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Editorial

Dear Reader,

When the Almighty God led His afflicted people out of Egypt, He not only gave them the Ten Commandments but also additional instructions. The people of Israel, God's own possession, were to be an example and a blessing. We read, "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:1).

Obedience and faith result in God's blessing but there is no blessing after disobedience and unbelief, nor do they result in peace or true joy. Therefore, God promised blessings but also threatened curses. In Deuteronomy twenty-seven and twenty-eight, there are ninety-four verses that clearly and straightforwardly present and explain blessings and curses to all.

It is God's grace that saves and redeems us. Then we can be declared as blessed. In Matthew 5:3-11, we read the eight Beatitudes of our Lord. But already in the Psalms and in other verses in the Old Testament, we find these words: "Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly . . . but his delight is in the law of the LORD" (Psalm 1:1-2).

Dear Reader, God gives us a choice. It is our decision. Our heavenly Father has made the choice so simple for us through His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. Our Savior calls, "Come to Me" (Matthew 11:28) and "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6). Our salvation and righteousness exist because of our redemption through Christ and our fellowship with Him. Yes, blessed is the one who believes in Him and is a child of God who follows Jesus in faith and obedience. This wonderful promise then applies to such a person: "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

H. D. Nimz

Christ's Strength is Made Perfect in Weakness

An Indian officer recounts the story of a young martyr, illustrating Christ's strength made perfect in weakness:

"In my regiment I had young man slight of frame and small in stature. He had lost his father and mother and was all alone in the world. This young man had to endure a lot of torment from the rough soldiers, but not for a moment did he deny his Christianity. His Christian mother had raised him well and in the way he conducted himself, he demonstrated that he was serious about his faith.

"One morning the news quickly spread that during the night the shooting targets had been knocked down and the usual exercise could not take place. The tracks of the culprits led to the tent where our petite believer, Willy Holt, was sleeping with about twelve others. The whole group was placed under arrest and it was found that one or more of them were guilty of the offense.

"The commanding general turned to the prisoners and said, 'If one of you who slept in No. 4 during the last night will come forward and take the punishment, the others may go out free. If not, each of you will face ten lashes with the "cat o' nine tails."'

"A deep silence followed. Then Willy Holt stepped forward. His face was pale as death as he said, 'I will bear the punishment for all of you.' I turned to the detainees and asked, 'Do you want this boy to suffer for you? He is innocent and we all know it.' But my order was firm, and the boy knew it too when he said, 'I'm ready, sir.'

"My heart ached at the thought that this guiltless boy should suffer the horrible punishment. At the fourth stroke, Jim Sykes, who had always been the black sheep in the regiment, grabbed the cruel whip and shouted, 'Stop, General, tie me up, instead! After all, he didn't do it! I did it!' And he wrapped his arms around the boy.

"Half fainting and almost speechless, Willy fixed his eyes on Jim and smiled. 'No, Jim,' he said, 'you are free now. The General's order is valid.' His head fell forward as he lost consciousness.

"The next day I went to the hospital and asked how the boy was doing. 'He is going downhill, General,' said the doctor. 'The boy is also better suited for heaven than for earth.' Tears came to his eyes.

"In a corner of the room I saw the boy sunk deeply in the pillows. Kneeling beside him was Jim Sykes. I saw beads of sweat on his forehead and heard him say, 'Why did you do that, Willy?'

"'Because I wanted to take the blame in your place. I thought maybe it would help you understand why Christ died for you.'

"'What do you mean, Willy?'

"'I mean that He died for you because He loved you, like I do, Jim. Only He loved you a thousand times more. I only suffered for one of your sins. But Christ suffered the penalty for all the sins you committed. The penalty was death, and Jim, Christ suffered that death for you.'

"'I am one of the bad people. Christ never cared about me.'

"'But Christ died precisely to save the bad. He said, "I have not come for the righteous, but for sinners." "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18). Dear Jim, should the Lord have died for you in vain? He is calling you. He has shed His precious blood for you. He is knocking at the door of your heart. Will you let him in? Oh, you must, and then we shall meet again in heaven.'

"A few moments later Willy fell back into the pillows. I heard him say, semi-conscious, 'Sing to me, mother, one more song.' It seemed as if he was listen-

ing to his mother's voice, and I heard him say, 'Soon I will be there, mother.'

"Where will you be, Willy?' I asked.

"He smiled, 'In heaven, General. I heard the call! The gates are open, the price is paid.' Then quietly, as if entering the gates of heaven, he said,

*"As I am, Lord, I'm coming,
Your precious blood, it speaks for me.
The door of heaven is now open,
O Lamb of God, I'm coming!"*

"Calmly he raised his eyes to me and said, 'General, you will continue to help Jim, won't you? You will show him the way to Jesus and to the pearly gates?'

"Suddenly the dying boy's eyes lit up, and with a jubilant cry he spread his arms and cried, 'Jesus is calling me to His side! Mother! Oh Mother, now I'll see you again, where you've been waiting for me!'

"Slowly the light faded from his shining eyes and the brave spirit of the little martyr went to be with Jesus." ■

Kindness Pays Dividends

Posted in the town of Kirn an der Nahe, Germany, a preacher named Mettel recounts this story.

"On Friday evening, I led services in a town on the Rhine, and on Sunday evening, I was supposed to be in a city in the Territory of the Saar Basin. With the French having commandeered the train, I had no choice but to cover the ninety kilometers [56 mi] on foot. The weather was bad. I managed to walk fifty-eight kilometers [36 mi] on Saturday nonetheless, but by the end of the day, I was so tired that I could not fall asleep for a long time.

"The next morning, I hit the road again, but my strength soon failed me. I collapsed several kilometers before reaching the city in which I had gone to school. Nobody was driving by to take me along. Inwardly, I sighed to the Lord, 'Oh Lord, I know that I am walking on Your path and in Your service. You said that You have all the power in Heaven and on Earth. So You can either give me new strength or send me somebody to give me a ride.'

"As I was praying, a cart came down the road. It rolled up to me, then past me, before the driver suddenly stopped. 'Mr. Mettel, you look exhausted. Get

in!' Without realizing it, I must have thanked God out loud. 'Who are you talking to?' asked the driver.

"Who do you think? You see, I walked fifty-eight kilometers yesterday, and I have been out walking again since eight o'clock this morning. When I could not go one step farther, I prayed to God, asking Him for help. He sent you my way. You are a messenger from God, sent in my time of utmost need. I was thanking God for that.' A few tears fell on the old man's beard as he sat beside me, lost in thought.

"After some time, I asked him how he knew me. 'You were at the secondary school in Z., right?' he asked. 'Sure, but that was over thirty years ago.'

"But your face hasn't changed much. I recognized you right away. I will never forget how, when all the other students walked past and ignored me, you politely tipped your cap to the cart driver, a lowly servant, and kindly wished me a good morning. Nobody has done that for me since.'

"I thought, 'Lord, how wonderful are Your ways! Now, in my greatest need, you let Your child see the fruit borne by one small, kind act offered in my youth to somebody starved for kindness.'" ■

The Peacemakers

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God”
(Matthew 5:9).

Through the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount, we can get to know ourselves. At the same time, we get to know God. By telling us how we should live, God reveals Who He was. He is a God of humility, comfort, gentleness, justice, mercy, and holiness. In the above-quoted text, we recognize Him as a God of peace.

One sign of evil and sin is strife. Everywhere around us we see discord, strife, and conflict. Christ came to bring peace on earth. He is called the Prince of Peace. The angels sang at His coming into the world: “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:14).

So, who are the peacemakers of whom Jesus speaks in Matthew 5? They are people who have attained true peace in their hearts and who are at peace with God. They have become children of peace. If people want to live in peace with each other, they must be in a right relationship with God. All strife arises from sin, selfishness, greed, ambition, vindictiveness, or envy and resentment. Christ came to restore peace to us who were lost in sin.

It is very important that our heart becomes a dwelling place of peace. Through purification of

heart and life, we become children of peace. Everything that disturbs this peace must be removed.

Peacemakers seek to make peace where there is strife. The Lord Jesus was the great Peacemaker Who came into the world to first make peace between God and man and then between mankind, uniting them all peacefully in His church. His true disciples follow in His footsteps and strive to prove themselves as peacemakers.

True peacemakers do not offer a sham peace that merely covers up sin. Whatever disturbs peace must be removed. However, one can only be a peacemaker if one’s own heart is pure. James says in chapter three, verse seventeen, “But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” Such a person will never approve injustice; he will fight all errors. In this sense, even the great Prince of Peace, Jesus, said in Luke 12:51, “Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division.” The zeal that true peacemakers display for truth and against error and injustice is precisely the proof that they are concerned with true and lasting peace. They are not content

with a temporary pseudo-peace, knowing that a peace not founded on truth and justice is worth nothing and cannot last long.

The peacemakers shall be called “children of God.” This is the pinnacle of all joy. Can there be anything better than this high calling? To be called a child of God, a brother of the Lord Jesus, is truly something amazing. A child and heir of the heavenly King! Who can imagine it? John exclaims, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). And Paul says, “And if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ” (Romans 8:17).

Whoever has attained peace through Christ and is a true peacemaker is also able to die in peace. To God be eternal praise and thanksgiving that He paved the way so that all who want to can be reconciled to Him and become children of peace. “That is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself . . . Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God” (2 Corinthians 5:19-20). ■

J. Greiner

Purity of Heart



How wonderful it is that God, in His eternal love, created an opportunity for us to receive pure hearts. It is written, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). These words would never be written in the Bible if there was no possibility of achieving this purity of heart. How wonderful it is that our hearts can receive again the purity we once had as children. All our sins can be expunged, so that our souls can be white as fresh snow. What a wonderful truth that is!

From a human perspective, King David had progressed remarkably. He started as a shepherd boy and became a king. During his inspiring career, he suffered the very painful loss of his purity of heart. I am certain that David looked back at this time with regret. As a shepherd boy, he took his harp and sang songs to praise God. Now he was king, and had won many battles; yet his joy was gone because his heart was stained with sin. But he went to God in his misery and prayed, “Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me by Your generous Spirit” (Psalm 51:12). This prayer was certainly of great significance, because he was able to renew his covenant with the living God. The

same miracle still happens today when we turn to Him, because His compassion has no end.

The Lord says through the prophet Isaiah, “‘Come now, and let us reason together,’ says the LORD, ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool’” (Isaiah 1:18). John, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says, “But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). This speaks of the possibility to be cleansed from our sins. How wonderful that we can already receive salvation here in this time!

Someone may ask, how would I know if my heart is pure or not? In 1 John 3:21-22, we read, “Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God. And whatever we ask we receive from Him, because we keep His com-

mandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.”

When sin entered the world through Adam and Eve, open fellowship with God was lost. But as soon as sin is pardoned and cleansed, we have a relationship with God again. We can approach God again through the blood of Jesus.

There is another indicator of a pure heart. Jesus says, “Blessed are the pure in heart.” Those who have a pure heart are joyful, and their lives radiate pure joy. External circumstances cannot take this joy away, because the source of joy comes from the hidden depth of a pure heart.

History tells us of times where there have been winds of persecution that blew over God’s church, such as when in the nights of centuries past, Christians shone like torches as they burned at stakes. However, their source of joy still flowed, allowing them to go to the pyres singing. Tools of torture could not stop the praises of the saints. When pure hearts gather for worship, their praises rise like holy incense to the living God above. It is the Holy Spirit Who rests over these gatherings, for He is present where pure hearts reside. ■

You Are the Light of the World

In John 8:12, Jesus says, “I am the light of the world.” And in Matthew 5:14, He says, “You are the light of the world.” What He claimed for Himself, He wanted His disciples to be as well. What a privilege, and what a responsibility! As children of God, we have a high calling in this world.

We all know how indispensable light is. Without light, life is impossible. At night, we cannot walk securely in total darkness. It is only with the help of a light that we can safely find our way. Light dispels the darkness so we can avoid any dangers on our way.

What a difference the sun makes! It is the sun that makes life on earth possible. When it shines, everything grows and prospers. Without it, earth would be frozen and lifeless.

Spiritually speaking, the world is in deep darkness and as children of God, we should do our part to shine light into that darkness. Those who are wandering in darkness and going astray need the light of the gospel to show them the way to heaven and back to God. It is our duty to do our part, each of us where God has placed us, so we may shine as lights.

Yet, we cannot shine unless we first have received light ourselves. A lamp must be connected to a source of energy before it can shine. We too, cannot shine by ourselves. Recall that Jesus says, “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Since Jesus is the Source of light, we must be connected to the source in order to shine. He said, “Without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). People can direct us to the source of light, but the light itself must come from the Lord.

Jesus wants to shine through the lives of His people here on earth. He is the light source, and we are the lamps. The streetlamps that light up our cities at night must be connected to the electrical power source. If

the connection is interrupted, the lamps cease to shine. In the same way, we need to be connected with Jesus to shine. If the connection is severed, we no longer shine.

A candle is lit for a purpose. It is not there to be marveled at but to give light and to shine in darkness so that things can be seen. The world should see God through us. People must see that we take our Christianity seriously. The best way to do this is to put it into practice. God gives each of His children a special gift with which to let his or her light shine. If all God’s people would let their light shine and make sure it is not concealed, spiritual darkness would not be so great.

How great is that darkness into which the true light does not shine! How cold and dark are those hearts who have not received the light of Christ. We know that the earth cannot bring forth fruit without sunshine. In the same way, if the heavenly sunshine does not illuminate the human heart, spiritual fruit cannot be expected to flourish. The heart of the natural man is filled with the coldness and darkness of sin. We are to bring warmth to the world. Failing to do so results in the dangerous situation where the world will grow even colder. We all have influence on our environment, but are also influenced by our environment. If our influence is not stronger than that of the world, we will succumb to it.

All followers of Jesus need to be light. How precious it is when a father and mother in a family let their lights shine and lead their children by being good examples. O blessed home in which Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, shines!

Dear Reader, do you shine as a light in this world, or is your life a dark shadow of sin? Let Jesus come into your heart, and let there be light! ■



Vital Christianity



It has not rained for a long time. Everything is dried out. The heads of the flowers are drooping. The fruit is languishing and looks pitiful. The earth is waiting for the refreshing moisture of heaven that still shows no sign of coming. What a sad picture!

Does not the spiritual condition of the world look like this as well? It is a pitiful picture we see before us. People who should be like trees planted by the rivers of water, bringing plentiful fruit in due season, are more like a dry desert internally, and they let their heads hang. Those who should be drinking from the fountain of living waters have instead hewn for themselves cisterns—broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13). The prophet has well said, “The poor and needy seek water, but there is none, their tongues fail for thirst” (Isaiah 41:17).

It has been told that in the burning desert there were bones of humans found, not only on the way to an oasis but also very close to the source of water. Dying of thirst and filled with the desire to receive a cup of life-giving water, some dragged themselves to the source and were found lifeless with a cup in hand. Some had the hope of finding water when they saw palm trees in the distance. After great effort they finally arrived, only to find the cisterns empty. With hopeless eyes, they looked into the empty pits, or with desperate thirst, they drank the last drops of muddy water from the dirty ground only to further aggravate their thirst. These poor, desperate souls sank to the ground, for all hope had vanished. Some cursed, others wailed in anguish, and so they collapsed and died of thirst. But after a time, the sky grew dark, thunder rolled and lightning flashed, and the refreshing rain came down

and even wet the pale lips of those dead corpses.

This is truly a horrible and pitiful picture. But is this not precisely the spiritual state many people find themselves in? There are so many cisterns in the world. People flock to the entertainment centers and seek to quench their souls’ desperate thirst. They wish to relieve the burning emptiness inside. Yet dirty puddles can never quench their thirst. They stagger from desire to indulgence, and in indulging they languish from desire. Need this be the case?

No, it is unnecessary. Humans were not intended to be like empty, dead skeletons upon the earth. No one was meant to go through life thirsty, miserable, and languishing, only to perish unsatisfied. Someone came into this world, and through His bitter suffering and death on the cross, a well was dug in which there is living water for all to drink and to satisfy their thirst. Jesus said, “Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life” (John 4:14).

Dear Reader, you are invited to drink of this water. More than that, you should not only drink; it is to become in you a fountain of water that shall never run dry. This will only happen if you claim for yourself what Jesus, the Son of God, has done for you. You will not only have enough for yourself, but you will have such an abundance, that many others with whom you have contact can reap the benefits of the grace you received. “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:38). ■

A. Borbe

Be Kind

The world is full of rudeness, criticalness, impatience, and unnecessary loud talk. But a Christian is to be kind, warm-hearted, and gracious.

The Apostle Paul lists three characteristics of a mature Christian: kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving (Ephesians 4:32). Our Lord taught us, “But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the ungrateful and evil. Therefore, be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful” (Luke 6:35-36).

It is not always easy to remain kind. We find it difficult to be kind to the ungrateful, the irresponsible, and the indifferent. Something much greater than human disposition is needed to remain kind to those who trample our goodness underfoot. Only the grace of God can help us be kind even to those who confront us freely and insolently, who do not mince words and who continually criticize.

It is difficult to love the unlovable, to help the ungrateful, to forgive the stubborn. It is difficult to maintain inner balance and dignity when we are surrounded by bad tempers, inconsideration, and rudeness. However, God provides grace sufficient for us, which enables us to be full of goodness and kindness even in difficult situations.

True spirituality is expressed through the grace of kindness. The language of heaven is expressed through love, kindness, and forgiveness. Jesus said, “By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

If you must deal with people who are rough, insulting, and rude, ask God to enable you to prove yourself as a true citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. His grace will enable you to remain polite and kind. He can assist you not to be tainted by the lowly, vindictive, and unclean spirit of those around you.

Christian kindness will be demonstrated by your ability to control yourself in times of temptation. It will enable you to maintain your composure while your surroundings lose their balance. By the grace of God, your speech will be full of grace during a loud argument.

Those who take to heart the golden rule of life will always treat others courteously: “Just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise” (Luke 6:31). Practice the virtue of patience and kindness, “considering yourself lest you also be tempted” (Galatians 6:1).

A kind person has a compassionate heart. There is great power in kindness. Love awakens love, kindness calls forth kindness, a

merciful mind will soften stony hearts.

A boy was born to a family who was not wanted. All day long, he was mistreated and misunderstood. This made him bitter, shy, and dishonest. One day, he became ill. His parents and siblings showed him little love during this time. Then a kind, Christian woman visited the home. She also took time to visit the boy in his room and shared words of comfort.

Suddenly, the boy pulled the blanket over his face and began to sob. The woman asked, “Have I hurt you in any way?”

The boy replied, “No, actually you are the first person who has ever spoken to me so kindly.”

A carriage driver unsuccessfully tried to get his stubborn horse to move forward in every possible way. Finally, he beat the animal, but it still refused to move. A man who was passing by saw the driver’s predicament and came over with a bunch of straw in his hand. He held it out to the horse, and the horse ate from it. Then the man patted the animal on the neck and spoke kindly to it. Next, he took hold of the reins and began to guide the animal. Kindness had accomplished what shouting, begging, and beating could not.

It is true: the world is cold and sick for lack of love and kindness.

It sees enough of clenched fists, exploding grenades, and bombs. The world is torn apart by hatred, revenge, war, and anger. How wonderful it would be if people learned to be patient, kind, forgiving, and helpful!

Let us start practicing kindness today. Many realize that they should be kinder, but they put it off

until tomorrow or the next place of employment.

If you want to do something, why not do it today? If you have resolved to treat your loved ones with more love, start now. If you want to be kind tomorrow, practice kindness today.

Be kind in your home. Be full of kindness at your workplace, at

school, at worship services. Treat the young, the old, and the children sincerely. Be kind to your friends. Show kindness to your enemies, if you have any. Your fellow men will be grateful for your kindness. Be kind also to those who make mistakes or fail. Be kind when you are greeted, and be kind when you are overlooked. ■

Our Distinguishing Mark

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:35).

Jesus spoke these words to His disciples shortly before His crucifixion, but they also apply to us today.

In the previous verse, Jesus gave the new commandment that we should love one another as He has loved us. Oh, how much He loved us! “Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma” (Ephesians 5:2).

Let us be still for a moment and think about what He endured and went through for us out of love. Think of the terrible scourging, the mockery, the cruel crown of thorns on His head, the nails driven

through His hands and feet. Why? He endured it for the lost world, for us, so we might be redeemed from our sins and be saved. Do we truly appreciate redemption which cost so much? See what the Father has given us: “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

As parents, are we willing to let our son or daughter go on a foreign mission if that is what God wants? Or do we shrink back from this thought and say, “Fine, but God will never ask them to go so far away. They can also work for Him here in their home country.”

Where is our surrender?

Do we love as Jesus loved us? Are we willing to deny ourselves or make a small sacrifice so we can help someone who is in need? Or perhaps someone is discouraged, ill or has other needs. Your visit would be such an encouragement!

O Beloved, how do we prove our love to the world and to professing Christians who are watching our lives? Time is rushing by; let us use it wisely and practice love where we can. This will not only help others but will also bring glory to our Lord and His cause. Genuine love among ourselves is the distinguishing mark of true children of God. ■



Let Your Light Shine

When our beloved Lord was here on Earth, He once said to His disciples, “You are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). In verse sixteen He added, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

This commandment was given to the disciples long ago, but it still applies to God’s people today. God commands us, His children, to let our light shine so that the people we come into contact with see Christ live within us and recognize us as His true children. He expects us to be true examples in this world.

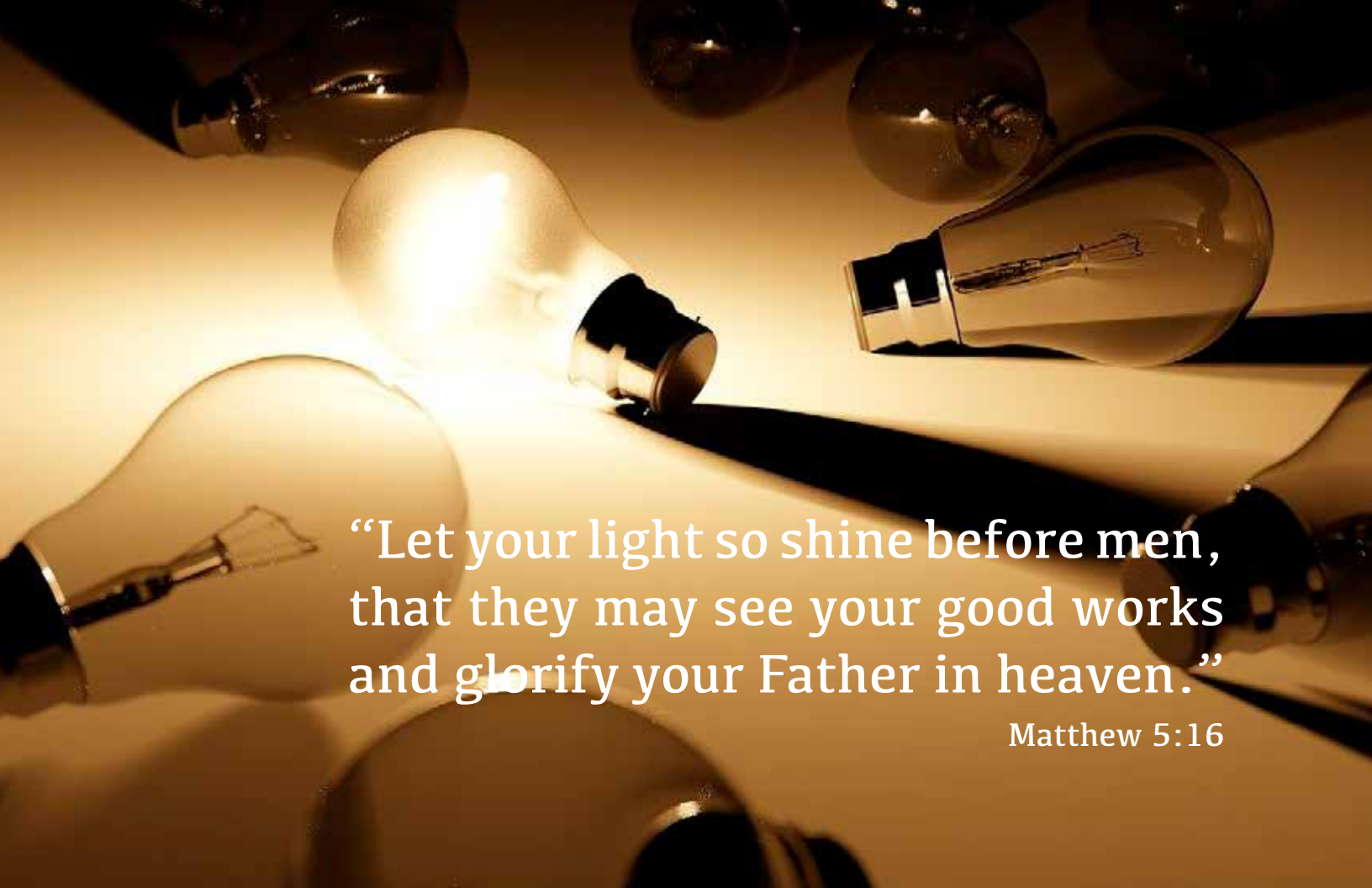
In Philippians 1:21, Paul wrote, “Christ is my life.” What an example Paul must have been! Being a man of God, Paul lived in such a way that others had no choice but to see Christ in him. This is exactly what God expects from everyone who professes to follow the Lord.

Some people have the desire to win others for the Lord. Yet they don’t feel called to preach, and feel that there is nothing for them to do. But we can still do something for the Lord, however small our place in

the Body of Christ may be. We can let our light shine through His grace and with His help.

We might think that nobody observes our life and that it doesn’t matter if we sometimes let things slide. It might seem as though we have very little influence in the world, but let’s be careful. Those of us who claim to be children of God bear a great responsibility, because the world watches us closely. Let’s always live according to the Bible. I know of no better or more successful way to win souls for God than to lead a pure and godly life in the eyes of the world.

If we live out God’s great grace, our neighbors will see it. When they see us going through difficult trials without complaint and when they see us patiently enduring whatever may come through true submission to God’s will in all things, they recognize that we are sustained by a power they do not understand. When they hear our pure speech and when they notice how conscientious we are in every regard, they realize that our lives rise above this sinful world. In our everyday lives, in the midst of the trials we all encounter, we proclaim the grace of God and let our lights shine



“Let your light so shine before men,
that they may see your good works
and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Matthew 5:16

so others will yearn to have the same experiences we have. I am convinced that our neighbors know if we are really saved.

In Colossians 3:3, we read, “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” If we are not dead to ourselves, if the ego is still alive and pops up now and then, our light cannot shine very brightly. Commonly used in the past, petroleum lamps would eventually begin to smoke and shed only a dim light. But once cleaned and filled up with fuel, they could shine so brightly that the darkness was driven from the room.

Likewise for us. Our hearts must be cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, freed of the ego, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Then, the light of the Gospel will shine from our lives. If Christ rules our hearts, He will reveal Himself.

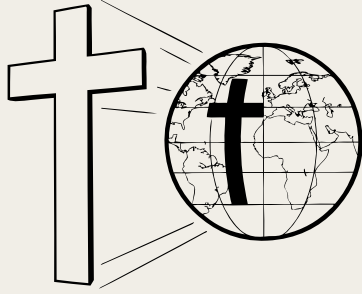
We are so privileged to be able to live out the Bible before the eyes of the world, leading a pure and spotless life to adorn the doctrine of God. In this life, we can live so virtuously that we make the teachings of the Bible attractive to the people around us. Let’s make sure our lives are spotless and blameless, as we follow

God’s will and keep our lamps trimmed and burning. I am convinced that nothing else has greater power to make people receptive to the truth. Nothing will remove prejudice as effectively as the pure, righteous life of a true child of God.

We might feel we are insignificant, that we lack status, and that nobody notices us. But that is not true. Several precious souls around us might be lost in darkness and yearning for a better life, only to be discouraged by the hypocrisy and fraud that can be found everywhere. However, if our light shines brightly and clearly, they might see it and be drawn to the path of truth.

Let us take courage and forge ahead. Let us lead a pure, righteous life and let our light shine in the small corner the Lord has assigned us. The Lord will be pleased with us, and on Judgment Day, we will be able to hear Him say, “Well done, good and faithful servant” (Matthew 25:23). May God help us always walk carefully before Him so we are never an obstacle to others but instead, we win people for the precious truth through our lives and actions. ■

Faith Stewart



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, ON

Blessed Are the Poor in Spirit

*“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”
(Matthew 5:3)*

With the eight Beatitudes, our Lord began what was probably the greatest sermon a human ear would ever hear. Jesus had a large crowd around Him. This “Sermon on the Mount” was primarily for His disciples but also for those who wanted to be His followers.

Jesus’ first Beatitude says, “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” This does not immediately make sense to everyone. Some may wonder, “How can being poor in spirit make someone glad or even happy?” Bruns writes, “Blessed are those who know themselves to be poor in spirit, for the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” He explains that “we humans are self-confident by nature and proudly go our way. Jesus wants followers who have failed in their own abilities and no longer expect to make it on their own.”

Luke 6:20 says, “Blessed are you poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.” We must not think that the wealthy are excluded from the kingdom of God. Likewise, we should not think that eternal hope is unconditionally promised to the poor. Both are wrong. Jesus knew from the beginning that wealth

could become an obstacle to receiving salvation. According to Mark 10:23, He explicitly said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” Yet He did not say it was impossible. On the other hand, poverty can also keep people out of heaven. It may even be possible for people who do not achieve their desired prosperity to become embittered and deliberately close themselves off to the saving grace of God. Whether poor or rich, the Word applies to everyone. “Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God” (1 Peter 5:6), and “Look to Me and be saved, all you ends of the earth!” (Isaiah 45:22). So, no one can avoid humbling themselves before God.

“To be spiritually poor” means to recognize our own impoverished inner life. We should not assume that an uneducated person is more useful in God’s work than an educated one. “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God,” says James 1:5. This path is open to all. Our text is about being poor in divine things, about inner poverty in contrast to the great riches of God.



Seen this way, all people are spiritually poor. By nature, no one possesses what he needs for his salvation. This poverty must be shown to us by the Spirit of God. Jesus brought us divine wealth, and it can only be found in Him. In John 10:10, He said, “I have come that they may have life and that they may have it more abundantly.” It is important for everyone to truly recognize their inner poverty. This is also true of Christians, for each of us can have more and become continually richer in God. Those who think highly of themselves are in reality poor and need wholesome humiliation. “And whoever exalts himself will be humbled,” is the divine message in Matthew 23:12.

The church at Laodicea had the opinion that they were “wealthy and in need of nothing.” But God’s verdict was that they “do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked” (Revelation 3:17). They lacked constructive self-awareness, which we too can lack in our personal life.

He who has a clear knowledge of the riches in Christ will appear small in his own eyes. He will think of himself as he should. What we really possess in our

inner life is shown by what we can give. Peter once humbly said to a poor beggar at the temple door, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk” (Acts 3:6).

A missionary traveled to Russia before World War I. He was picked up from a port on the Volga River and taken to a farm where many people had already gathered for worship. At his first appearance, some said that such a plain, small, feeble man probably did not have much to offer. But when he began to preach, “he became bigger and bigger in our eyes, and we became smaller and smaller,” someone said.

“He stores up sound wisdom for the upright; He is a shield to those who walk uprightly” (Proverbs 2:7). Jesus could not give anything to the proud, haughty Pharisees. He sought out the humble, spiritually poor hearts and blessed them with complete forgiveness and with a new inner life. “For they shall inherit the earth,” Jesus said. They have access to all the treasures of heaven. In view of this wealth, everyone should see themselves as inwardly poor. ■

Consider Yourself!

My wife and I live in a small, tranquil town in the Weser Uplands region of Germany. The hustle and bustle of a big city are completely foreign to us here, so something as mundane as a traffic jam causes a minor sensation. One morning on my way to work, that's exactly what happened. I was waiting behind a huge truck and semitrailer in a traffic-controlled thoroughfare. The unfortunate foreign driver was completely distraught. Before him was a bridge with a maximum clearance height of twelve and a half feet. His truck was thirteen feet high. The only turning road led into a residential area. Due to the approximately fifty-six-foot long vehicle, there was no way for him to get through there, especially since the road was also narrowed by a traffic island. The only way out was to maneuver a semitrailer backwards for about one thousand feet into a street full of cars. He was alone, without a co-driver and without the possibility of clear communication.

Could the situation have been avoided? Yes, certainly. At the beginning of the street there is a sign: No Trucks Allowed. How could this have happened? Carelessness? Deliberate disregard for the sign? Or was the driver mistakenly sent down this road by someone else? Whatever the reason, it no longer had any bearing on the outcome—the driver was faced with a major problem.

Don't we sometimes feel the same way in a figurative sense? We carelessly burden our conscience. We think to ourselves, "It won't be so bad . . ." and realize afterwards that it was much worse. We've gone along with others and, as a result, got into an unpleasant situation or into trouble that could obviously have been avoided. But how?

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul left behind some valuable advice for dealing with one another.

In the second part of Galatians 6:1, it says to consider yourself. It seems this advice was something very essential for him, because he wrote something similar to his co-worker Timothy: "Take heed to yourself" (1 Timothy 4:16). And we know from the letter to the Galatians that Paul expected precisely the same from Peter, who had evidently failed in this point (Galatians 2:11-21).

But how do you do this practically? How do I watch myself? Just as the traffic regulations describe the rules of the road, the Bible is a far greater help to a Christian in everyday life. It contains instructions for a happy, fulfilled life. As in our everyday lives, we find mandatory signs (Matthew 22:37-39), instruction signs (Haggai 1:5), and also prohibitive signs (Matthew 6:19). Mark these different types of signs in your daily Bible reading with three different colors. That way, you will eventually always have an eye on what you need to pay attention to in your Bible. Then consciously and faithfully follow these instructions—they will be a light on your path (Psalm 119:105)!

When I asked our youth group for practical suggestions of how to watch, a young man answered, "I should stop at the end of the day or from time to time and check how things are in my (faith) walk." For this, we should take time, talk to God about it very sincerely, and be open to His prompting.

This reminded me of 2 Corinthians 13:5, where Paul says, "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves." We should really do that from time to time, a kind of faith—technical inspection. A technical inspection certifies the proper condition of a product and uncovers relevant defects. On the basis of checklists, one examines the object and issues a certificate at the end. Which points would be included in a faith checklist? Consider these possibilities:



- Do I still have clear vision? Am I firm in the doctrine? Or is my view impeded by “stone chips?”
- Do the brakes still work? Is God’s Word still affecting my life and holding me back from doing certain things?
- Do my lights still work? Am I still a shining example?
- Is the engine power still right? Am I able to withstand temptation, or is there not enough power to do so?

You can probably think of other points that belong on this list. But make the effort and deal with it—it’s about your safety! One final piece of advice: Pick up

a concordance—not your cell phone—and look up phrases such as “watch yourself” or “take heed” or “consider,” and read those passages in your Bible. I was amazed to find the many places where we encounter these “guide markers” in the Bible: “And let us consider one another” (Hebrews 10:24). “Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God” (Hebrews 12:15). “Therefore take heed how you hear” (Luke 8:18), etc.

Watch yourself. It’s actually so simple and yet often so difficult. Is it possible that you too have become stuck? Sometimes backing up is the only way to move forward. ■

Niko Ernst

“Delight yourself also in the LORD”

“Delight yourself also in the LORD, and He shall give you the desires of your heart” (Psalm 37:4).

Young people have a unique zest for life and a desire for adventure. They typically like being spontaneous and exploring new things. Usually, they enjoy good health, and their energy allows them to look to the future with excitement and hope. They are willing to take some risks in order to pursue their goals.

These characteristics make young people unique. Those who are older are often more settled, but also have more responsibilities and commitments.

Unfortunately, Satan knows this about young people as well. He knows the passion and drive they possess, so he tries to fill their minds with worthless risks and adventures. Every day Satan can convince a young person to pursue worldly adventures and selfish ambitions is a day God is not able to use him or her to further His Kingdom.

One of the greatest weapons in Satan’s arsenal is the lie that God and the things of God are boring. Serving God with a pure and dedicated heart is the furthest ▶

thing from boring. I don't imagine Joseph was bored when God led him to become second in command to Pharaoh in Egypt. Was Esther bored when she was chosen to replace Vashti to become the queen of the Babylonian Empire and save her people from utter destruction?

Or what about David? Scripture says in Psalm 78:70-72, "He also chose David His servant, and took him from the sheepfolds; from following the ewes that had young He brought him, to shepherd Jacob His people, and Israel His inheritance. So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them by the skillfulness of his hands."

What about the young people mentioned in the New Testament? I think of the young man Timothy, who accompanied the great evangelist Paul on his missionary journeys. Or Paul's nephew, who risked his life to warn his uncle of the deceitful plotting of the Jewish leaders (Acts 23:16-22).

I think of my own life. I was born in Santa Cruz, Bolivia, to a large family struggling to make ends meet. God led my family to Aylmer, Ontario, where we found the church of God. At the age of sixteen, I accepted God's calling to become His child. Two years later, God led me to Edmonton, Alberta, where I finished my education. Edmonton is also where my wife Karina was born and raised. We had previously met at a Bible course but developed our relationship through correspondence. Karina was raised in the church of God and found the Lord at the age of eight.

About a year after our wedding, I had finished my schooling. Through prayer and God's leading, we felt the call to go to Bolivia to help along in the mission schools wherever we were needed. We were able to serve both in Valle Esperanza and Via Gracia.

At the age of twenty-five, the Lord had different work for us in mind. He called us to enter church

ministry and to serve in Chilliwack, British Columbia, in a mentorship capacity. After two and a half years of learning under Pastor Gerald Krebs and Sister Sonja, the first part of our learning closed. We were then directed to serve the young congregation of Rosal, near Cuauhtémoc, Mexico. We enjoyed three years of serving alongside our brothers and sisters in Mexico.

And as I write these words on the twenty-first of May, my family and I are celebrating exactly two years of service in Seminole, Texas. Within the last ten years of our lives, God has called us to four different countries. There is nothing boring about dedicating one's life to God and His Kingdom.

Within the Law of Moses, God commanded the Israelites to give Him the first of the produce of their land (Ex. 23:19a). God always deserves the first and best of whatever we have. The youth years of our lives belong to this category of first fruits. The energy, talents, and opportunities young people have can be incredible assets for God's Kingdom. What God wants is young people who dedicate themselves to His work and submit themselves to His leading.

Too many young people allow Satan to fill their hearts with desires for frivolous adventures. The best adventures are experienced by those who lay themselves completely in the hands of the Almighty. At times, God may lead us to faraway places; at other times, He may have work for us to do serving our family, church family, and community.

The current adventure to which God has called my wife and me is helping along with the youth page of this periodical. We look forward to serving in this way to His honor and glory. We are certain He has an adventure in store for all of you as well! ■

David Knelsen, *Seminole, TX*

A Prank

A feeble, elderly man was walking down the street. He carried a heavy sack on his shoulder. Some boys who had just come from school saw him and whispered, "Should we have some fun with the old man? Let's put something across the road to make him stumble. Then the potatoes in the sack will roll down the hill."

"This is going to be a fun prank!" the other boys agreed.

But that's when Ben stepped forward. He had only recently moved to the village and did not like the plan his classmates had hatched. But he was a bit shy, so at first he hadn't dared reprimand the others. Now he said, "I know something that would be even more fun for us," he began. "It would be cowardly to trip the feeble man. Wouldn't it be better if we carried his potatoes home for him? Look, the sack is much too heavy for him!"

"You must be kidding, Ben!" several classmates exclaimed. "Who wants to carry such a heavy load on this hot day?"

"I'll do it!" replied Ben "Who's going to help me?"

Only one volunteered. Together, they approached the old man and said, "Please give us the sack. We want to carry it home for you."

At first, the old man did not trust them. He thought they wanted to steal his potatoes. But when he looked into Ben's clear eyes, he gave them the sack. He breathed a sigh of relief. He had hardly known how to continue on. He was so touched that tears welled up in his eyes. He thanked them heartily and said, "God bless you, dear boys. You have helped me so much. God bless you for your kindness!"

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matthew 5:7). ■



Set Your House In Order

| *“Set your house in order, for you shall die” (Isaiah 38:1).*

Hezekiah was given this command by the prophet Isaiah when he was “near death.” This must have been shocking news to him! Although God answered Hezekiah’s prayer to prolong his life and added fifteen years to his life, we read that ultimately he died as well. “So Hezekiah rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the upper tombs of the sons of David” (2 Chronicles 32:33).

The matter of death and dying is a sensitive topic. Although we know death is inevitable, we try to postpone it as much as possible. Some prefer to not think about it at all. Yet dying is a reality. Someone once said, “We are born to die.” Many years ago, the wise Solomon wrote these words: “To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2). In the letter to the Hebrews, we read that “it is appointed for men to die once” (Hebrews 9:27). Therefore, we want to think about this realistically. It is easier to live and easier to die when our house is in order, when we are prepared for our end, or when everything is looked after. Those who neglect this die unprepared, causing a lot of difficulties not only for them but also for those left behind.

“Set your house in order” means you should take the initiative yourself and ensure everything is in order, so the process before and after death, or while dying, goes smoothly. In doing so, we should not only think of ourselves but also of our loved ones left behind. What does this planning include? Which areas should be considered? The following points should serve as food for thought: the soul, my interpersonal relationships, the body, the inheritance (what I own), and the funeral.

I. Your Soul

In determining the proper sequence of the previous points, we give priority to the soul. I think we understand why. The soul (the actual person) is immortal and lives on after death. When the heart has stopped

beating and the body is laid to rest, the soul has long since left its earthly dwelling. Although all people die, not all arrive at the same destination. The Bible speaks not only of two paths but also of two destinations: eternal life and eternal damnation. One place should be sought, the other avoided.

In order to die with righteousness, to be with the Lord for eternity, and to arrive at the desired destination, we need to have chosen the right path. “Enter by the narrow gate . . . [b]ecause narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life” (Matthew 7:13-14), Jesus said. Whoever wants to be properly prepared to die must have entered this narrow way and walked it to the end.

Carefully considering certain questions would be helpful. Am I a child of God? Do I have peace with God? Are my sins forgiven? Do I have testimony of the Holy Spirit working in my life? Do I know where I am going when I die?

Let me add some personal questions. Have I paid my taxes? Have I given the Lord what belongs to Him? Do I have anything in my possession that does not belong to me (e.g. books)? Are there any unpaid bills, or do I owe anyone anything? Is there something in my home that I would not want found after I die?

Or are there other concerns? Perhaps our conscience admonishes us, reminding us of unfinished, unresolved issues. These could prevent us from experiencing the joy of our salvation. The witness of the Spirit mentioned in Scripture is missing. Every day brings us closer to dying. “Set your house in order” are words that go straight to the heart. Don’t put off this preparation. There is such a thing as being too late. “Today, if you will hear His voice . . .” (Hebrews 3:7-8).

II. Interpersonal Relationships

This is about our relationship with our fellow human beings. This includes my spouse, children, relatives, neighbors, nursing home staff, fellow brothers and sis-



ters in the church, etc. We have journeyed through life with people. For decades, people have walked beside us. We could also speak of “togetherness.” We lived together as a family, we sat in the same classrooms together, we worked together, we belonged to the same congregation together. As such, there were and continue to be many relationships.

Sometimes we hear of troubled relationships, meaning the relationship is not as it should be. This exists at all levels, from children-in-law to caregivers. If you want to draw the circle closer, we can encounter troubled relationships in the family as well, or even within the closest bond there is—marriage. Then we have the spiritual family, our brothers and sisters in the Lord. Over the years, we attended services together, sang together in the choir, worked together for the Lord, worked on projects together. Where people live together, conflicts can occur. Consequently, we understand why the Bible includes thoughts like forgiving one another, respecting and accepting each another. We need this. If something happens, if we have hurt each other or even if injustice has occurred, it needs to be dealt with. I have had to ask for forgiveness in my life, and not just once. On the other hand, I’ve also had to forgive. Jesus’ words about forgiving “seventy times seven times” stand before us as a reminder (Matthew 18:22).

It is important and biblical to deal with troubled relationships. Jesus also addressed this issue in the Sermon on the Mount. He taught His listeners, “Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). When this happens, a troubled relationship becomes a healed relationship that is restored.

If you consider a cross, you will see a vertical beam (from bottom to top) and a horizontal beam (from left to right). We could apply this image as a representation of our relationship with God (from the bottom to the top), but also our relationships with our fellow human beings (from left to right). Therefore, we sometimes talk about the need to maintain our relationships with God and people.

Is it possible that a conversation, a letter, or an email may be appropriate to restore a relationship? Perhaps it would be necessary to approach someone and address issues of the past, to clarify, or to make amends.

“Set your house in order, for you shall die” are words that go to the heart. They carry weight. That is why we should take them seriously and do what is necessary. ■

(To be continued.)

Harry Semenjuk

Go And Bring Fruit

Once went to southern Germany for a business trip. At the end of the meeting, I asked the leader of a global company, “Do you have a few minutes to discuss something different than what we talked about earlier today?” A little amazed and disconcerted, he willingly said “yes.”

“Now,” I said, “you have great standing, enjoy a good reputation, and as far as I can tell, you’re healthy, have a good income, and a great family—but have you ever thought about what the goal of your journey is?”

The man looked at me curiously. “I was waiting for this question,” he explained after a while. “I’ve always waited for a question like that. You are right: I do have an elevated social status, reputation, health, and a family that is well taken care of. I have everything. And yet, is that all? This question often plagues me.”

There was constant knocking at the door. Numerous times, employees came into the room, obviously upset about my long conversation with their boss, who would become available for them when it was time for me to catch the train.

My mission was to appeal to him spiritually, not to any business need. Clearly, this was only a means to fulfill my assignment. But what if I remained quiet? If my question did not reach this man, what then? This is what compels me to find the courage to talk to people. But those who fear God do not need to fear men. Or does the scripture “you will be My witnesses” not cause us to fear the Lord?

I have often experienced that people are waiting to be talked to. Those who have not experienced how thankful such people are when we part ways after our meaningful conversation have robbed themselves of the joy this brings.

It happened a few weeks ago that a man urgently wanted to speak with me, but because of a long phone call, I could not receive him right away. He managed to wait and shared his business affairs with me. These were done in a few minutes, but not our conversation. I don’t remember how our conversation started. Originally in a hurry, the man ended up staying for about two hours. Nothing else was more important. The only priority was God speaking and the burning questions he had on his heart.

Another time, it was a manufacturer. After the business conversation ended, I had the spiritual conversa-

tion. Throughout the conversation, the man cried like a child. The issue that had suddenly crossed his path had a deep impact on him. However, I believe it was God Who stepped into his path. I received new confirmation: People are waiting to hear about a better life!

Also, the two young men who approached me one day inquiring about jobs wanted a different life. I realized that they were transient, here one day and somewhere else the next. It was not possible to give them jobs. We were already short on work.

“I want to give you something better,” I said, and handed them a tract. “What you do with it depends on you. It is truly better and more important than work. You will find work somewhere else.” They thanked me but didn’t know what to do with the tract. “It will show you the way to a better and more meaningful life,” I said. “Be honest with yourself. You’ve often had the thought, ‘End your life. It doesn’t have purpose. Why would you want to keep on living? For what? Why?’”

They looked at me with shock. “Yes, it’s true!” they answered. Then I was able to tell them life does have purpose and that it can be changed to a different direction, that there is something better than living for the moment.

Again, this is a story without end. How it ends will be revealed on the Judgment Day when we will no longer ask any questions. I am moved by this expressive poem:

*The source of joy I found, my Lord, in You.
And now to lead others to You, I’m hoping,
I pray, my Savior, grant that what I do
May graciously find hearts and doors wide open.*

*Worry and suff’ring weigh so many down
Who could be helped at my source and spring of joy.
The way to the Father’s house would be found;
The deep wounds would be healed and sweet peace enjoyed.*

*O let me reach all those who still are lost
And carry them to the spring and source of life:
The resurrected Christ, who paid the cost
To heal and to cleanse the heart that’s filled with
strife.*

*Let all who drink from this pure spring so pure
Rejoice and praise the Lord forevermore.* ■

The Seven Beatitudes of Revelation

“Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written in it; for the time is near” (Revelation 1:3).

“‘Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.’ ‘Yes,’ says the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them’” (Revelation 14:13).

“Behold, I am coming as a thief. Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame” (Revelation 16:15).

“Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!” (Revelation 19:9).

“Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power” (Revelation 20:6).

“Behold, I am coming quickly! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book” (Revelation 22:7).

“Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city” (Revelation 22:14).

What wonderful beatitudes and glorious promises we all have, although they come with the condition that we must believe them, take them to heart, and live them!

Stronger Than Hate

The sun sank behind the Himalayas and illuminated the snow-covered peaks once again with its golden rays. Meanwhile, in the small Hindu village of Chakdara at the foot of the mighty mountain range, there was great excitement. Gopal, the only son of Rajpout, who belonged to an influential caste, had disappeared. Since the time Gopal had become a Christian, his father had treated him with hatred and cruelty. Young Gopal had endured all this steadfastly. But now he had secretly left the village. Strangely, at the same time, the unfamiliar man Sadhu who had been preaching the gospel had also disappeared. No doubt, the two had left together.

Days and months passed, and Rajpout's hatred grew. Finally in the spring, a farmer delivered the great news that Gopal was in school in the plains together with Sadhu. But in four days, Sadhu was to come to Bareri to visit his friends.

"Now I will get a chance to take revenge," thought Rajpout. "He has bewitched my son; therefore, he must die." On the third day, he called his friends in the village together and told them his plan. On the fourth day at dawn, a group of men, armed with bamboo sticks and swords, set out from Chakdara to Bareri. Ram, a cousin of Gopal, was among them.

Having arrived near the village, everyone hid in the dense fir forest. One man was assigned to guard the road and give the signal. The hours went by, and nothing happened. Finally, the signal was heard.

The men burst out of their hiding places and rushed at Sadhu with sticks and knives. They inflicted a deep wound to his head and left him lying on the road.

Meanwhile, Ram had stayed in the background to see what would happen. He hid be-

hind a tree again and waited. Sadhu was not dead, and his friends who rushed to his aid took care of him, while the people of Bareri alerted the police. The wounded man repeated over and over, "Father, forgive them!" and then added, "Do not call the police!"

Utterly perplexed, Ram returned home. There, he learned that the police had already searched the village and taken Rajpout and his party to jail.

Ram immediately set off again. All night, he wandered throughout the mountains until he arrived the next morning in the big city. For a long time, he searched for the prison. He did not dare to ask for fear that he would be imprisoned as well.

When he finally found it and inconspicuously crept closer, he saw the door open and Rajpout and his party step out. They were free! How had this happened?

On the way home, they told Ram the amazing story. "Sadhu himself helped us. As he could not walk, he had people carry him to the city on a stretcher. He kept pleading with the police for us. The last time, he became forceful. As a result, they let us go."

But why do you think Sadhu had pleaded so much for them? Had they not wanted to kill him? To this, none of them had an answer.

A year later, Sadhu and Gopal returned to Chakdara. Again, there was great excitement throughout the village, but this time it was the joy of Gopal's homecoming. News spread like wildfire throughout the village. Rajpout and his friends, in fact all the villagers, came together, not only to greet Gopal, but also to hear with willing hearts what Sadhu shared with them concerning Jesus Christ. ■

Are We a Good Influence?

Daniel was in the royal court in Babylon and lived in the sight of God in the midst of pagan circumstances. His life made a deep impression on everyone, even the king. One day, when he was observed calling upon his God and praying to Him despite the commandment not to pray, his enemies brought accusations against him to the king. According to the law, he was thrown into the lion's den. Nevertheless, Daniel's life and influence were remembered by the king, and he said, "Your God, whom you serve continually, He will deliver you" (Daniel 6:16). This proved that the king believed it was truly possible for Daniel to receive salvation from his God.

Where did he get this conviction from? It was the influence of Daniel's life. The king could not close his mind to this influence; he realized this man had something he and the others did not possess.

When Daniel was brought out of the lion's den unharmed, King Darius could not help but give glory to God and decree that this one God Whom Daniel worshipped should be feared. This was the result of the influence of a man who loved and honored God.

Every person will influence others wherever they are, and not always for good. Most people live in sin, and according to their sinful lives exert a bad influence. In doing so, they draw many to their ruin and rejoice when they succeed in dragging young, innocent people with them into sin.

There is talk of sexual education to help young people. In reality, however, it is an effort to lift shame, which is a God-given barrier, so no conscience should awaken when even the dirtiest sins are being committed. It is a push towards the conditions of Sodom and Gomorrah. Therefore, the opinion exists that everything motivated by love, even sexual sin, is not a sin.

The term "sin" must not exist. The consequences of sin are devastating, and one notices its influence in close circles, how it spreads out farther and farther and causes damage to body and soul. What will become of the next generation if such opinions become wide-

spread? It is not about the others, but it is about our children and our children's children. What should we do? It is time to wake up and try everything to counteract this influence.

Daniel did not fall prey to his pagan culture, but his influence became so powerful that even the king and the kingdom were moved. We too should use our influence. If we are no longer able to exert a strong influence, we will resemble the salt of which the Lord said it had become flavorless, useless. It was good for nothing more than to be trampled on by people. We cannot look on indifferently and let everything go. We have a responsibility to our family members and fellow human beings.

Dear Reader, let yourself be roused from your indifference and make your good influence felt by raising a bulwark against sin, on which its power is broken. Begin to pray more earnestly that God may help you to stand boldly for your convictions. Then your influence will become stronger.

Many people have slackened in their zeal for God and His cause. It seems to be the root of the prevalence of bad influences. Recognize it and ask God to bring you to stand again for holiness, purity of body and soul, and biblical truth. Make the Bible your standard, and surrender to the influence of this blessed Book. Allow the Word to work upon you, and pass on what God has given you from its blessed pages.

Exert a biblical influence in your home, at work, and wherever you may be. Do not think that others should do this, but stand in the gap yourself. Do not close your eyes to the danger and think that you have averted it. If you act like that, it will take hold of you, roll over you, and crush you. We must be aware of this, because it may already be too late to do anything for those whom God has entrusted to us or placed in our path. Therefore, exert a good influence against all filth, evil, and sin so the fear of God may not be eradicated in our country. ■

G. Sonnenberg

Willing to Suffer

In his lifetime, Samuel Hebich also experienced what the Apostle Paul testified: “[B]y honor and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold we live; as chastened, and yet not killed” (2 Corinthians 6:8-9).

Samuel Hebich had an abundant share in the sufferings that come as a follower of Christ. He was a “commander” in the “holy troops” of the Lord’s fighters. That is why the arrows, belonging to the prince of darkness, often whizzed around him. He not only defended the salvation that was given to him, but made it his business to break into the ranks of the enemy and to multiply those ransomed for the kingdom of God, his Immanuel. Therefore, the enemies of God hated him and vented their fury on the faithful servant of God. No longer being a novice, he wrote from India, “These six years, the devil has not yet let me take a step unchallenged; so here too, I am once again in a fight. But I may, though somewhat timidly, still raise my head!”

In the case of a man like Samuel Hebich, it is not at all surprising that it was primarily the “Christians” who opposed him. The truth he spoke stung the people too hard for them to remain silent. His co-worker writes, “When the younger officers talked about him while enjoying a glass of grog, their opinions differed widely. To some, he seemed a dangerous enthusiast, to others a harmless, animated man with interesting ideas, and to others, a shrewd Jew. One day they said, “We will soon see how he embarks on a ship with a

big chest of money and disappears. I would swear he’s pocketed six hundred English pounds in the last month, and that’s just not right.” Alternatively, there were also people who, for the sake of his tireless activity, thought he was an extraordinary man, but whom they timidly avoided.

It happened that after his conversion, a young officer read in his previously kept diary. Day after day, a lot of shoptalk, soldiers’ jokes and anecdotes were dished up at the officers’ tables, associated with the “Beardman” (as they nicknamed him). He actually smiled to himself when he compared his present knowledge of Hebich (as he was also called) with his earlier impressions. And because the kingdom of God always requires sacrifice, it is still true today: “The disciple is not above his Master.” Whoever wants to stand in the ranks of the palm bearers must also be ready to take the cup of suffering for the brethren.

Hebich writes of his first period of ministry in India: These were remarkable years for us. The struggles are completely different from the ones imagined while I was back at home. I believe that if a person would know of them in advance, hardly anyone would readily take up this profession. I shudder when I think about the dangers into which the old evil enemy tries to seduce God’s servants. He tries a thousand different ways to ruin them in body and soul. Certainly, I am ashamed the enemy is not yet finished with me. But, what a faithful Lord is our God! His Word says, “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world,” and in Him are “Yes, and in Him Amen.” Halleluja! ■

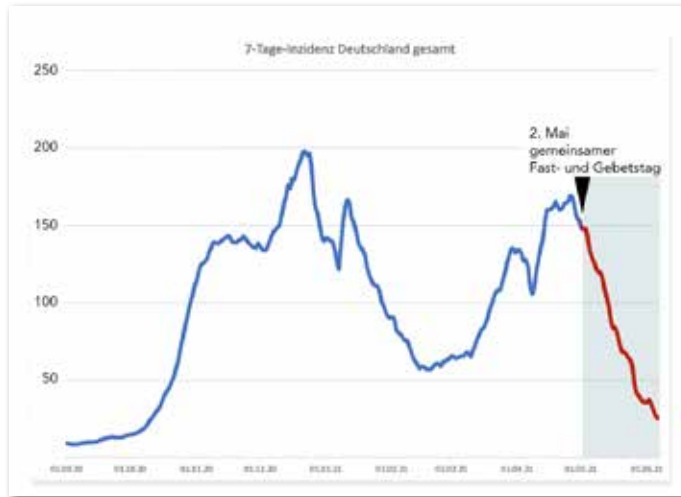
God and Corona

“Our God is the God of salvation; and to God the Lord belong escapes from death” (Psalm 68:20).

“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” (Matthew 18:19).

Last year, the Corona pandemic brought completely new experiences all over the world. Especially in the last eight months (until June 2021), the number of people infected with Corona and those who died as a result has risen sharply worldwide. The pandemic reached a peak in Germany in December 2020 and then again in April 2021.

At the end of April, the church of God in Germany was impressed with the idea of a common day of fasting and prayer for this need. Many local churches in Germany and in other countries participated. We were especially encouraged when Brother Kowalski informed the brothers in Nigeria of our in-



tent. Brother Rufus replied shortly after, “Good evening, Brother Herbert. There is one Spirit of God. Here too, we will mark this day as a day of fasting and prayer.”

Two months have passed since we united in prayer. God has answered the petitions in a wonderful way. When we made the decision to set this day of prayer, the number of new infections began

to decrease. Since that time, there have been only four days when the seven-day incidence was higher than the previous day’s totals. The numbers decreased steadily and significantly, as is evident from the graph.

Is the cause due to an overwhelming number of vaccinations? We know that to date, only a few, about twenty percent of the population, have received both vaccinations. Has people’s behavior changed, or have they become more cautious? This cannot be the reason with certainty either. God has heard the prayers of His children and answered wonderfully. For this, He alone deserves our thanks and adoration. ■

Hermann Vogt

Announcements

New Church Dedication Service in Edmonton

September 19th, 2021
Services: 10:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m.

Edmonton Church of God
7230 Keswick Link SW
Edmonton, AB
T6W 4R7

www.edmontonchurchofgod.com
Email:
office@edmontonchurchofgod.com
Telephone 780-433-8706

Blessed People

The poor in spirit, bless'd are they;
They cry to God, "O Lord, we pray,
Forgive our sins and make us whole."
God gives them peace and saves their souls.

And those who mourn because they've sinned
No longer are undisciplined;
They're comforted in all they face,
For they have found amazing grace.

And blessed are those who are meek;
They pity sinners and they seek
To bring them to be born again;
Their life on earth is not in vain.

All those who seek God's righteousness
And hunger for His Word are bless'd;
By deep, still waters they will reside,
And, oh, their souls are satisfied.

And blessed are the merciful
Whose works of love are plentiful
In helping those who suffer pain,
That they may find relief again.

And blessed are the pure in heart
Who pray to God and do their part
To keep from sin upon this sod;
The pure in heart, they shall see God.

The peacemakers, bless'd are they,
For harmony and peace they pray;
Children of God, they try anew
And strive for peace in all they do.

If in this world you are despised
And suffer for the sake of Christ,
Rejoice and stay true to the Lord;
In heaven you have great reward.

Edeltraut Nimz