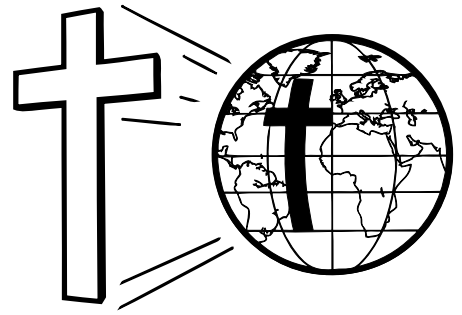


Foundation of Faith



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The Year

The Gravity
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How To
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How To
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Editor

Hans-Dietrich Nimz

Editorial Team

Sieghard Schulz

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

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Editorial

Dear Reader.

A new year of grace has begun! How time flies! A songwriter writes the following:

*Time onward flows like a river vast,
While age on age it has borne to the sea...
What is this life but a fleeting day?
Soon death will come with a stern decree;
Then one by one we must pass away,
And go from time to eternity.*

What is the Christian worldview of time and eternity? Time has no beginning and no end, no parameters, no margins, no boundaries outside of God Himself. Time was willed and created by God. We see all of life and all of the time that God created for us as a gift. Each moment of life is a gift open to the possibility of eternity, and so what we do now matters for eternity. The gift of time enables us to prepare ourselves for an everlasting relationship with God. This gives significance to every one of our actions.

What enables this everlasting relationship with God? In Galatians 4:4, the Apostle Paul writes: "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son." Jesus Christ ushered in a new period of time: the time of grace. He came to preach the gospel, to heal the brokenhearted, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (see Luke 4:16-21). Yet today, everyone is invited to find forgiveness, healing, and grace in Christ Jesus.

Alas, many do not wish to accept Christ's offer of forgiveness and consequently do not take advantage of this time of grace. The present resembles Jesus' day when He came to the city of Jerusalem before His suffering and death and wept: "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes" (Luke 19:42).

Dear reader, "behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). There is no time like the present to receive God's forgiveness and salvation and serve Him for the rest of your life!

H.D. Nimz

Time: A Valuable Asset

It is worth the effort to calculate the asset of time the New Year holds for us: 365 days, 24 hours/day, 60 minutes/hour, 60 seconds/minute gives us 8,760 hours or 525,000 minutes or 31,536,000 seconds!

That is an enormous sum. Everyone who has entered into the New Year is a millionaire in terms of time.

There are four rules for managing this asset:

Be punctual! As I wound up the clock hanging on our wall this morning, I had to think of my elderly father. My parents have a clock on their bedroom wall that would run for 14 days before it had to be rewound. My father always did this task himself. The clock was precious to him, and no one else could touch it. The striking of the clock would order his hours at night, and the hands would direct his daytime hours. Promptly at the strike of the clock he would leave his room, sometimes even earlier. He was only late in cases of illness. Punctuality is part of using our asset of time correctly.

Keep order! Father was disorganized by nature. That often cost him time, but he continued to strive for greater organization and order. His completed letters were always stored on the same shelf, and his unfinished business also had its special place.

Postpone nothing! How many times did our father tell us: postpone nothing! Do not leave for tomorrow what you can accomplish today!

Do everything in love! This was actually father's greatest secret for using his time wisely. Every unkind act costs you endless time. But everything that happens in love flows quickly from our hands, leaves room for new work and new rest, and gives us time to serve the weary without being rushed.

G. v. Bodelschwingh (1831 – 1910)

Time—More Precious Than Gold!

It was January 1866. The relatively new steamship “London” floated on the open sea as a helpless wreck. Its sinking was inevitable. Its final lifeboat was released and lots were drawn for its available seats. Whoever did not receive a place in the boat would have to remain on the sinking ship with the captain.

A rich woman had fortunately drawn a lot for a seat on the lifeboat, yet she hesitated to leave the ship. It seemed too dangerous for her to be let down in the lifeboat because of the high seas. There were repeated opportune moments where the waves lifted the lifeboat to the side of the ship and she could have easily reached it, but she hesitated too long each time the opportunity came.

There was no more time to lose, however, if the lifeboat was not to be pulled down by the sinking ship. The sailors

pushed off and rowed fiercely in the direction of the coast. They had barely left when the woman appeared at the ship's edge and called to the people in the boat, “I will give you 1,000 gold pieces if you take me along!”

She could have offered many millions, but it would have been in vain. It was too late. This woman had been earnestly and insistently encouraged to get in! She had not wanted to, and now she sank with the ship into the depths of the sea. There was no more salvation possible.

It is similar with mankind. The grace of salvation is offered to everyone, but whoever does not dare to take the step and throw themselves into the open arms of the Savior will be eternally lost.

Therefore, let it be said, “Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).

What Lasts

“Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.” (Luke 24:29)

New Year's Eve reminds us of the flight of time. Who can evade it? No one and nothing! Even the noblest and best must pay tribute to time. There is nothing solid or lasting in this world. Everything is carried away or altered by the change of time. Only Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, tomorrow, and forever. His words will remain even when heaven and earth pass away. As the stars shine in the heavens, so His words illuminate the darkness of our lives. He, the Lord, remains. Through Christ, a life with God is both visible and tangible.

Those who hunger for life and truth are on the path where Christ can meet them. Throughout all times, people who have grown tired of their own way must find the way back to the One who gives abundant life. Christ is the Lord of time and an immovable rock in the storms of history. For this reason we pray: “Abide with us, for it is toward evening!”

In the evening, when the distracting influences of the day are done, a person can reflect inwardly. New Year's Eve is an excellent time to think back on the past year. Did we do all we should have done in the last year? Were there days and hours that we cannot look back on with a clear conscience? Then there is a need to pray with childlike faith: “Lord, help me!” He alone can take our burden of guilt and allow us to look to the future with joy and courage. Perhaps our hearts first need to burn in shame for all time wasted on useless work, and time spent entertaining useless thoughts, rather than on self-sacrifice and the courage to witness. Yes, may we be more on fire because of the kindness, the compassion, and the unmerited favor of our Lord. Can sin remain and rule over us in any form when our Lord and Master is ruler of our lives? No, never! Therefore, dear reader, come to Him if you are still burdened by sin in your life!

Jesus is the Lord of truth, the Lord of time and the Lord over sin and guilt. His goal is to redeem us fully, and to give us complete joy and peace when we come to God through Him. Nothing can harm us or separate us when we are united with Him. Therefore, this coming year and at all times, the request of our hearts should always be: “Lord, abide with us!”

EP

Deep Questions

*If you look back on the Old Year
Once the New Year's just begun,
Can you say with joy and calmness
That a good race you have run?
Can you say that you've been faithful
And you walk the narrow way;
Serving God with fear and gladness
In all you do and ev'ry day?*

*Do your lips still praise the Master
For God's grace and peace within?
Is your love still real and fervent,
As when God forgave your sins?
Is the spring of living water
Bubbling up within your soul?
Do you know God hears your prayers?
Is to serve Him still your goal?*

*Are you still in sweet communion
With the precious Son of God?
Do you know you have salvation
As you travel on this sod?
Is your peace deep like a river?
Is your heart pure, free from sin?
Are you humble in God's presence?
Do you feel His strength within?*

*Are you willing now to suffer
If it be His will for you?
Are you patient in temptation,
Asking what would Jesus do?
Can you bear without complaining,
Bear the cross that's meant for you?
Or are you seeking worldly riches,
Always wanting something new?*

*Is it still your heart's desire
To be faithful, come what may?
Will you strive with all your power
To stay on the narrow way?
Then put on the spiritual armor,
Entrust to Jesus all you do.
Strive to follow in Christ's footsteps;
He will surely see you through.*

TIME

As We Begin the Year



A new year—a new page in our book of life is opened. What do we want to write on it? What will we want to see in there at the end of this coming year?

Every day that comes to an end, and especially the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one, should evoke thoughts of eternity in us. Yes, they should remind us that we are only strangers and pilgrims in this world. Everything is transient, and we have no lasting place here.

A year has again rushed by, like a river that flowed into the sea of eternity. It was a year full of toil and trouble, joy and sorrow, misfortunes and blessings; a year of many opportunities and privileges that cannot be retrieved. Many who looked to the future full of hope at the beginning of the year, are now silent in the grave. Let us become still to reflect and ask ourselves some questions.

The Past

We should ask ourselves the serious question: How have I spent the last years of my life, and especially the days of the past year?—Have you lived, talked, and acted as you should have? How did you make use of the precious time that God, in His grace, gave you? How did you apply the opportunities, health, strength, talents, and gifts that God bestowed upon you? Did you live for yourself, for your own interests, or did you even waste those powers and benedictory gifts in the service of sin? Or have you lived and worked for God, for eternity, and for your fellow man?

What efforts have you made to advance the cause of the Lord, who suffered for you? How many prayers have

you sent up for the salvation of the lost? How much time and effort did you put in to leading the wayward, the outcasts, those bound in sin, to the cross of Jesus? How many sacrifices have you made to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, clothe the naked, or to ease the lot of your neighbor? Can you look back on the past year with a clear conscience? Do you know that you have done your duty, or are there things standing between you and God? Things which accuse you? Words that you should not have said? Words that wounded and words that damaged or even destroyed the reputation of others? Actions that brought shame to the cause of God, hurt your neighbor and harmed your soul? Look back and test yourself!

The Present

“[Redeem] the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). Now is the time to act! Today belongs to us. No guarantee is given for tomorrow. Live today as you would one day wish to have lived it. Live this day as if it would be your last. Ask yourself: Am I fulfilling the purpose for my life? Am I hindering the work of God? Is there a danger that through my lifestyle I might be hurting the cause of truth through unrighteousness? Am I an offense and outrage to others? Does my influence pull others into ruin? Will you one day also exclaim like the man who once lay on his deathbed and looked back on his life: “O that my influence could be buried with me”?

Or are you a blessing for your fellow man? Do you dry the tears of others? Do you bind wounded hearts? Do you take on the needs and afflictions of your fellow human beings? Do you lead the lost to Jesus? Is your life a model, a salt, a light in this world? Can others rely on you and follow you? Do you lead a prayer and faith life that inspires others to imitate you?

The Future

Everything rushes toward eternity. The future will show what preparations we made, what kind of life we led, and how we utilized the precious present. As the seed, so is the harvest. One day we will all recognize the value of time, the meaning of a word, and the importance of an action. In eternity we will realize that every thought, every word, and every action had an effect and that we decided our eternal destiny here in this life. There our life

will pass before our spiritual eye like a panorama. In the light of eternity and in the light of God's holiness, things will appear to us as they really are. This is why the prophet exclaims: “Prepare to meet your God”

Time

Like a fleeting smoke disappears, like the water in the stream rushes downward, so time hastens on. A wise man said, “Know the time—do not waste a minute.” Someone else said, “Another hour gone, of which I must give account.” If only we could fully recognize the value of time! Only eternity can reveal what meaning a moment in time may have for us! Let us therefore take advantage of the time, because it has eternal value!

A young girl watched as the grains of sand rolled quickly from top to bottom in an hourglass. This awakened thoughts of eternity in her and she turned to God. On her deathbed, Queen Victoria of England once called out: “Half my kingdom for a moment of time!” But all the treasures of the world could not buy this moment of time. She had to die and pass into eternity without God and without hope.

Life

Who knows the secret of life? Only the Creator alone. “For what is your life?” cries the Apostle. “It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). “You have made my days as handbreadths,” says David (Psalm 39:5). As a current flows, so life rushes on. It is unfortunately too true that many people live as if they could stay here forever. Dear reader, be careful that you live your life here for eternity.

Recognize the responsibility, the seriousness, and the brevity of life! You must one day give account before God of your life. Let us pray with the Psalmist: “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24).

D.M.

Time and Eternity

These words sound so entirely different and their meanings are completely different as well. “Time” encompasses the notion of our short time here on earth. “Eternity” is the unfathomable existence of God. Fleeting and yet of utmost importance is time. And yet of far greater importance is eternity. Our attitude towards time impacts eternity.

When we examine time more closely we discover that it is but a segment that is limited by a beginning and end. Time is virtually born out of eternity and is therefore intimately related to eternity. God established and set a goal for time.

David, the royal singer, was mindful of how fleeting time is. He cried: “Indeed, You have made my days as handbreadths, and my age is as nothing before You; certainly every man at his best state is but vapor” (Psalm 39:5). We can compare the fast pace of time with a wheel that is powered by a motor. God holds the lever in His hand and one day He will turn it off forever. God is the Lord of time.

Our present life has the same importance for all people. It is given to us by God as an opportunity that will never be given again. For this reason, it is our duty to seize this opportunity and to understand how to properly take advantage of it. This can occur only if we allow God to prepare us for eternity during this time. God’s great love and grace makes this preparation possible. If we consecrate our lives to Him, then He will help to use our time wisely.

We all have duties and responsibilities that God gives us to fulfill during our time on earth. The greatest and most wonderful mission involves being a light and guide that leads lost souls toward the eternal home. This requires us to properly value and utilize our time. It is God’s will for us to minister and work. We should not allow ourselves to be idly pulled along by the current of time. Instead, we should devote our full energy to work for God’s kingdom. We may be able catch up on some things, but not on lost time! One day God will hold us accountable for how we used our time. He, who called us into exist-

tence and entrusted time to us, has a right to require this of us.

The faster our days pass, the greater we sense the approach of eternity. A certain poet was justified in writing:

*Oh eternity, you mighty word,
you sword, that pierces the soul,
you beginning without end!*

How horrible is a failed life in the face of eternity! The thought of being eternally lost should motivate the sinner to find God’s grace in time. Human understanding cannot possibly comprehend the magnitude of this tragic fate. For this reason our present time should serve to prepare us for eternity.

Rightfully we speak of the “school of life.” Everything that we encounter in this time, be it joy or sorrow, forms and builds our character. It may often be difficult for us to recognize the inherent value of our struggles. Let us, however, look to the man who experienced a multitude of sufferings that few have ever faced. To encourage us, he wrote the following words: “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Paul looked past this present time towards eternity. Assurance of eternal joy sweetened his sorrows during this short time.

The heroes of faith in the Bible and in all Christianity were always individuals who correctly understood the concepts of time and eternity. They saw the importance and purpose of their lives and sought their true home beyond time’s border in eternity. For this reason they consecrated body and soul to the Lord and worked with all their strength for God’s kingdom and for lost souls. They remain a shining example for us.

To the Galatians Paul wrote: “And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:9-10). He admonished

the Ephesians to redeem “. . . the time, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:16). And to Timothy he said: “Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season” (2 Timothy 4:2a).

To redeem time in this manner means to forge our days for eternity and to make a covenant with eternity. God will not judge us according to what we intended to do, but ac-

cording to what we were capable of doing and then accomplished.

At the end of our lives, we are blessed if we did what we could and were faithful in what was least.

H. F.

Are You Using Your Time Wisely?

Life hurries along like a shadow. It is like grass that grows quickly and then wilts. The psalmist calls out, “Remember how short my time is” (Psalm 89:47). With these words he reminds God of the vanity of his life and asks God to receive him.

Our time is given to us by God, and He wants us to use it wisely. Many people are very exact with their money yet virtually waste their time. In their youth they believe they have enough time for all their plans. Confident of victory, they say things like, “We have the best years of our lives ahead of us and enough time to accomplish great things!”

Yet the spring of life is soon over and much that needed to get done got pushed off instead. So little that is done has true worth! Most people are like the young man who received a great inheritance. In one stroke he was wealthy, and believed he could live his life in pleasure. He thought his money would last his lifetime, but as the years passed, his riches dwindled more and more, until finally he was left with absolutely nothing. He had thrown his money away with both hands.

Our time dwindles as well and comes to an end in our mortal lives. When the final minutes of our lives come, we finally acknowledge what immense worth our time has, especially if it was not used well nor wisely.

Time spent by a child of God should reap rich fruits for God. “[Redeem] the time,” God’s Word calls to us (Ephesians 5:16). The story of a certain blacksmith is a good example. Despite having had no schooling, he became a significant and capable minister of the gospel by reading instructive books. He often placed a book on the wall while working so that he could study every possible minute.

The psalmist prayed, “So teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom” (Psalm 90:12). A Hindu that converted to Christianity bought himself a clock and a Bible. He said, “The clock will show me how time passes, and the Bible will tell me how to spend it.” Each child of God must redeem the passing time in truth and according to the will of God.

It is important to use a portion of our time to stimulate our knowledge and train the abilities that we will use for working in the Lord’s vineyard. Paul spent years of study and preparation for his God-given mission. The time was well-spent and it brought him and others great blessings. Above all else, time spent with God in prayer is the most practical way to provoke blessings. Nothing else can give a greater blessing.

Wesley, the well-known preacher, meditated on godly things while traveling. We too should apply our time in winning others for the Lord and bringing sunshine into cold or barren hearts. What good is our entire life if we do not lead at least one soul to God!

Every day when the sun starts to set, remember that a part of your time has again sunk into the sea of eternity. The hours fly by as if on wings. We will soon be at our goal! What then?

When the heart begins to fail and the soul gets ready to pass to the land from which there is no return, will you close your eyes with this distressing self-accusation: “Oh, if only I had lived my life differently”? Now is the time to contemplate these earnest things.

EP

With God I Reach the Goal

There are many dangers along the road of life. Powerful enemies surround us, but the Lord is willing and able to protect His own and enable them to reach the goal.

“The LORD will perfect that which concerns me; Your mercy, O LORD, endures forever; Do not forsake the works of Your hands” (Psalm 138:8).

How quickly everything passes! How swiftly the new becomes old, especially nowadays! Whatever has just been loudly praised will be outdated tomorrow. Overnight, the “last call” becomes the cry of something dying. But throughout the turns and changes of the years, one thing should not be minimized: our precious Bible retains its worth in spite of its critics. The Scriptures are timeless and keep their validity forever.

But there is One who, despite the “changing of the guards” here on earth and “changing of scenes,” cannot fade into the background: the living God! He remains eternal, as He is. His years do not come to an end. Therefore, we must rely on Him completely. Each new day declares loud and clear: “The eternal God is your refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms” (Deuteronomy 33:27). If one thing remains amidst the confusion of the present time, it is the faithfulness of God. It is unshakable.

This faithfulness is what is referred to in the Psalm above: “The Lord will perfect that which concerns me.”

What will He perfect, then? The previous verse gives us the answer: “Though I walk in the midst of trouble, You will revive me.” Isn’t that precious? Everyone experiences trouble. Only the frivolous and superficial pretend as though that is not true. They withdraw from the stranglehold of fear and self-deception. Narcotics are widely available in tablet and other forms. Anything that robs us of our sober view of things becomes like a harmful drug. When it is no longer effective, many know no other way than to “exit” and end it all. In doing so, the addicted unfortunately forget that the supposed end is just a short intermission. It is “to be continued” on the other side! Surely this truth will not be easier to face than their cur-

rent existence of suffering. This nightmare confronts the unbelievers, even if they deny it. “Fear,” wrote E. Stanley Jones, “is the measure of the distance between people and God.”

Even a believer may often become anxious. But he does not give up. Whatever comes his way, he can look at it square in the eye with courage and confidence, because he is “looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

The promise in Psalm 121:2 applies every year and for every person, old or young, rich or poor: Our help comes from the Lord who has made heaven and earth and who has reconciled earth with heaven through Himself. In light of that, every fear must disperse, both the fear in life and fear in death. This is the refreshing that does not fail or run dry. It is imparted to us in the midst of trouble, when we are surrounded by fear like a pack of wolves. Then God’s hand suddenly lifts us up to Himself. Others do not see this hand, but we sense and experience it. It reaches out in love for us, and we reach for it in faith. We are removed from fear. God’s hand is the only hand that will never let go of us; it pulls us to Himself out of pure goodness.

And God’s hand does more. It not only supports and strengthens us but also protects and preserves us when danger threatens. Who nowadays is not affected? We are constantly hearing of catastrophes. All the man-made security measures cannot prevent them. There are dangers all around, both physical and spiritual. This is the life we live. Despite our efforts to downplay these dangers, we cannot avoid the fact that we are surrounded by crafty and mighty enemies that seek to destroy our body, mind, and soul.

But then we look up to the almighty God. He is greater than all our opponents, even if they act like madmen. In

His wisdom and power, He is more than capable to conquer any attacker. This we experience again and again. Whereas every cruel blow of fate causes the unbeliever to flounder along helplessly and weakly, we see God at work, Who breaks in order to heal, Who judges in order to save, Who humbles in order to exalt.

This is the foundation on which this assurance rests: "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me." To God, this means: "I will make your concerns My concerns and will show you My thoughts of peace until completion." Is that not a wonderful promise of our God? Who else could promise someone: "I have a very special purpose for you, and I will accomplish it no matter what!" God is one hundred percent able to vouch the glorious end for us, the glory without end. Why? Because He laid the foundation for it in the pivotal act on the cross.

The name of Jesus, which substituted everything necessary for our salvation, will not rest until everything is done according to the plan of the Father for believers as a whole, as well as for every individual. God takes His time doing this. His thread of patience is longer and stronger than ours. God's patience has stood the test of hundreds and thousands of years of time. God does not become weak as we do through age and sickness. He does not become tired and discouraged as we do when we cannot see any visible success. He waits until the time is right, which we do so poorly, until the fruit is ripe for us and we are ripe for the fruit. And although it occasionally seems that God has loosened the reins of this world, He will never let the reins out of His hand for even a second! The more willing we are to respond to His purposes, and the more joyfully we obey Him, the better it will be for us. Whoever follows His gentle leading will not find the pressure of His hand upon him to be painful. And when it becomes dark around us and in us, then we know without fail: "With Thee through night and darkness, I reach the goal." Why should we hesitate and complain? God will see us through if only we surrender to Him. The answer of the Psalm singers should be our answer: "Your mercy, O Lord, endures forever!" And in praise, join in with this plea in faith: "Do not forsake the works of Your hands!" No, He will not leave us nor forsake us.

This also applies for the New Year that lies ahead of us.

J.A.N.



The Gravity of Life

It matters how we live our life here on earth. God, our Creator, has given us life, and one day we will give an account for what we have done with it.

Life is short. Time flies like the wind! Minutes turn to hours, hours to days, days to weeks, weeks to months, and months to years. Before we even notice, life has come to an end. The inspired writer asks in solemn words: “What is your life?” Yes, what is it? The solemn answer comes from God’s eternal Word: “It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away” (James 4:14). Yes, it is only a shadow, merely a handbreadth as the Psalmist states (Psalm 39:5).

If we look to the past, to the centuries that have disappeared into the sea of eternity, what do we see? Great kingdoms, mighty nations, and famous men appear before our eyes. We see glory and splendor. But what has come out of all of this? Where did the beauty, magnitude, fame, glory, and splendor go? It all turned to dust and ashes. Only the memories remain.

Where are the souls who once reveled in this earthly glow and splendor, and whose hearts clung to the vain and fleeting things of this world? They have been driven away into the land of the shadows of death where there is no joy, no light, no glory, and no splendor. They are in a place where the soul languishes, yes suffers for all eternity.

While on earth, they tried to satisfy their hearts with fabricated, fleeting things. But they did not search for the fount of life that alone can bring peace, true life, and true happiness. Now it is too late, for ever and eternally too late! They sowed vanity and harvested destruction. They squandered the precious gift of time during their lives. They did not prepare for eternity and now they are homeless, without purpose and without objective for all eternity. They are strangers in a foreign land, in a place where the worm never dies and the fire never ceases to burn, where their conscience gnaws at the fibers of their hearts and reproaches them for all eternity. Oh, the sad reality of eternity!

Dear reader, what value do you place on your life? How do you spend your time? What does your heart cling to? What preparations are you making for the never-ending eternity? Keep in mind that you are dealing with a holy, eternal, and all-knowing God and with your own immortal soul. Keep in mind that God, eternity, hell, death, sin, life, Satan, and the dark forces are a reality. Remember that you

are surrounded by innumerable enemies who want to steal your soul and send you into eternal damnation. Also consider that God and His Spirit are pleading with you. The Father sacrificed His only Son out of love for you; He provided His eternal Word to enable you to come to Him and be freed from your sins. Take advantage of these wonderful privileges and opportunities. Stand still, reflect, and be honest with God and your own soul! Examine the situation in the light of eternity and the light of God’s Word. Is your heart and life in agreement with God’s Holy Word? What does your heart and conscience tell you? What is God’s voice telling you deep down inside? Listen! Do not close your ears and do not allow your heart to make excuses. Do not heed the voice that whispers: “There is still time. I will examine myself later. I will sort things out later. Just wait a little longer.” Remember that procrastination is the thief of time. Procrastination is one of Satan’s terrible deceptions. Procrastination is a murderer of the soul. Thousands, even millions now find themselves in hellfire because they failed to take advantage of the available opportunities to make things right before God. They deferred their salvation from day to day until it was finally too late and they were swept into eternity, from which there is no escape.

Do not harden your heart! Do not dull your conscience! Water will quickly freeze on a cold winter’s day if it does not move. First a very thin crust forms which then thickens so that in the end one can walk or even drive across it. It is the same with the human conscience. If one does not heed the Word of God through the voice of conscience, and acts against it, it becomes duller and duller until the person can do things which are wrong without his conscience bothering him. Thus he ends up in darkness and confusion. It comes to the point where he can no longer see nor recognize his true circumstances and hastens toward eternal destruction.

Dear soul, wake up and examine yourself! Recognize the gravity and responsibility of life. Today is the day of salvation! “How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation” (Hebrews 2:3)? Therefore: “Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:2).



God's Word and Time

Psalm 31:15 *My times are in Your hand.*

Psalm 27:5 *For in the time of trouble He shall hide me in His pavilion.*

Psalm 69:14 *But as for me, my prayer is to You, O LORD, in the acceptable time.*

Galatians 4:4 *But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law.*

Acts 17:30 *Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.*

Acts 24:25 *“Go away for now; when I have a convenient time I will call for you.”*

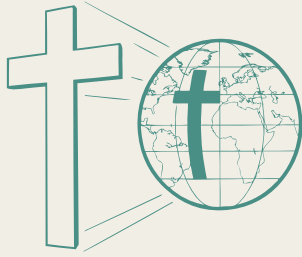
2 Corinthians 6:2 *“In an acceptable time I have heard you, and in the day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.*

Ephesians 3:21 *To Him[God] be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.*

Galatians 6:9 *And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.*

Galatians 6:10 *Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith.*

Colossians 4:5 *Walk in wisdom toward those who are outside, redeeming the time.*



Radio Broadcast

The Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs
Kitchener, Ontario

Time will be no more

Time is rightfully ranked as the most valuable asset we have. This reality should motivate us to seriously reflect on the use of our time. There is no way for us to buy more time—we can only use what we have.

Time is rightly considered the most valuable capital of our life. Every person should give serious thought to this fact. None of our wealth or possessions can buy us more time. Unfortunately, most people are unconcerned about their precious time. Many do not realize how valuable time is until it has almost run out. A queen of England once offered her doctor half of her kingdom if only he could give her more time. Not even the value of her whole kingdom could buy her more time. She could not escape death.

We hear it said and often say it ourselves: “I have no time.” There is truth in these words, although most do not take it seriously. In fact, we do not have any time since our time lies in God’s hands. Only God determines and appoints our time. Time is a gift from God, which is ours by the grace of God and has its destined end.

All of creation and all material things will come to an inevitable end. Peter wrote: “the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:12). This will be the end! On that last day, this period of time will end with the judgment day of our Lord. There will be no more time, only eternity!

Our personal time and our life will end. We all know

that we have no permanent home here on earth. “And it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27). This means the end! Everyone will experience that day when they have no more time. It can happen very suddenly. Is this not serious?

When King Hezekiah was deathly ill he was told: “Set your house in order, for you shall die” (2 Kings 20:1). This meant: “You have no more time!” Overwhelmed by this news, Hezekiah prayed: “Remember now, O Lord, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight” (2 Kings 20:3). Hezekiah wept bitterly. Even as a king, he could neither give nor take for himself more time. God was merciful and added some more years to his life. We can clearly see that it is only God who determines and appoints our time.

Our life is like a one-way street. We only have one life! We are not able to repeat one minute or one hour of our time. One songwriter wrote:

*“The time is short, the years are flying
Like tempest clouds across the sky;
Today we smile, and weep, and labor,*



*Tomorrow we in silence lie.
The time is short, away with malice,
With thoughtless words, and false report;
Away with harmful, careless judgment,
With deeds unkind, for time is short!*

He also writes: “No time for languid, weak endeavor, our strength on worthless tasks to spend.” In other words, there is no extra time to waste on worthless things. Many spend so much time striving for the material things of this world that they neglect the important things in life. The years pass by and God says: “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?” (Luke 12:20). Do we pay attention to the opportunities we miss and realize the consequences we will bear?

It was evening. A man was seen running to the store because he still needed to buy something. He saw the light on inside but when he went to open the door, it was already locked. He quickly looked at his watch and said to himself: “How late is it anyway?” Another man, standing close by simply replied: “Too late!” That was the appropriate response. It really was too late. The shop was closed. It is the same with missed opportunities. Once they are gone, we cannot rectify our omission since the time has passed.

The Bible speaks of the greatest missed opportunity: “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause

trouble, and by this many became defiled; lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears” (Hebrews 12:15-17).

Jesus also preached of this missed opportunity when He said: “Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, ‘Lord, Lord, open for us,’ and He will answer and say to you, ‘I do not know you where you are from’” (Luke 13:24-25). We are reminded of the “too late” in our life. It illustrates that there will be a time when we will neither be able to accomplish anything nor make up for lost time.

There is a picture that shows a steel door. The door is tightly secured and has no doorknob. Whoever goes through this door cannot come back out. Each person’s life has this “door of time.” At any point in time, this door can close. After passing through the door, there is no way back! Blessed is the man who has used the time of grace to enter through the “door” of Jesus Christ and received salvation; only they shall have eternal life. Whether we want to or not, we are all heading towards eternity. The last day is surely coming, where time will be no more. Consider it!

How To Have Victory

Although we have been rescued and saved, and have been freed from the power of sin and Satan, we still live in a fallen world. A world in which Satan, the ruler of the world, reigns in darkness. And that is why we are tempted, and stand in danger of giving in to temptation and of sinning. The question, “How can I have victory?” is important for every follower of Christ to consider. I have some practical clues that may help you guard against temptation and live a victorious life.

Prayer

Jesus teaches us in the Lord’s Prayer, “And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (Matthew 6:13). And Jabez prayed, “...and that You would keep me from evil, that I may not cause pain!” (1 Chronicles 4:10). Realize that you’re allowed to ask not to fall into temptation at all. That is so much better than asking for victory right in the middle of temptation. God can protect you so much better than you can yourself. God can and will do this by keeping evil far from you. But He will not always do so, because He will test your love and your faith. He wants you to pass through difficulties and thereby experience growth. Therefore He will allow periods of testing and temptation to come your way. But He does not want to see you fall; rather, He wants to watch you triumph. As an encouragement, please read 1 Corinthians 10:13.

So do not succumb to the illusion that you may pass through life without temptation. Temptations will come, and you need to handle them. Here are four adverbs that describe how you should handle them.

Immediately

When you notice that you are in the middle of a temptation, you must act immediately. The longer you allow the temptation to have its effect on you, the stronger its power over you will be. The more room you allow an evil thought, the more it can develop and encourage your fantasy, and the harder it will be to withdraw this thought that has fully developed in your imagination. Let’s assume that someone has hurt you, and has shamed and offended you in class or at work. You ponder the situation and go over it in your mind again and again. You fall into

self-pity and thoughts of revenge begin to mount in your heart. If you allow room for this scenario, it is obvious that you will be repaying evil with evil, and will thereby have fallen into temptation. Sometimes this call to act “immediately” means you need to flee immediately, and literally leave the room and walk away. Sometimes you will need to close your eyes or to deliberately change the view. Sometimes you will need to force your thoughts in a different direction, in order to avoid the sin to which they lead. Take a good look at the shame they could bring to the name of Christ. Then give your thoughts a new focus.

Relentlessly

Not only do you need to act immediately, but you must also fight relentlessly to override your temptations. Jesus says in Matthew 5, “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” Then He says these hard, unsettling words, “If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell” (Matthew 5:27–30).

This is not a call for self-mutilation. If I look lingeringly at a woman with lust, it will not be helpful to tear out my right eye. I will still be able to lust after her just as sinfully with my left eye. The problem in this moment is not my eyes, but rather the lust in my heart that causes my eyes to wander. Lust is the root of this evil that I must grasp and relentlessly avoid.

To be relentless means you are willing to go to great lengths, that you are willing to hazard the consequences of being considered absurdly ridiculous in public, and that you are prepared to forfeit something, to lose something. It means you have to be very hard on yourself.

There are temptations no one will have a clue you are struggling with, temptations you may not have act-

ed against immediately, and in the meantime, they have become so overpowering in your life that you no longer know how to cope with them. These temptations can lose their power when you bring the sin out into the open and tell someone about them. It is embarrassing and difficult, but you must do it, if you wish to protect yourself.

Sustainably

By saying “sustainably” I mean to safeguard or ensure that you consistently have victory in a certain area. Victory can be sustained. It starts with the small things. Continuing with the example of lust, as already mentioned, someone once told me, “It isn’t the first glance at a wom-

an’s legs that is the problem, it’s the second glance.” How are you preventing that second look? By focusing your vision on something worthwhile in the eyes of God.

“Sustainably” includes filling our hearts with goodness, so that we won’t have to work so frantically to keep out the evil. Fill your heart with God’s Word. Reflect on the truly valuable things in life. Read Philippians 4:8 and write it out in your own words. Record some practical aspects of your life that apply to this passage in Philippians. Think about these things and you will have victory!

Robert Witt
Germany

The Mistake of My Life

One of the most colorful and powerful people of German soccer is Uli Hoeneß. Most recently, he was president of the most famous German soccer club FC Bayern München. He referred to it as his life’s work, and many people agreed that the success of the club was largely thanks to the work of Uli Hoeneß.

In April 2013 his career came to an abrupt end. The news that he was arrested during a house search spread like wildfire. He was accused of having evaded millions in taxes—a suspicion that was later confirmed. When he stood trial in March 2014 the tax inspectors calculated a sum of more than 30 million euros. In addition to payment of taxes in arrears, he was sentenced to three years and six months in prison, of which he has already served about half.

After the verdict, Uli Hoeneß made a statement to the media in which he accepted his punishment. Many respected him for his attitude since he could have appealed the sentence. In his explanation he made a thought-provoking statement: “tax evasion was the mistake of my life.”

The Bible tells us that we must all stand before Jesus Christ in judgment someday (2 Corinthians 5:10) and

there “each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.” How will we fare? Uli Hoeneß’s arrest came suddenly and unexpectedly. He had no time to take precautions. What would happen to us if we had to stand before Jesus tomorrow? Will we see things that have become the mistakes of our life and have to acknowledge them? Are there things only we know about? Will the biggest mistake not be our neglect in asking Jesus Christ for forgiveness beforehand? Would that not be the greatest mistake?

The problem is that this knowledge would come entirely too late. With respect to his sentence, it did Uli Hoeneß no good to acknowledge his error after hearing the verdict. His punishment remained the same. He has the opportunity to be free again in the foreseeable future. Yet when Christ gives His verdict for our life, it is binding for all eternity.

We read in the Bible, “it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

Do not make the mistake of your life.

Niko Ernst,
Herford, Germany

Be Still And Know That I AM GOD

Psalms 46:1-11

- 1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.**
- 2 Therefore we will not fear, even though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;**
- 3 Though its waters roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with its swelling. Selah**
- 4 There is a river whose streams shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High.**
- 5 God is in the midst of her, she shall not be moved; God shall help her, just at the break of dawn.**
- 6 The nations raged, the kingdoms were moved; He uttered His voice, the earth melted.**
- 7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah**
- 8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, Who has made desolations in the earth.**
- 9 He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; He breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; He burns the chariot in the fire.**
- 10 Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!**
- 11 The LORD of hosts is with us; The God of Jacob is our refuge.**

What Followed

A young man, arrested for stealing \$30,000, sat alone in a criminal's cell out of which daylight had faded. Lying on his hard bed, he pictured the world outside full of warmth, light, and comfort. The question came to him sharply,

"How did I get here?"

Was it really for the stealing of this great sum?

Yes and no. Looking back twenty years, he saw himself as a schoolboy, ten years old. He remembered his Uncle John—such a queer, kind, forgetful man. That very morning his uncle had sent him to pay a bill at the country store and there were seventy-two cents left and Uncle John did not ask for it. When they met that noon, this boy stood there under the beautiful blue sky, and a great temptation came. He said to himself, "Shall I give it back, or shall I wait until he asks for it? If he never asks, that is his loss."

A theft of \$30,000 brought this young man to a prison door, but as a boy, he began down that path

when he sold his honesty for seventy-two cents. That night he sat disgraced, an open criminal, in his chilly cell.

Uncle John was dead. His mother was broken-hearted. The prisoner knew that what brought him there was not the man's deed alone but the boy's. Had the ten-year-old boy been true to the Lord, life now would have been different.

One little incident of cheating was the first of many, until his character had sunk low, he could bear no test, and he had wrecked his manliness and his life.

King Solomon writes: "Catch us the foxes, the little foxes that spoil the vines" (Song of Solomon 2:15).

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"The Beautiful Way"



Gossip

Hanging in my hall is a quotation that someone gave me during my youth: “In this house, take note, no one speaks badly of others.” Oh, how often I think of the words that Luther used to describe malicious gossip: “to slander” and “to blacken someone’s reputation.” It is shocking how often I have encountered gossip in my lifetime. It produces such a toxic and hellish atmosphere; it is a whispering campaign that can do untold damage in the kingdom of God. Gossip escapes the reaches of the law, and those who engage in it speak only of possibilities, of “if” and “but.” And yet, everyone knows exactly what they mean.

Once when such gossip was circulating in my church, an older brother told me that it was “nothing but gossip.” Even so, gossip can do so much harm. It can cast doubts on the preacher, a brother or sister, and even an entire church community, and these doubts can become a powerful force for evil in the community. Thoughts have power. When such negative thoughts hold our minds captive and control our actions and feelings, they can bring us into serious trouble. We can get into situations where we speak diplomatic and friendly words, while our hearts are filled with bitter thoughts. Feigning love for someone and at the same time harboring suspicions, contempt, and resentment about that same person is dishonest. Indeed, thoughts can become demonic strongholds.

Years ago, one of my male acquaintances was given a tape recorder. One day, the local gossips came to his house for coffee. He hid the tape recorder under

the sofa and secretly recorded the ladies’ conversation. They talked behind people’s backs and said nothing good about any of their neighbors. After some time had passed, my friend showed his guests his new machine. As a result, there were soon no ladies left in the room. They all left. Impure thoughts are powerful; impure words are the fiery darts of the wicked!

The Bible says that one day we will have to give an account of every word that we have spoken. What would our lives look like if we had to give an account of all our thoughts to the Lord?

As a preacher, I have learned not to have any reservations about people who come to meet with me. I can only meet with people in this way if I listen to them in the same way that the Lord listens to us. Pastoral counsel that does not include prayerful listening is no counsel at all. People can only reach others when they look beyond the individual’s past. For this purpose, we need to look to the cross of Christ. Here, we receive the gift of listening like a disciple. Here, we receive the gift of speaking like a disciple.

Help that I may always say
what I can stand by,
let no useless word
come from my mouth,
and when in my office
I should and must speak,
then give my words force
and weight without causing vexation.

Living One Day at a Time

“Hour by Hour With Jesus,” were the words written on a plaque above Gertie’s kitchen table. She had received this plaque from her mother many years ago for her birthday. Her mother knew about her many struggles with anxiety. Her character naturally leaned towards the worrying type and on top of that, her family was not that well off. Looking at these words helped her to gain the upper hand on the worries and anxieties that wanted to overcome her.

On her birthday she would spend time looking back at all the gifts of grace God had given her in the last year. God had brought her through the difficulties, time and time again. Was it not His love that gave her the strength to fulfill her daily duties towards her family and in the home despite her frail health? Yes, she knew if she looked up to God she would receive new strength to continue on.

One afternoon, as Gertie was doing the laundry, her thoughts went to the future of her family, as they did so often. Her oldest would soon be done with school, and what would he do then? All their efforts to find an apprenticeship position for him had been in vain so far. On top of that her husband was talking about the fact that he may be out of work soon. And then what?

Like mountains all these things were weighing her spirit down. The weight upon her heart became heavier and heavier and the question kept coming: “What then?” Everything seemed to be dark and gloomy and her soul was weighed down with anxiety. Did she forget all the marvelous provision and help of God she had experienced in the past? Couldn’t she remember any of God’s precious promises? No, the enemy did everything he could to get her down.

Then she had an enlightening thought. Her mother had written her such an encouraging letter for her last birthday. She took the letter out of her drawer and re-read the words.

Among other things she read: “Since I have learned the secret of totally trusting in God, my life is filled with much more joy and peace. You know, my dear Gertie, let us not worry about tomorrow or the future. We want to focus on living with God today and lean fully on Him as we submit the future to Him. We only have the present, and we want to fill every day with uplifting thoughts, diligent and joyful work, and total surrender to God. Do we even know if we will have tomorrow and if we will be able to take care of our family tomorrow? Our Lord gently admonished us: “Do not worry about your life” (Luke 12:22). He wants to guide His loved ones right and provide for them and not withhold anything they need for a life of godliness in this present age. Gertie, try it and become a joyful, God-trusting women. I learned this secret a long time ago, but sadly many children of God have never even tried to learn this secret. Walk with Jesus, hour by hour! Cast all your worries and difficulties at His feet and face the day with confidence knowing that your all-knowing Father in heaven has heard your prayer and holds all your anxieties in His hand. He understands you even better than your dear mother does.”

Gertie couldn’t read the letter any further. She knelt down and asked God to forgive her for allowing herself to be entangled with anxieties again and placed herself and her family in God’s hands. She resolved to carry all things to God in prayer and not let worries and earthly matters bring her down. Instead, she wanted to trust God’s leading in faith like a child. She really understood now that her small faith brought dishonor to her heavenly Father. She asked God for special strength to enable her to bring glory to God by continually trusting and committing everything to Him.

When her husband came home later that day and her daughter came inside from playing, they found an encouraged and joyful wife and mother who could sing of the Master’s glory with all of her heart. W. W.

If You Would Believe

Part 1

Preface

The Apostle Paul, writing to the Corinthian church makes a powerful statement: Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. (1Corinthians 11:1 NIV)*. My parents were that example of the imitation of Christ to me. By observing them, I learned about forgiveness; I learned about sacrifice and giving; I observed first-hand what it means to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33); I saw what it means to lead a life of prayer and Bible study; In the many answered prayers I witnessed the truth in Jesus' claim that, "all things are possible to him who believes." (Mark 9:23); I learned about humility; I observed infectious joy in the Lord We (my two brothers and I) are truly blessed to have grown up in this home. My desire to share some of these lessons and experiences with my children, grandchildren, and relatives led me to document some of them - not to glorify our parents, but to glorify Christ Jesus who is the author and finisher of our faith.

Many experiences our parents made in their lifetime were shared by them in sermons and testimonies. Though often requested to record them, they always declined for fear that they might receive the glory, which God alone is worthy of receiving. I am persuaded that it is not counter to their wishes, now well over 30 years since they have seen their beloved Savior face to face, for me to share our spiritual inheritance in printed form, to the glory of Christ Jesus my redeemer.

In my own family, as in our local congregation, I have attempted to keep some of these memories alive. Now

that they are being prepared for publication, I have been careful to record them just as our parents told them, or as I personally experienced them. I thank my two brothers for proofreading, making corrections and suggesting additions, so that I am comfortable that the result is in keeping with the facts.

Some of the events recorded here are express miracles of God, which may incline some readers to dismiss them out of hand. But God continues to stand by his Word. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, (Hebrews 13:8); If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes (Mark 9:23); and to Martha, the sister of the deceased Lazarus, Jesus said, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?" (John 11:40).

For me, witnessing first-hand the glory of God in the many experiences in our home spared me any doubts about the existence of God. May the written account similarly strengthen the faith of the reader who, not necessarily having witnessed these events, yet believes. For Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed." (John 20:29)

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*All Bible quotations are from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.



Assurance of Salvation

Without fail, Opa and Oma (our grandparents) and their four girls and one son, drove to the Sunday services at the local church. Opa was well known in Dombrowken and the District of Culm, Poland, where he and his family lived, not only as the owner of a flourmill but for his indisputable honesty. He was respectfully known as the holy Neumann. Teaching his children never to steal, he instructed, “And if it’s only sun-bleached dog excrement; do not take it! It doesn’t belong to you!” –.

Mother was baptized as an infant. She took part in religious instruction and, not surprisingly, she maintained a high moral standard in all her conduct. Yet, she yearned for assurance of salvation – when I die, will I enter heaven? “In her church, she was instructed, “We cannot be certain of our salvation in this life; when we die, we shall know.”

She testified, “Sometimes at night, I would lie awake praying: Lord, how can I be sure that I am saved? Do I have to go through life, hoping yet never knowing? What if I were to die tonight? Where would my soul go? Lord, have mercy on me!”

Following the First World War, Europe experienced great revivals. Mother attended revival meetings held in her vicinity at that time. Under the teaching of the word, her religious crutches crumbled one by one: Baptism - not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God (1Peter 3:21); not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us (Titus 3:5); not her name in the membership register of her church, but if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:15 NIV); not a life in accordance with a high moral

standard, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Her religious house in ruins, she kneels at the altar, as Brother Flottman, a kindly old minister kneels down next to her enquiring about her need. She is seeking assurance of salvation, but she states emphatically, “If I have to be baptized again, I will get up now and leave!” She did not yet understand.

Reassuring her, Brother Flottman answers, “No-one has said that you must be baptized. That is your personal decision.” With that, she is open to further counsel: He (Jesus) was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, (Isaiah 53:5 NIV). Jesus suffered the curse of death that is upon every sinner; For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:23). He atoned for our sins when he shed his blood on the cross: The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7).

Suddenly her faith takes wing, her heart becomes light. For the first time in her life she is confident of her salvation: Her sins are forgiven, her name is registered in the Book of Life; praise God, assurance of salvation - a reality here in this life!

“Before the revival meetings came to a close”, she later explained, I was one of the first to volunteer for baptism.” It became clear to me that this was God’s plan for all who believe”.

*He who believes and is baptized will be saved;
but he who does not believe will be condemned.
(Mark 16:16)*

Study Your Bible

Many people complain that they have no time to study the Bible. However, if we believe that Bible study is important, we will find time for it.

1. Study the Bible with a plan

If someone wants to build a house, they first need a blueprint from an architect. In a company, the individual departments work together according to a work plan. Every businessman has a certain plan, or specific ideas for his work. That is why studying the Bible also requires a plan. For example, begin by studying the Gospel of John and then continue with the book of Acts.

2. Study the Bible Thoroughly

Avoid superficiality when studying God's Word. We need to read the same chapter several times before the message is understandable and we have grasped its meaning. We need to concentrate while we read. Never hurry when reading the Bible. Being rushed is one of the greatest enemies of effective Bible study. Ask the Lord Jesus to keep all distractive thoughts that might hinder your reading far from you. If we want to study the Bible, we must also know the characteristics of the particular book we are reading. That includes: Who is the author of the book? To whom and under what circumstances was it written, etc.? It can be helpful to have a Bible dictionary on hand to assist you. But we should consider carefully when we choose a reference book to help us better understand the Bible. I prefer to read the Bible with questions, because in looking for answers, I must read the Word of God closely.

In this context, I would also like to point to Bible verse memorization. It is truly valuable to know God's Word by heart. This is only possible if we take note of key verses. When you study your Bible, take the time to memorize key verses.

Study the Bible as a whole, not just in parts. In 2 Timothy 3:16 we read: "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

God did not only give us two or three books to study

in the Bible. He gave us 66. Every book has its meaning. Each part of the Bible is a message of God for us. Therefore, we should make it our goal to study the Bible in its entirety, in order to have a comprehensive knowledge of all the things the Lord has revealed to us in His word.

3. Study the Bible Thematically

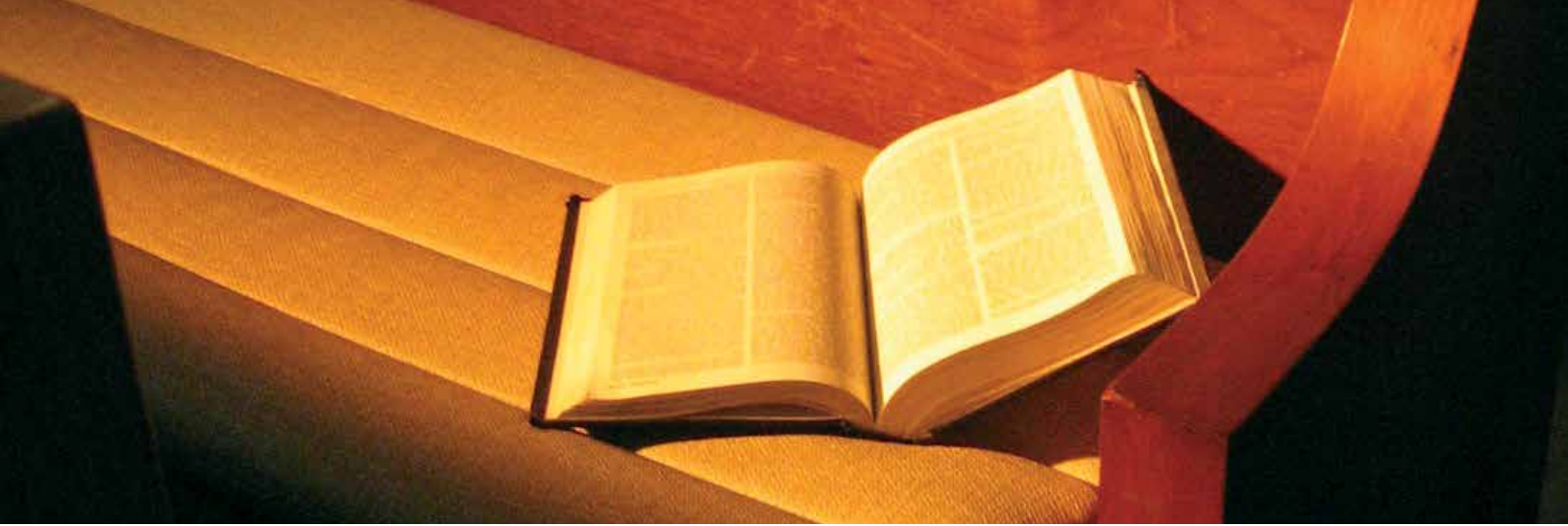
It is extremely instructive to find out what the Bible has to say about a particular topic. It is dangerous to build a doctrine on a single verse or a part of the Bible. How misleading it is to take a verse or a scripture passage out of context. Most heresies are based on a part or a verse of the Bible and not the entire Word of God. Take time to study the basic teachings of the Bible, such as the blood and sacrificial death of Christ, His resurrection, the Holy Spirit, the church and its mission, baptism, etc. You will be amazed at what the Bible has to say about these topics.

4. Study the Bible with the Help of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible. That is why He is also the best interpreter. Jesus told His disciples in John 16:12-13: "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come." It is our privilege to have the greatest Bible scholar, the Holy Spirit Himself, by our side when we open our Bible. Before each Bible study ask the Lord for the Holy Spirit's guidance and revelation.

5. Study the Bible with a Desire to Obey It

A Bible study will be worthless if we do not want to walk in the light of what we have received. "But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves" (James 1:22). You should not only read your Bible as the Word of God, but also as the message the Lord has for you personally. Ask the Lord Jesus to show you what you should do. May the Lord grant us much grace to live out His Word.



How a Church Was Set on Fire

"I came to send fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled!" Luke 12:49

Some years ago, a church in England began to experience a mighty work of God. Ministers of other denominations inquired as to how it started, and were told the following story:

"Ours was a church that did not have a summer slump, for ours was a year-round slump. How we worked for that church! But despite all our efforts the services continued to dwindle and lose ground Sunday after Sunday, until it seemed we would have to close.

"We blamed the minister. He was a godly man and would have given his life for the Gospel. He blamed the young people. Some almost blamed God Himself!

"About this time a quiet, middle-aged woman moved into town. Her faith was boundless. She knew the Bible from cover to cover. Her quiet but trusting faith put us to shame. The sight of our unfilled pews, almost empty Sunday School left her undismayed. 'God wants His house filled,' she said. 'He wants the young people saved and the older ones reclaimed. He wants men and women delivered from Satan's power. We must take ourselves to prayer for them.'"

"Encouraged by her insistent, unfaltering faith, we set ourselves to praying. We began, a little band of eight earnest souls. Every day at eleven and again at four, we gave ourselves to prayer for the minister, for the ingathering

of souls in the community, for our loved ones, for those in authority in our nation, for all saints, for all men, and for the mission fields. As God laid it on our hearts, so we prayed.

"Every evening for one hour before services we prayed unitedly, earnestly. All talking was forbidden. We tiptoed to our place of prayer and stayed there as long as our hearts were burdened. Prayer became our business. We gave ourselves to it with all that was in us. And how God did help us! We did not proclaim what we were doing abroad, but others attracted by our earnestness began to join us in prayer.

"Soon the attendance in church and Sunday School began to increase. By God's help, we built an altar of prayer in our church and built all other things around it. We held with an iron grasp the hours we had pledged to prayer. The leadership of the Holy Spirit was acknowledged. Human leadership and self-assertion were not encouraged in our midst. All self was humbled. Our spirits were contrite and broken under the burden of prayer for lost souls.

"Our minister caught the fire. Our church became holy ground. Before the town realized it, the church services were crowded. The theaters and dance halls were almost deserted, and the spirit of a heaven-sent revival pervaded the whole town and countryside."

Speaking in Tongues

The Bible Is Our Guide

The phenomenon of ecstatic “speaking in tongues,” praying in tongues, etc. is prevalent among Christians and non-Christians around the world. It is spreading rapidly in Christian movements in the name of the Holy Spirit. It is important that the Word of God be the guide and that all practices and doctrines be in conformity to the Bible—regardless of opinions, experiences, and physical manifestations. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Beware of False Teachings

Jesus gave the church the following warning: “For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect” (Matthew 24:24). The devil comes not only with the appearance of evil but also as an angel of light working miracles. It is vital that truth be embraced and all error rejected. Many are being deceived by the false doctrine of glossolalia that is sweeping across the land. It brings a false sense of spiritual security to those who practice it and undermines the reality of a true experience of the Holy Spirit and holy living. Modern speaking in tongues is not a result of the Holy Spirit but is of a counterfeit spirit. It is vital that every child of God understand the truth of “tongues” and beware of the fallacy in much of the current teaching and observance on the subject.

Speaking with New Tongues

Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel. “And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues [glossa]” (Mark 16:17). This is the only place in the Gospels that references speaking with tongues as a gift or a sign. This was beautifully fulfilled on the day of Pentecost when the disciples “. . . were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues” (Acts 2:4) and “. . . everyone heard them speak in his own language [dialektos]” (Acts 2:6). The disciples were speaking in “new” or “other” languages. They had not learned the languages they were speaking but were able to speak them through the power and gifting of the Holy Spirit.

The disciples were not babbling or speaking unintelligibly. They were speaking with clarity and distinction in a foreign language. By the Spirit, they were beginning their ministry to people from outside of Israel who spoke different languages.

Many people today testify to having been baptized with the Holy Spirit and having a Pentecost experience of speaking in tongues. If this were accurate, these people would be speaking human languages to witness of the power of God instead of the incoherent babbling that is filling many churches today.

The Gift of Tongues

The Apostle Paul expounded upon the diversities of gifts that are given by the Spirit. “There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:4). The Holy Spirit does not give all people the same gift. “For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills” (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).

God gives gifts of the Spirit as He sees they will be profitable to the body of Christ and to the work of the Kingdom of God. The gift of tongues, as evidenced by Pentecost, is the ability to speak in a foreign language that is not learned but is given through the power of the Spirit to share the gospel with people in their native tongue or language. The word glossa (or language) used in 1 Corinthians is the same word used in Acts 2. It is not a gift of babbling or speaking in an unknown language to man. The gift of tongues was not the gift of glossolalia but of xenoglossia.

Gift of Interpretation

The gift of interpretation is the special gifting of the Spirit to translate for someone who is speaking in his own language that is different than that of the hearers. If the disciples on the day of Pentecost would not have been blessed with the gift of tongues, they would have needed

someone with the gift of interpretation to translate their message into the languages of the listeners. Often, as people babble ecstatically, they claim they need a translator. This is far from the reality of the true gift of tongues or the gift of interpretation. Where there is the gift of tongues, there is no need for an interpreter as everyone will understand in their native language.

Many seek the gift of tongues and esteem it greatly, even if their understanding is faulty. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 12:31, "But earnestly desire the best gifts. And yet I show you a more excellent way." He then expounds on the value of love in the thirteenth chapter. If people would get as excited about and value love as much as they do tongues, the world would be a different place. While not everyone receives the same gift from the Holy Spirit, all can receive the gift of the Holy Spirit Himself.

Scriptural Examples of the Gift of Tongues

In addition to the day of Pentecost, there are two other times recorded in the scriptures where people received the Holy Spirit and spoke in tongues. A few years after Pentecost, Peter ministered to the household of Cornelius and the Holy Ghost fell on them. "And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished . . . because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God" (Acts 10:45-46). Peter later testified that ". . . the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning" (Acts 11:15). Similarly, the Holy Ghost fell on disciples of John the Baptist at Ephesus who received Christ. They also ". . . spoke with tongues [glossa], and prophesied" (Acts 19:6).

The Holy Spirit was not only given to people on the day of Pentecost but to all believers who opened their hearts and sought for the infilling. God also gave the gift of tongues in these two recorded examples just as He gave at Pentecost. Again, they were not speaking incoherently but in the languages of the hearers. Any other accounting is a perversion of what the scripture clearly states. With the gift of different foreign languages, they prophesied, or taught, the doctrines of Christ in those languages.

Everyone Does Not Speak with Tongues

Many churches that practice glossolalia, speaking unintelligible speech, teach this is the evidence of the Holy Spirit. Not only is their understanding of tongues wrong, it is also incorrect to believe that everyone will have the true, Bible experience of tongues. God sets the members in the body and distributes the gifts of the Spirit as it is

pleasing to Him. Paul asked questions to make a definite point in 1 Corinthians 12:29-30. "Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles?" The answer to those questions is clearly "No." Paul continues to ask: "Do all have gifts of healings? Do all speak with tongues [in foreign languages]? Do all interpret?" The answer remains the same: "No."

Tongues (Foreign Language) Is Just One Gift

While some of the 120 believers in Acts 2 spoke in foreign languages, many others who received the Holy Spirit at that time did not speak in tongues (other languages). When people of Samaria heard the word of God and were saved, Peter and John prayed for them and they received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-17). They did not speak in tongues, nor did Paul when he received the Holy Spirit. Most importantly, Jesus did not speak in tongues when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. Speaking in tongues, or foreign languages, was never commanded, was not practiced by all people filled with the Holy Spirit, and was not exemplified by Christ Himself. It is just one gift of the Spirit that was given at needful times to witness to the unbeliever (1 Corinthians 14:22) that the gospel would be spread and believed.

Evidence of the Spirit Is Power to Live Holy

The true evidence of the Holy Spirit is found in the power to live a holy life and to bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). It is by this fruit that the spiritual life of a person is truly known. There are many people who babble and speak incoherently. They profess to possess the Holy Spirit and yet they are living in sin and in disobedience to God's Word. They are not filled with the Spirit, for the Spirit will only dwell in a clean, holy temple.

Conclusion

The scripture lays down a clear pattern at Pentecost for understanding the gift of tongues as a human, foreign language. The "tongues" movement has gained millions of people who are drawn to an experience that would appear to be supernatural. If someone can have this experience and still live in sin, why seek the real Bible experience of the Holy Spirit? Charismatic babbling is not of the Holy Spirit but of a deceptive spirit contrary to that of God. God does not want to be worshiped in illegitimate ways. The fullness of the Holy Spirit is not found in external exhibition but in righteousness, peace, and joy.

-mws

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A Prayer for the New Year

*You are the One whose hands hold time,
Lord, take the burdens of this year
and turn them into blessings!
From You alone through Jesus Christ,
our focus is set and secure.
Lead us on toward the goal!*

*Who of us can stand before You?
Each one, our day, our work will pass,
Only You, Lord will remain.
Only God's year stays eternal.
Therefore, we come to You each day,
For without You our work is fleeting.*

*We know not when our time will stop,
but You remain just as You are,
in years that are without an end.
We should but vanish in Your wrath,
and yet You still pour out Your grace
into our weak and empty hands.*

*You alone are named Eternal.
You know the start, and final goal
in our time that quickly passes.
Please continue to show Your grace
and lead us by Your loving hand,
that we may safely travel on.*

Jochen Klepper (1903 – 1942)