation is granted to the lost. An unsaved person is without Christ in this world. A saved person is in Christ. Paul declares, “If anyone is

in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

A saved person will want to share his or her faith with others. Jesus said, “Whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). Confessing our faith not only glorifies God, but it also strengthens our faith and helps us to grow in grace. It is a privilege to serve the Lord and is not something to ever be ashamed of.

What is even more important than sharing our faith verbally is to live righteously. Our actions speak louder than our words. Confessing to be a Christian is not good enough. We must not only talk the talk but also walk the walk. Jesus Himself said, “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21).

Being alive in Christ means being dead to the world. This means being buried. Paul says, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

God wants to lead His children into all truth, from glory to glory. After becoming children of God, Christians are encouraged to lay their all upon the altar (Romans 12:1-2) in order to be useful vessels for the cause of Christ. Of the Gentiles who were converted, Peter says, “So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith” (Acts 15:8-9). Every believer should strive to have this experience. How blessed is the walk of those who do not delay.

As a Christian, I need to read the Bible, since it is “a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” (Psalm 119:105). The Bible is the sword of the Spirit that we need to be victorious in our spiritual battles. Paul exhorts us, “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord” (Colossians 3:15). God speaks to us through His Word.

Prayer is as important for the Christian as breathing is for every mortal being. That is why Paul says, “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17). That does not mean we never get up from our knees, but it does mean we can live in such a manner that proves “our citizenship is in heaven” (Philippians 3:20). It is not the posture of our body but the attitude of our heart that counts.

A born-again Christian will have a desire to meet and gather with other Christians in order to encourage, admonish, exhort, and build each other up. The testimonies of other Christians can help us to fight the good fight and be victorious in our spiritual battles. The prayers we collectively bring to the throne of God

for each other encourage and unify us. We can pray collectively and fervently for the weak, the sick, the lost, and bring God glory with praise and thanks.

Sermons are given to teach, to ground you in the biblical faith, and to strengthen your faith so you can give answers “to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you” (1 Peter 3:15). The bond we feel with God’s children will give us the desire to be present when the congregation meets. As we prepare for the worship service by praying and studying the Bible, the blessings will be great.

The Christian will realize that Christian living is not always smooth-sailing. As Christians, we should not be surprised when we encounter disappointments, opposition, and sorrow. Peter writes, “Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same mind” (1 Peter 4:1).

No one should base their faith merely on their own experience, knowledge, or faithfulness, but on the righteousness of Jesus Christ, out of which all Christian virtues grow. “As it is written, ‘He who glories, let him glory in the LORD’” (1 Corinthians 1:31). The righteousness of Christ alone is our security. Without Him, we can do nothing of eternal value. But through Christ, we can live a life pleasing to God. Paul exclaimed, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

As followers of Christ, we need to avoid business deals, employment, or relationships that are questionable. Those who play with fire get burned. It is always good to ask ourselves, “What would Jesus do?”

A Christian must also keep his or her tongue under control. What we speak should be to the glory of God and helpful for others.

Our thoughts and wishes are known by God. Let’s keep that in mind; let’s be careful; let’s not be quick to judge others.

As those who are born again, we need to have a forgiving heart. We need to forgive those who ask for pardon, but we also need to forgive those who do not ask. Jesus said, “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15).

“And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7). ■

A New Start With Jesus

A man was walking thoughtfully through his garden when he saw a bird's nest on the ground. A mighty storm had just passed through. The nest had been destroyed by the violent shaking of the trees. The man was saddened at the sight of the nest, but when he looked up, he noticed how the birds in the branches were already building a new nest. That made him think. It was as if someone said to him, "Do not despair."

Dear Reader, your past may not be pleasant. Perhaps you see it broken, lying on the ground, lost. Do not let it lead you to despair. You don't need to walk hopelessly through life. Jesus is there for people like you. He extends His hand

to you to begin a new life.—

A middle-aged woman walked slowly and wearily along the banks of the Rhine. She looked around timidly, while her lips murmured

spot, shaded by thick bushes. The woman sat down so the tips of her shoes reached into the water, and then continued her monologue. "It just can't go on like this anymore . . ."

During the night, she found time to put all her affairs in order and to write kind farewell words to her sick husband in the clinic. In the morning, she turned the key to the apartment, put it in her pocket, and walked out of the house with a steady pace.

There! What was that? Sounds from a morning worship service. A

tremor went through her body. She paused, considered, and said to herself, "I would still like to hear a funeral sermon, so I won't die as an unbeliever."

"Christ lives! He can help!" sounded out to the attentive lis-



teners. “He did not merely come to make your circumstances better, but to save you from sin, the ruin of men. Whoever finds Christ and has accepted Him as Savior need not despair. He has the strength to always be victorious in the many struggles in life.” There was a bit of restlessness in one corner of the room. The preacher did not notice. At the end of the service, he announced there would be a special meeting that afternoon, with a guest speaker present.

Before the final song, the suicidal woman hurried out, confused and agitated. The sermon hadn’t really suited her plan. For hours, she wandered around outside without being able to make a firm decision. At last, she returned to town. First, she wanted to listen to the guest speaker’s message that afternoon, and afterwards she would go into the water.

After a brisk congregational hymn, a brief prayer, and a well-performed choir song, the address came, simple and biblical. Single sentences penetrated her heart like arrows. “Christ walks through time and through insignificant, personal events of human lives. You can experience Him, find Him, have Him, but only through repentance in sincere self-judgment. To God’s glory, tears of repentance will brighten the eyes of the contrite. Anyone who remains proud, still quarreling with his fate, and lashing outward instead of turning inward will never find Him. Why do people complain in life? Everyone should complain against their sins. Those who do not recognize their guilt and refuse to humble themselves will sink into eternal darkness.”

This was by no means a funeral sermon. Our friend pushed her way out and away, but not to her place on the Rhine—she had completely forgotten about that—but instead, went home. The farewell letter to her husband was still on the table. There was dead silence all around. Only her heart beat loud and fast. An agonizing unrest burned in her soul. The seriousness of eternity settled on the lonely woman’s mind. Fear of God tightened her chest. Then that mysterious and yet-so-clear voice began to speak to her. Only those who have heard it know it.

“You put all the blame on relentless fate. Isn’t sin also your ruin? Neither on the day of your engagement nor on the morning of your wedding did you seriously think of Me, your Lord and God. You have never bent your knees together in marriage. How often have sins occurred, minor, major, secret—you

have always disregarded the accusations of your conscience. You had neither time nor interest for Me and My kingdom. Whether I spoke to you in gentle love or asked to be there in times of suffering, you did not want to understand Me, and kept the door of your heart locked. Your greatest sin is that you have remained without a Savior to this day. Now you want to throw away like an old garment the precious life I gave you? See, you are now about to top off all your sins.”

When night came to an end and the first rays of the morning sun fell through the window, they illuminated a repentant woman who lay on her knees, bathed in tears, begging for mercy and receiving mercy. The heated battle led to the peace of God, which is greater than our understanding. With a new heart confident of His forgiveness, she straightened up, not to die, but to live and to proclaim the Lord’s works. The difficulties of life had not disappeared, but above them stood the Lord, Who can and will always help. He certainly helps all who trust Him.

The farewell letter on the table? It was firmly torn to shreds. Instead of saying goodbye to her husband, she wrote another letter and openly shared with him what she had been going through lately, what she had had in mind, and how the grace of God sought and found her in the “twelfth hour.” Her only concern was the impression the letter would make on him. But when the answer came, the woman could hardly contain herself with astonishment, amazement, and joy.

Her husband wrote, “I, too, was on the verge of despair. Nobody could help me but God. When I didn’t know what to do, when I was in dire straits, I saw a couple of devotional pages on the table. I eagerly read the short tracts that spoke of our sin and the grace of God, got on my knees, prayed as I had never prayed before, and was heard. Dear Wife, my sins are forgiven, too. I am certain my Savior will touch my body and heal me and give me grace to a new life—as well as you . . .”

Human words are too limited to describe the feelings of joy that animated the hearts of this couple after the husband’s return home, when they bowed their knees together for the first time to worship their Savior and thank Him for His love, for seeking and finding them.

Yes, for those who have a new start with Jesus, there is great hope. ■

God's Plan of Salvation

Christ died for everyone, and yet, the sinner has an obligation in order to obtain this precious salvation. Some try to become Christians by joining a church, becoming baptized, or taking any number of other human approaches to this divine gift.

The biblical plan of salvation is clearly outlined by Paul in Romans 5: 18: “But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” If Christ had not died for us, salvation would be impossible.

Humanity has been separated from God by sin. Initially, this separation occurred when the first people, Adam and Eve, were expelled from the Garden of Eden for sinning, and God assigned the cherubim to guard its gates and prevent access to the Tree of Life. Through this original sin, humanity suffered spiritual death and lost communion with God, the fount of life. Paul leaves no room for doubt on this point, writing, “For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 6:23).

If Christ had not died for us, it would be impossible for us to be reconciled and reunited with God by gaining forgiveness for our sins. The Bible unequivocally states that “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Hebrews 9:22)—remission meaning forgiveness—and in Romans 5:9, Paul confirms that we can only be saved through the blood of Jesus. There is no other way to be reconciled with God.

However, some teach that all will be saved because Jesus died for everybody. It is indeed a glorious truth that Christ died for everyone, but we cannot allow ourselves to

overlook the biblical truth that sinners must fulfill certain conditions to be saved. After Paul wrote in Romans 4:25 that Christ died for our offenses and arose from the dead for our salvation, he added, in Romans 5:1, “Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Sinners must acknowledge that Christ made the ultimate sacrifice for them because He loves them immeasurably. Each sinner must recognize that his or her own sin nailed Jesus to the cross, and each one of us must truly and sincerely repent of having sinned, to the point of finding sin repulsive. Then, and only then, are we able to sincerely claim Christ's gift for ourselves and be saved from our sins.

Christ can do nothing for us as long as we insist upon remaining in sin. To become eligible for salvation, each sinner must turn away from sin and toward God. Someone who is not willing to stop sinning has not yet recognized how terrible sin really is, and without this recognition, true repentance is out of the question.

God's plan of salvation is perfect. Paul knew he was saved from sin and reconciled with God because Christ had taken on the burden of his sins and atoned for them. This assurance of salvation is available to anyone who wants it, but those who do not repent will not receive forgiveness. The greatest truth in the plan of salvation is that everyone who bows down before God in sincere remorse and repentance will be saved, because Christ gave His blood to make salvation from sin possible. ■

R. P. Loudermilk



I'll Never Go Back

*I once was in bondage in Egypt's dark night,
But Jesus has brought me out into the light;
He banished my sins and has made my heart right;
I'll never go back, I'll never go back.*

*I'll never go back to the bondage of sin,
I'll never go back to the place I was in,
A crown of rejoicing I'm striving to win;
I'll never go back again.*

*From sin and its follies I knew I must part
If Jesus were ever to reign in my heart;
So, turning from evil, I hastened to start;
I'll never go back, I'll never go back.*

*I'll never go back to the world and its ways,
Its pride and its fashions, nor seek for its praise;
I'll give to my Savior my strength and my days,
I'll never go back again.*

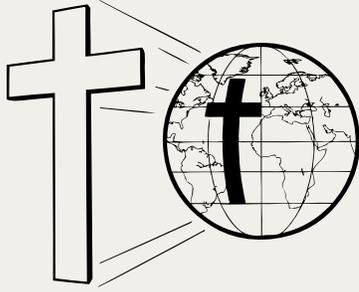
*From Babel confusion most gladly I fled,
And came to the heights of fair Zion instead;
I'm feasting this moment on heavenly bread;
I'll never go back, I'll never go back.*

*The beast and his image, his mark, and his name,
My love or allegiance no longer can claim,
Though men may exalt them to honor and fame;
I'll never go back again.*

*The church that was built when the Pentecost came,
The church that is kept in one faith and one name,
Shall shine on resplendent, forever the same;
I'll never go back, I'll never go back.*

*I'll never go back to division and strife,
Where hatred and envy and malice are rife;
I'll walk in the truth all the days of my life;
I'll never go back again.*

C. W. Naylor



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

God Commands All People to Repent

Although all spheres of life are changing at an unbelievable rate, one part remains completely unaffected: the needs of the human soul and its relationship to God. Since there has been sin in the world, there is only one way to personal salvation: repentance.

Yes, God commands us to do what people least want to do. There is no relationship with God without first repenting. Wherever an apostle or servant of God preached about the foundation of our faith, he always began with the message of repentance. That was how Jesus began His mission. Mark tells us, “After John was imprisoned, Jesus came to Galilee and preached the gospel of the kingdom of God and said, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel’” (Mark 1:15).

The kingdom of God can only begin where people are willing and ready to first repent. Paul also appeared in Athens with the conviction, “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). This was preached not only in Athens but in every corner of the earth. Paul stated this very clearly and touched on the most crucial point in life.

With the call to repentance, he indirectly, but very consciously, reminded all of the undeniable guilt without addressing it head on. His message had gained sufficient knowledge and was understood, for

“some, including one of the council, believed” (verse 34). Salvation in Jesus Christ is offered to all people and can only be experienced through repentance and faith.

The word “repentance” does not mean “penance” or personal performance, as is required in some religious circles. Repentance means to reverse direction and return to God. This is about a complete change of mind. In true repentance, a person is ready to turn from his stubborn and worldly ways and accept God with all his heart. This contrite reversal naturally includes the admission and confession of personal guilt. Conversion takes place in the belief of forgiveness and redemption through the blood of Jesus.

Therefore, repentance is not an outward atonement of guilt but a humble, repentant acknowledgment before God. The prophet Joel preached, “Now, therefore, says the Lord, Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning” (Joel 2:12). John the Baptist warned against the outward appearance of repentance that does not result in real fruit (Matthew 3:8).



True repentance leads to an acquittal and a living relationship with God, which is why we must begin with repentance, and precisely why the Lord instructed His servants to preach repentance. Through preaching, man is shown the ways of God and his wrong ways that lead to destruction and, ultimately, to death. Preaching repentance is intended to encourage the sinner to repent, accept the gospel, and find forgiveness. The call to repentance does not drive the listener into despair but shows the way to his salvation. God does not want anyone to perish in their sin, so He commands all people in every corner of the earth to repent.

Personal guilt makes personal repentance and conversion necessary. Paul made the claim in a letter to the Romans that the entire world is guilty before God. “They have all turned aside; they have together become unprofitable; there is none who does good, no, not one” (Romans 3:12).

Since God is holy, man can’t have a relationship with God in a state of guilt and sin. When Isaiah saw the Lord in His Holiness, he exclaimed, “Woe is me,

for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips” (Isaiah 6:5). But after he became a prophet, he began to expose the sins of his people and called them to repentance. Almost desperately, an evangelist once said, “It is so difficult to find sinners. But if I could find one, I would have a wonderful message for him.”

There are many self-righteous people, but no one wants to be a sinner. Too often, people excuse their sin. Unfortunately, many times a “gospel of love” is preached to people, whereby sinners need not be frightened nor hypocrites tremble (see Isaiah 33:14). Most people of our time want “gentle sermons,” and efforts are made to offer them. But God wants repentance, and He commands it.

Every pastor should be reminded of his responsibility before God and man. Gentle preaching leads many people into apathy rather than real, sincere repentance. The desired awakening can only come from a deep knowledge of sin and repentance. It has to start with real repentance in our community, in the church, and where necessary, within ourselves. ■

I Will Lift Up My Eyes to the Hills (6)

Mount of Olives—the Mountain of Prayer

Somewhat out of the way to the east of the city of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives. When Jesus lived on this earth, it was His custom to go there (Luke 22:39).

During the day, He would teach the people in the temple, but at night, He would withdraw and go to the mountain and spend the night there (Luke 21:37; John 8:1), only to come back again the following morning to teach the people in the temple (Luke 21:38; John 8:2).

Deep in prayer, He would speak with God, uninterrupted and alone, distant from the masses who constantly surrounded Him, hidden from the curious and deceitful looks of the Pharisees and scribes who were trying to trap Him with their questions “to find a cause against Him” to get rid of Him.

Here, at the Mount of Olives, through prayer, Jesus gathered more strength for His work on earth. Even though He “was in all points tempted as we are” (Hebrews 4:15), He remained without sin and was sure of His mission: He had come to seek and to save that which was lost (Luke 19:10). To fulfill His mission, the will of His heavenly Father was always top priority (Luke 22:42).

Even on the last evening spent in the circle of His disciples before He was captured, He shared communion with them and directed these words at them: “A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father” (John 16:16). “Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me” (John 16:32). He urgently warned them, “Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat” (Luke 22:31). A sense of insecurity, sadness, and fear came over the disciples, and even though Jesus assured and encouraged them, “Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world” (John 16:33), they followed their Master with heavy hearts outside into the darkness

over Kidron Creek to Gethsemane at the Mount of Olives.

And Jesus? He stood before an unimaginably heavy road of suffering and knew exactly what was ahead of Him. An enormous amount of emotional pressure lay on His soul. Yes, the Son of God experienced deadly terror and was disheartened (Matthew 26:37-38). The sense of abandonment and fear of the upcoming horrific crucifixion would seem to overwhelm Him. Nevertheless, He knew that only prayer could help Him, and He warned His disciples insistently to “pray that you may not enter into temptation” (Luke 22:40). While the disciples, overcome by sorrow, fell asleep (Luke 22:45), Jesus prayed persistently and intensively, “Not My will, but Yours, be done.” Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him (Luke 22:43). Jesus was armed for His martyrdom and woke His disciples. “Rise, let us be going.”

Jesus showed us through this experience that nothing in our lives should cause us to neglect prayer, “not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer” (Romans 12:11-12). Make it a habit to go to the “Mount of Olives” to pray. Prayer is not restricted to specific locations, and yet, it is important to find a place of safe haven where nothing can distract you and where you can consciously pray from the heart to God. It can be your room, while you are in the car, or the city park near campus.

There will be moments in your life when you will experience losses, be confused and helpless, or need to overcome exam anxiety. When prayer becomes your habit, you will experience its incredible power during the most difficult circumstances in your life.

Therefore, get up and pray. God will protect you from falling in times of temptation (Luke 22:46). ■

Andreas Schell, Hetzerath (DE)



. . . Notes from School (8)

No pain, no gain!

There had been worse semesters than this one. In one, we had 11 exams to write, so the 7 in this semester would not be a serious obstacle. One common expression states, “the last mile is the longest.” I don’t know exactly what was happening, but suddenly I experienced a very clear aversion to learning. Preparing for the exams became tougher and tougher, and finally, when only two or three exams were left, I occupied myself mainly with things that did not challenge my mind—I was tired of it. In addition, I had never been forced to repeat an exam before, and I secretly hoped this would be the case again. Really, what grand questions would the ear, nose, and throat doctors ask? As it turned out, they had all kinds of questions, and I failed. I had written over fifty exams during my studies and now for the first time, in the ninth semester, I had to re-write an exam. I was a bit embarrassed, but not really surprised; the failure was well-deserved. Nothing could have been more effective than this “wake-up call,” because in one fell swoop, it gave me back my missing diligence and enthusiasm for work. No further motivation was needed. Resignedly, I sat down at my desk and focused on preparing for the exam with unusual care. The re-examination consisted of a very nice talk with a leading physician, who, after less than ten minutes, fortunately came to the conclusion that my knowledge was now sufficient to pass.

It was not without reason when Paul recommended that the Romans should not be “lagging in diligence” (Romans 12:11). This is sound advice, because how often do we find ourselves getting tired and lazy, with the vague hope of somehow getting away with it. Sometimes, encouragement from our brothers and sisters is enough to renew our zeal, but sometimes God lets us experience a failure, as a loving rebuke that things cannot go on like this. God reminds us that it’s up to each Christian to apply all diligence and give his best. ■

Verse of the Month

May God “make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever” (Hebrews 13:21).

You may have noticed that we are not in a position to be able to fulfill the will of God in our own strength.

I want to show you how this verse has personally impacted me.

He works in you.

He wants to work in us to fulfill His work and to guide us to our goal. That is common knowledge. But what is your answer? Do we allow Him to work in us?

We read in 2 Corinthians 1:20, “For all the promises of God in Him are Yes.”

When we come to Jesus and ask Him, it is always a “yes” on His behalf.

How is it with us?

What answer do we give Him?

When He wants to make us aware of something, correcting and holding out the mirror to us sometimes hurts, but our answer is crucial:

“Yes, I see the need.

Yes, You are right. Help me to change that.

Yes, work in me.”

A “yes” on our behalf changes our lives and leads to further development and spiritual growth.

Finding Assurance

A young man was asked how long he knew the Lord and if he knew that his sins were forgiven.

He replied, “My sins are forgiven. I truly know.”

“When were you convinced of that?”

“When my mother was stung by a bee,” was his answer.

“When your mother was stung by a bee? What do you mean by that? Why don’t you tell me your story?”

“I had a godly mother,” he said. “In my childhood, she often told me what Jesus did for me, but I never understood it all. I just couldn’t imagine that He took my place and died for me.

“Then that summer afternoon happened. I was playing by the door of our home. Mother was ironing in the kitchen. All of a sudden, a large, frenzied bee came flying by and kept buzzing around my head. Without a doubt, the bee was irritated and prepared to sting. I was scared and tried to swat her

away a few times, but she kept circling around me, coming closer every time. Finally, in desperation, I ran into the house to escape my tormentor. I rushed to my mother, who had been watching me the whole time, and hid under her apron. She smiled at my fear, but with motherly concern, she wrapped her arms around me as if to say, ‘You are totally safe with me.’

“She had just done that when the bee descended on her bare arm and viciously stung her. My mother winced. Then she looked at the bee and said to me, ‘You can come out now. The bee stung me instead of you. Look how it’s crawling on my arm. It can’t hurt you now because a bee can only sting once.’

“I was still a bit scared, and then I felt sorry for my mom. But I dared to look at the stinger as my mother wisely used the opportunity the experience afforded. She explained to me, ‘This is a picture of the wonderful truth I have often

told you about: Christ took your place and died for you.’

“I had learned that Scripture and often quoted it: ‘And by His stripes we are healed’ (Isaiah 53:5). But until then, I had never grasped that Jesus voluntarily took our punishment upon Himself. Now I looked at the bee and the stinger, and everything became clear. God doesn’t ask for double payment. He doesn’t call me to judgment. Christ paid the price with His blood. Praise and thanks be to Him!”

Dear Reader, can you too believe that Jesus was pierced for you and, as a result, you are free? “Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). But you have to believe with your whole heart. You wouldn’t want to continue living in destructive sin. Surely you are longing for freedom.

Repent, and you will be free to rejoice in the wonderful assurance that you are His child because He died in your place. Just believe. ■





Transformed

One morning, a mother was pleasantly surprised by her son Jacob when he said to her, “Mom, I have almost an hour before school starts. Can I help you with something?”

The mother could hardly comprehend what had suddenly happened to her boy, because as a rule, Jacob did only what he absolutely had to do, and never willingly or gladly. So she said, “Yes, you can still help me a little.” Jacob did everything quickly and well and looked so happy that his mother couldn’t overcome her astonishment.

When he returned home from school, he asked again, “Can I help you with something?” The mother replied, “No, this time I have nothing for you to do; you can still play a little with the other children.” But she wondered why her son had suddenly changed so much.

In the evening, Jacob’s parents asked him why he was suddenly so completely different. He explained to them, “Last Sunday in Sunday school, our teacher said that Jesus can and will change people, and that He wants to give them a new heart when they come

to Him and ask Him sincerely. In the evening, I didn’t go to sleep right away but prayed until Jesus entered my heart. He made me a new person, and now I want to make Him happy, and you too, as my dear parents. Every morning, I always ask God to help me do what pleases Him. And He has been giving me the strength to do so.”

Dear Children, wouldn’t you want to do what pleases the Savior and your parents, too? Then do what Jacob did: Ask Jesus for a new heart and ask Him every day to help you do the right thing. ■

Marriage (Part 2)

A study from Los Angeles found that couples in North America communicate with each other for an average of about 35 minutes per week, and mostly about organizational matters. Barely half an hour of “conversation” per week is a rather meager balance. Obviously, it doesn’t look like this in every relationship, but perhaps the result of this study is a good starting point for introspection. Is the presence of our partner something we take for granted, and has life with them become routine? How often and how long do we consciously talk to each other? The biggest challenge is certainly to create uninterrupted time. In this digital age with smartphones (cellphones), news, and a true flood of information, it has become difficult because we are constantly challenged to distinguish between important and unimportant. We are often distracted and stressed from many sides. With the following thought-provoking points, we can consciously maintain and strengthen our marriage in very practical ways.

I. Regular Time Off

We responsibly mark dates in our calendar for important people. We set priorities and even move things around that are important to us. We should do the same for our partner. After a long “to-do list,” we are usually no longer in a position to make time for our partner. We are tired and exhausted and prefer our rest. How beneficial it would be if we did not put our spouse at the back but consciously planned time for them. Relationships should be nourished regularly. An outing, a walk, there are many possibilities. Such time together relaxes and encourages us to address problems and share what is on our minds.

II. Supporting Your Partner

Every person takes on tasks throughout the changing phases of life, be it in marriage, in the family, at work, in the community, or in other areas. How do spouses support each other in these tasks? Are they an obstacle or a help to each other? How is the husband respected

by his wife? What appreciation does the wife receive from her husband? How does he express his gratitude? How much do the husband and wife know about the challenges and difficulties of the other and support them in word and deed and in prayer? In Ecclesiastes 4:9-12, we read an impressive text that wonderfully emphasizes the coherence of marriage. “Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their labor. For if they fall, one will lift up his companion. But woe to him who is alone when he falls, for he has no one to help him up. . . . Though one may be overpowered by another, two can withstand him. And a threefold cord is not quickly broken.”

These verses are applicable to both our daily and spiritual tasks. No man or woman is perfect in this relationship. But a wife who is a true help to her husband complements him, tactfully correcting his mistakes without him noticing. The husband supports, encourages, and protects his wife. This mutual help makes both spouses more valuable in the family and in the outside world.

III. Setting Common Goals

It is so important that a married couple set common goals, both short- and long-term. Shaping their shared future unites them. A couple that works together as a team in planning and implementing these goals is more effective and far more successful. But it is even more beautiful to work hand in hand in the kingdom of God. A married couple experiences deep fulfillment in common faith and service to the Lord.

We find an exemplary married couple in Priscilla and Aquila. In Acts 18, we learn that at the time of the apostle’s first visit to Corinth, Aquila, a Jew born in Pontus, had recently arrived there with his wife Priscilla. They had to change their place of residence because Emperor Claudius had issued a decree that all Jews had to leave Rome.

Like Paul, Aquila was a tentmaker by profession, and during his stay in Corinth of about eighteen months, the apostle practiced his trade together with



his newly-made friends. From Luke's narrative (Acts 18:18), it is clear that Aquila and Priscilla had stayed there the whole time Paul was in Corinth and did not leave the city until the apostle sailed for Syria. They accompanied him and crossed the Mediterranean Sea from Europe to Asia Minor, because afterwards their presence is noted in Ephesus (Acts 18:26). There, they showed a personal interest in the spiritual welfare of Apollos, an Alexandrian Jew. They took him to their home to give him a more accurate explanation of the way of God, for he knew only the baptism of John the Baptist.

This event in Ephesus seems to characterize the nature of their shared service to the Lord. Apollos was thus introduced to the warm atmosphere of their Christian home. Here, Aquila and his wife talked to him face-to-face, with all frankness and zeal, about the work, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, as well as the many truths related to it.

In Aquila and Priscilla, we have a clear example of the blessed and effective influence that can come from a couple dedicated to the interests of Christ. They are always mentioned together, as Priscilla (Prisca) and Aquila, but never alone.

Throughout the history of mankind, we can see that marital union has been used time and again for bad purposes. Even in the first days of church fellowship, Ananias and Sapphira, misled by Satan, had agreed to tempt the Spirit of the Lord. Deceived in the same way, equally guilty, they were both punished in the same way (Acts 5:1-11).

Compared to this example of marital corruption in Jerusalem, the joint behavior of Aquila and Priscilla is a beautiful contrast. They did not look so much at their personal affairs, but at what concerned the

others. Their inclination and willingness to sacrifice was so striking that it impressed the churches everywhere.

This couple realized they were "one flesh," not only in tentmaking and other earthly matters, but above all in being one "in Christ," displaying the fruit of the Spirit. They were convinced that the things of the Lord must always take precedence. They beautifully complemented each other, and were able to balance each other's deficiencies. In this way, they were the counterpart and counterweight of one other, always one in purpose and one in execution.

In the letter addressed to the beloved of God in Rome, the apostle added a special greeting to the assembly in the house of Priscilla and Aquila: "Greet Priscilla and Aquila . . . the church that is in their house" (Romans 16:3, 5).

To make tents, Aquila needed a sufficiently large house with rooms for his work and chambers for his private accommodation. Obviously, one or more rooms were made available for the meetings of the brothers and sisters. This fact was known to Paul when he wrote to the faithful in Rome, and he sent this greeting to those who gathered in Aquila's house.

Aquila and Priscilla showed the same interest in the welfare of the saints in Ephesus as they did in Rome. From Ephesus, Paul wrote to Corinth, "Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord, with the church that is in their house" (1 Corinthians 16:19). This admirable couple dedicated their home to the service of the Lord, both in Rome and in Ephesus.

May this God-fearing, zealous, and happy couple be an example and inspiration to us all. ■

Lilly Bebernik, Edmonton (CA)

The Gospel Net

The fascinating way Samuel Hebich “captured” a British Major through the intricate net of God’s Word is recounted in his own words.

The manner in which I met Hebich was as unusual as the man himself. Our battalion was stationed in Madras during one of the hottest trade wind seasons I can ever recall.

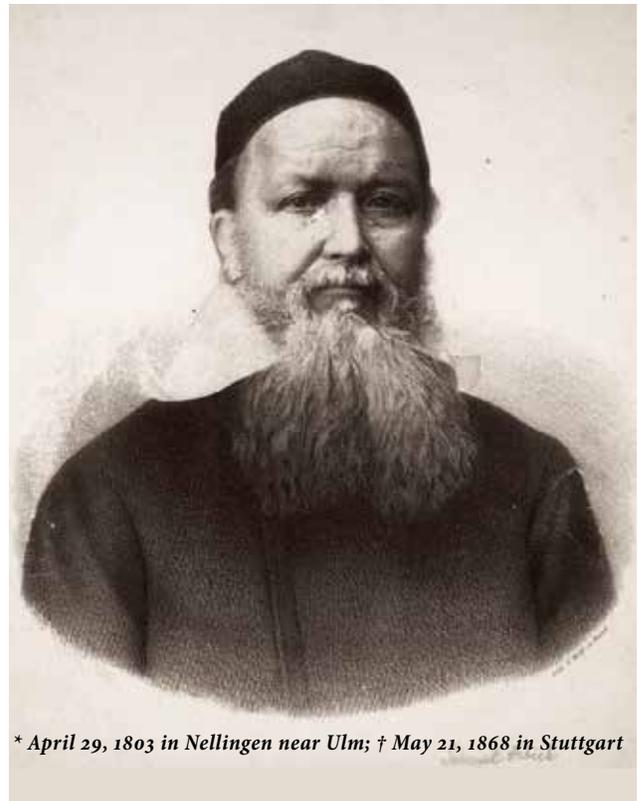
Throughout the entire day, the barracks were as silent as if everyone had become extinct. It was only possible for a European to venture out before sunrise and after sunset. We were plagued with boredom and, naturally, our moods were not particularly pleasant during this involuntary idleness. In the midst of this environment, the news broke that “Hebich has arrived!” This was the only topic of discussion at dinner in the casino. Some of our men had seen the man before, but most, including myself, had only heard about him.

“You’ll all get to know him soon without any introduction,” one of the fellows offered. “Hebich goes wherever he wants to, and no one evades him.”

I had my own thoughts about this, but I kept them to myself, curious to learn more about him.

“Who is this Hebich who moves around so freely?” I asked. Something about my challenging tone of voice caused my comrade to chuckle. He turned to face me, informing me, “You will be the first one he’ll try to get hold of, because he is going to hear soon enough what a notable sinner you are, Sir. Mr. Hebich is a German who came here to convert the dark-skinned heathens, but he has said that he found white heathens (meaning Europeans) need the Gospel even more.”

The effect this explanation had on me made my blood boil. I will not repeat the colorful language that came out of my mouth about Hebich and his unorthodox obtrusiveness. I concluded my tirade about He-



* April 29, 1803 in Nellingen near Ulm; † May 21, 1868 in Stuttgart

bich with the comment that if I ever found him in my courtyard, I would toss him out straight away. With the heat being so intense, my thoughts never dwelled on anything too long, and I had nearly forgotten all about Mr. Hebich.

It was probably at the hottest time of the day, if any difference in heat could even be detected, for it was always hot, day in and day out, when I heard footsteps on the veranda. I was reclining on my bed lazily and indifferently perceiving the soft creaking of the whirling Punkah fan overhead. All the windows and doors were open, and nothing was further from my mind than receiving a visitor at this moment. With surprise, I noted that the peculiarity of these approaching footsteps suggested an extraordinary personality.

There was something enchanting about the methodical, forceful steps that seemed to command attention. They implied a sense of dignity and subordination all at once.

Anticipating my servant would make an effort to receive the guest, I waited expectantly. However, he must have decided to pause for a nap during the heat of the day. The footsteps crossed over the front room and were nearing the door of my room. I lifted my head to see whose presence might be lurking there, when suddenly, a tall, haggard man stood in front of me. My first impression of him coaxed a smile out of me. He was quite a comical sight, with a long black robe hanging loosely on his body, a tremendous green umbrella under his arm, and a large hat dangling from his lean hand. But when peering into his face, all such thoughts quickly vanished. His gaze made a profound impression on me. There was intensity in those eyes which seemed to look right through you, not with scorn, but with irrevocable compassion. It was a look that caused your face to redden, ready to do whatever he asked, as one who seemed to know much better what would be good for you.

It was him, Hebich, who had entered my room. I stood up to greet him. He bowed deeply before me and, in his friendly way, stretched out his hand to wish me a good day. So where was my presumption and my resolution to toss this man out? I can't explain it. I felt like a student standing in front of my professor. Clumsily, I returned his greeting, not knowing what to do next.

But, as absentminded as I was, he felt quite at home. Politely, he asked me to take a seat and proceeded to situate himself a short distance away.

After a few moments of silence, he abruptly said, "Hand me the Book."

I walked across the room to stand in front of my bookshelf. I had no need of asking "which book?" There were volumes of regulations and war strategies, but those were not books for him. He carried a message of peace. There, in an obscure corner, was my Bible, a book included in the gear that outfitted every British officer. However, I had never even opened this book.

Hesitantly, I brought it over to the table near my chair and looked questioningly over at Hebich. He gestured and ceremoniously said, "Open it to the first chapter of Genesis and then read the first two verses.

I read it out loud. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

"All right, that's enough. Close the Book. Let us pray." He knelt down, and I followed suit. What he prayed, I cannot tell you. Something unknown, something new came over me. I couldn't form two straight thoughts. I didn't know what to say or think or even what I should do. The questions arising in my head shook my frame of mind. "What should I do? What do I need? To whom shall I go?"

Hebich stood up and earnestly shook my hand. He left the same way he came. I could not make myself go to dinner at the casino that night. An uncertainty enveloped me, although I was not known as a coward. I simply could not be in the company of others that night.

As I lay idly upon my bed again the next day, a strange sensation came over me. I almost feared what was going to happen, and yet I desired to know how this would all end. There was no distraction, or noise; only the Punkah fan creaked softly above me.

Again, I heard those footsteps, the same as yesterday: outside the courtyard, across the yard, through the hallway, outside my door, and . . . there stood Hebich again.

Again, I stood up to return his "good day." I was awkward and confused as well. He motioned for me to sit down, and after a solemn silence, commanded, "Hand me the Book."

Again, I took the same few steps to the bookshelf, grabbed the Bible, and took my seat again.

"Open to the first chapter of Genesis and read the first two verses."

I read out loud, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

"That's enough. Close the Book and let us pray."

This time, I comprehended his prayer. And what a prayer it was! I had never heard any prayer before that hadn't been read out of a book. This was as if a man was speaking to his good friend. He told "his dear Father" all about me. He asked Him to reveal self-understanding, to detest myself, and to flee from myself to Christ Jesus.



Once again, he left me, as he had on the previous day. The open Bible lay on the table. I couldn't make myself close it and put it away. I felt drawn to go back to the Book and study it like a student returning to his lessons. I read those verses over and over again, until they were engraved into the very insides of my soul.

I did not need an interpreter. The words were self-explanatory. They meant me. Yes, I was like the earth, being without form and so void. Sin had dragged me into the darkness of indifference and unbelief; it had desensitized me and had obscured the true state of my existence.

"And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters."

Was the amazing power of this strange man connecting me to the living God, that same hovering of the Spirit of God over me? If anyone had ever been humiliated, convicted of sin in its complete sinfulness, in total reality, then that is what happened to me. The blinding scales of pride, prejudice, and worldliness fell from my eyes.

I cannot remember how I spent the hours until the next day. I certainly did not observe the heat. A complete new captivation was awakened in me. Like the hour that precedes twilight, there was a craving for new life in me.

Outside, I heard footsteps approaching my yard. I waited in suppressed suspense. Like a student waiting for his teacher, my Bible lay open on the table. My heart was full. I stood up and grabbed his hand. "Mr. Hebich, what must I do? I understand it all now!"

With spiritual empathy and love, he looked at me and said, "My son." (How incredibly my heart was drawn to his, like the prodigal son's to his father's, as told in the Gospel of Luke.) "God said, 'let there be light.'" Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved."

He directed me to Calvary's cross, where Jesus took my misery and made it His own. Then he showed me the risen Savior on His throne, Who alone could make me righteous.

We knelt down together. For the first time ever, I prayed, not out of a book but freely, and thanked the Lord for eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

This is how Samuel Hebich won this man for Jesus!

Wilhelm Jörn

Repentance: *An Outdated Word?*

Everyone wants to hear they are good and that they make good decisions. But guilt and misconduct cannot simply be discussed away; they strain the relationship and the conscience until the guilt is finally forgiven.

Please, you have to admit that some of the words Christians use are entirely outdated. Like ‘repentance.’ It’s a medieval concept with no relevance for us in this millennium.”

“Really? What do you understand repentance to mean?”

“Well, now that you’re putting me on the spot, I guess I can’t define it precisely. Though more or less, I think it leads to you spiraling deeper and deeper into guilt until you feel insignificant and dirty. Repentance means intentionally cultivating an inferiority complex.”

“You have no idea what repentance means. It’s the same old story: You reject Christianity because you don’t understand it. You’re rejecting a great gift.”

“What are you talking about? There’s no way repentance could possibly be a gift.”

“But it is. Without the living God helping us repent through His mercy, we would never arrive at the truth.”

“Truth? If anything, repentance is hypocritical.”

“Quite to the contrary, repentance means leaving lies and hypocrisy behind and entering into the truth.”

“Now I’m really confused. You’re turning everything upside down.”

“No, I’m turning everything you turned upside down right-side up.”

“Whatever. Just explain to me how you define repentance.”

“The Bible’s explanation of repentance—not mine—is that repentance starts with God speaking to someone’s

conscience through the Holy Spirit and saying, ‘Something is not right in your life. The way you are right now, you are lost.’”

“To be honest, I have occasionally had thoughts like that.”

“There you go. But now comes the second step, that we consciously and clearly accept God’s judgment without excuses. That’s how we get to the truth.”

“That makes sense.”

“Then comes the third step: confessing our sins—first by prayer to God and then, if necessary, directly to other people as well.”

“That would be the hardest part.”

“Yes, and the most rewarding. It is so freeing to finally clear the air. But we can only succeed in this third step if we know about the fourth one: faith. This means believing with all our hearts that Jesus died for our sins and that His blood makes us clean of all sin so we can be reconciled with God and become His children.”

“I’ve never thought of it that way. It really does have nothing to do with an inferiority complex.”

“That’s what I was trying to say. Repentance is a gift from God that cleanses us and brings us joy. But there is little point in just knowing this. What matters is hearing and obeying when Jesus calls us to repent. That is the key to gaining entry into the kingdom of Heaven, even while we’re still here on Earth.” ■

Wilhelm Busch

Praying with Jesus

As Christians, we begin the new year looking to Jesus for guidance. He alone knows what lies ahead, as all our days are in His hands and He knew them before they were (Psalm 139:16). This is our joy as His people, to know He loves us and cares for us as His very own children. The Good Shepherd will always lead us in the way that's best for our souls, be it through the valleys or the bright sunny days of life (Psalm 23, John 10). What joy to know we can fully trust Him with every aspect of our lives, and the lives of our loved ones. Again this year, Jesus is waiting for us to meditate on His wonderful Word and come to Him in prayer. What a privilege to spend time in prayer with the Lord Who invites us to worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:23f.). During this Prayer Week we wish to learn from Jesus how to pray in spirit and truth.

Harry Klinger
Winnipeg (CA)

1. Alone with Jesus

“But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matthew 6:6).

It is amazing to think that our Heavenly Father has time to hear and answer our prayers. It is as if He delights in them. Who are we to gain the attention of the King of Kings? Yet He not only listens, but sees us in our quiet place of prayer. This means He knows everything about us and will answer our secret heartfelt pleas. Remember how Jesus saw Nathanael under the

fig tree and opened this honest seeker's eyes of faith? (John 1:47-51). Jesus will surely reward His children who pray in faith, with His blessings and guidance.

Let us learn from Jesus and . . .

- Find a quiet place of daily prayer in a busy world filled with distractions.
- Pray to our Heavenly Father, just as Jesus took time for prayer in Mark 1:35-37.
- Be still, worship and know that He is our Lord and Savior (Psalm 46:10).

2. Praying in Fellowship

“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them” (Matthew 18:19f).

This is an amazing promise of Jesus for everyone who prays in faith and in His name. When we gather with a friend, as a couple or a family, Jesus is in our very midst. The Lord graces us with His holy presence! Our church family may be large or small, but if we pray in unity of spirit, He is among us ministering to our souls. He helps us ask according to His will and prom-

ises to have His Father answer our prayers. In our own home, when our children were young, we would have our meals together and take time for devotions. What a blessing this was for our family, laying their foundation of faith for years to come.

Always remember, Jesus will meet us if we . . .

- Pray as a family and study His Word (Luke 11:9-13).
- Gather in fellowship with other believers and pray together (Acts 2:42f).
- Expect great things and seek to be filled with His Holy Spirit (Acts 4:29-33).

3. Learning to Pray from the Master

“Now it came to pass, as He was praying in a certain place, when He ceased, that one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples’” (Luke 11:1).

To grow and mature in our faith as Christians, we need to learn from the Master. The disciples observed Jesus’ prayer life and asked Him to teach them how best to pray. The Lord loves to answer such a request! He then taught them the Lord’s prayer (v. 2-4). What a wonderful prayer to follow, where we first focus on God and

His majesty and Kingdom! We then ask Him to empower us to live out His heavenly will in our daily lives. We should always thank God for our daily blessings and ask Him to give us a forgiving heart victorious over sin.

Let us learn from Jesus and . . .

- Pray the Lord’s Prayer, keeping our families, our church, and country in mind (Matthew 6:9-13).
- Know that His Spirit will transform us into leading a life pleasing to God and others (Luke 2:52).

4. All-Night Prayer with Jesus

“Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.” (Luke 6:12f.)

Jesus teaches us to live a life of continuous prayer. There are times when we are distressed or facing a very important decision that requires us to demonstrate persistent prayer. When Jesus faced the decision of selecting twelve apostles from all His disciples, He spent the night in prayer until He knew God’s answer. This one decision would change His

entire ministry and the course of history. Perhaps we are facing important decisions that could alter our life’s course, decisions such as which career or job to pursue, what mate to choose, where to live, and so on. This is the time to pray continuously until God’s answer comes.

Let us learn from Jesus and . . .

- Pray in faith and be persistent until God’s answer is given as He promises in Luke 11:5-10.
- Know that our fervent prayers will be answered in wonderful ways (James 5:16).

5. Worship the Lord Jesus

“Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven. And they worshiped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy, and were continually in the temple praising and blessing God. Amen” (Luke 24:51-53).

Truly Jesus is the Son of God and worthy of all our worship, honor, and praise. The disciples had seen the risen Christ and now He ascended to His glory in heaven. Their hearts were filled with joy and they worshiped Him. Our hearts are filled with praise and

adoration as we reflect on His love to us and our great salvation by His precious blood (1 Peter 1:17-21). May all of our worship services always serve to honor Him.

Let us pray in Jesus’ name and . . .

- Worship Him, reflecting on His wonderful name that is above all names (Philippians 2:5-11).
- Invite Him to be the center of our lives, and bless His holy name (Psalm 103:1-5).

Have you repented?

Say, my friend, did you repent?
Is the Lord your loving Savior?
You, for whom His blood was spent,
Are you living in His favor?
Do you feel the Lord is near?
Are you happy, free from fear?

Or do you still live in sin,
Striving after worldly pleasures?
Do you have no peace within,
Loving only earthly treasures?
Satan's strongholds God destroys;
He'll forgive and grant you joy.

Do not listen to the trends
Of this old world that deceive you.
Enemies appear as friends,
And in your need they will leave you.
Come to Jesus Christ today;
He is Truth, the Life, the Way.

Now's the time, oh don't delay,
Your talents for the Lord employ.
Don't be deceived, repent today;
Take up your cross with grace and joy.
Fight the good fight with the Lord,
Heavenly is the reward.