



Foundation of Faith

Belief Rather Than Unbelief

What is Faith Anyway?

Obstacles to Faith

When All Falls Apart

Real-Life Faith at Home

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

This month, we wish to look at the topic of faith and belief, but not a general belief in God, nor the opinions of scholars and modern theologians! For us it is only about faith in Jesus Christ.

In the first few chapters of the Gospel of Mark, ten images of Jesus are shown to us in the text:

*Jesus, the Mighty—Jesus, the Son of God—
Jesus, the Victor—Jesus, the supreme Majesty—
Jesus, the Master—Jesus, the Teacher—
Jesus, Lord over the devil—Jesus, the Physician—
Jesus, the One who prayed—Jesus, the Savior*

Yes, in Jesus we have the godly mystery. Here is the true meaning and purpose of our worship, our sermons, and all missionary work for all times and nations. We find another seven truths about Jesus in 1 Timothy 3: 16: “And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory.”

But we ask: “Is that all?”—Oh no, in Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Yes, in Christ dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily (see Colossians 2: 3,9).

Now, what does faith in Jesus bring us? The answer is in the wonderful song by B. E. Warren:

*We’re living by faith in the Savior alone,
Who suffered on Calv’ry for sin to atone;
He’s fully redeemed us from Satan’s domain
By raising us up to this glorious plane.
Oh, that stream so deep and wide,
Flowing from the Savior’s side.*

The list from the first chapters of the Gospel of Mark could be continued: He, the King of kings and Lord of lords, is also the eternal Judge. On the last day, all knees must bow before Him and confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God!

H. D. Nimz

The Uselessness of Unbelief

An unbeliever once gave a lecture against the Bible and Christianity. Thinking that he had convinced everyone, he said at the end that if anyone wished to counter his arguments, they should come forward.

After a little while, a woman stepped forward and said: “I would like to ask you a question.”

“Well, dear woman, what would you like to ask?”

The woman replied, “Ten years ago, I became a widow with eight small children. My husband died poor. He did not leave me much except a Bible. I read this book daily and found much comfort and strength in it. God has blessed me and my children. My hope is in Jesus Christ. I know that when I die, I will be with Him forever. Now, sir, what has your unbelief done for you?”

Quite bewildered, the unbeliever replied, “Dear lady, I have no desire at all to disturb your joy.”

“Yes, obviously you can’t take that away from me!” the woman replied. “But that is not my question at all. My question is this: “What has your unbelief done for you?”

Silenced, the speaker withdrew to the laughter of the assembly. ■

There Is No God?

An American naval captain related the following from his life:

I was a sailor on a ship bound for Montevideo, South America. It was nighttime and another sailor, George, and I were on watch. I talked to him about my youth and my Christian upbringing. George made fun of it and declared that there was no God.

The ship’s bell struck eight, the guards rotated, and the sailors who were relieved of their duty had to go to the ship’s pumps. George took a bucket to scoop up water to get the pump going. He bent over the railing. The bucket filled faster than he had expected and swept him down into the sea.

Immediately, the cry rang out throughout the ship, “Man overboard!” We could hear him screaming in the darkness: “Help! Save me!” A boat was quickly lowered. It was pitch dark, and the sea was rough. We rowed with all our might toward the direction from which the cries for help were coming.

Finally, we reached poor George, who was struggling against the waves. Because he was an excellent swimmer, he was able to stay afloat for so long. We took him into the boat and then reached the ship again.

The next morning, I said to him: “Did you believe the ship would abandon you and you would be lost?” His answer was: “Yes, I

believed that.” Then I asked him: “George, be honest and tell me: what would you have done then?” He answered: “I prayed to God.”— “What?” I replied. “I thought you don’t believe in God.”

“I know,” he said, “but when you go overboard and everything is pitch dark, when the ship sails away from you and you think you’re going to die, then you think differently, feel differently, and speak very differently than when you’re safely on the deck of the ship.”

No word of disbelief, no blasphemy passed across his lips again. Unfortunately, he did not recover physically. We left him sick in the hospital in Montevideo, where he died. ■

When All Falls Apart

In 1665, the Great Plague was raging in London. Lord Growen decided to move to one of his most distant estates to avoid being infected by this contagious disease. The wagon was packed and ready at the door when he heard one of his servants say to another, “Lord Growen is leaving London to save himself from the plague. I believe his God dwells in the country and not in the city.” These words, spoken in simplicity by his servant, who incidentally believed in several gods, made a deep impact on his master. After a quick decision, he immediately had his carriage unloaded again. He then remained in London throughout the entire time the plague raged. His trust in the Almighty God was not shattered. He and his family were spared the dreaded disease.

When all things in life appear to flounder, God steadfastly remains a refuge for His children. One Sunday, a family found themselves in great need. The only food they had left were a few small rolls. In the afternoon, when the hunger pangs became particularly noticeable, the six-year-old girl said to her slight-

ly older sister, “Come, let’s go to church for the service. Maybe the good Lord will give us bread.” But the sister replied, “Oh, how will the good Lord give us bread there?” The little girl was undeterred and replied, “Why not? After all, the Master gave food to 5000 people after His sermon!” Persuaded, the older sister went along. As it so happened, they were seated next to an elderly and kind gentleman. After the service was over, he handed each of them a coin. The good Lord provided the means to buy the bread they longed for, and they even had some money left over.

“Lord, you have been our refuge in all generations” (Psalm 90:1, AMP). He is indeed the greatest Refuge. And yet a question remains, not in relation to God but in relation to us human beings. Do we utilize that Refuge? Lack of faith, doubt, and skepticism seem to occupy us to the point that many would have negated the childlike faith of the believing six-year-old girl. But good for him who is not deceived; he does not go astray. Our trust in God will not be in vain.

When hope recedes,
God will never leave,
For my Lord is greater,
far beyond my need.

“But what if I can’t see anything yet or have any hope for the future?” you may ask. Does your “not seeing and not feeling” prevent the great God from helping you? Never! Only one thing can prevent that: your unbelief!

A Chinese man had been a heavy opium smoker. When he came to God, it was clear to him that he needed to be freed from this addiction. Some who had known him before his transformation believed that he would never give up opium. His body was far too addicted to it. The man remained steadfast, however, and proved himself to be a true Christian. “How did you do it?” they asked him. “What did you do to stop smoking opium?”—“I used both of my knees and sought refuge in God,” he answered simply, “and the Lord gave me the strength to overcome.”

God is a refuge in every temptation, addiction, and attack of the enemy! ■



*When all falls apart, God does not abandon,
The need is not greater than the helper.*

Genuine Faith

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. . . . By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.” (Hebrews 11:1,3)

What is faith?

In the simplest manner in which I am able to express it, I answer: Faith is the assurance that the thing which God has said in His Word is true and that God will act according to what He has said in His Word. This assurance, this reliance on God’s Word, this confidence is *faith*.

No feelings are to be taken in connection with faith. Feelings have neither one thing nor the other to do with faith. Faith has to do with the Word of God. It is not our feelings, whether strong or weak, which will make any difference. We have to do with the written Word and not ourselves or our feelings.

Probabilities are not to be taken into account. Many people are willing to believe regarding those things that seem probable to them. Faith has nothing to do with probabilities. The realm of *faith* begins where probabilities cease, and sight and sense fail. A great many of God’s children are cast down and lament their lack of faith. They write to me and say that they have no feelings; they see no probability that the thing they desire will come to pass.

Appearances are not to be taken into account. The question is whether God has spoken it in His Word.

And now, beloved Christian friends, you are in great need to ask yourselves whether you are in the habit of trusting, in your inmost soul, in what God has said and whether you are truly seeking to find whether the thing you want is in accordance with what He has said in His Word.

How faith may be increased

It gives God great joy to increase the faith of His children. Our faith, which is weak at first, is developed and strengthened more and more by us. We should, instead of wanting no trials before victory, no exercise for patience, be willing to take them from God’s

hand as a means of growing our faith. I say—and say it deliberately—trials, obstacles, difficulties, and sometimes defeats, are the very food of faith.

Just as surely as we ask to have our faith strengthened, we must be willing to take from God’s hand the means for strengthening it. We must allow Him to educate us through trials and bereavements and troubles. It is through trials that faith is exercised and developed more and more. God affectionately permits difficulties, that He may develop unceasingly that which He is willing to do for us, and to this end we should not shrink, but if He gives us sorrow and hindrances and losses and afflictions, we should take them out of His hands as evidences of His love and care for us in developing more and more that faith which He is seeking to strengthen in us.

The Church of God is not awakened to be able to see God as the beautiful and lovable One He is. Because of this, the blessings remain small. Oh, beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, seek to learn for yourselves, for I cannot tell you the blessedness!

In the darkest moments, I am able to confide in Him, for I know what a beautiful and kind and lovable Being He is, and, if it be the will of God to put us in the furnace, let Him do it, that so we may acquaint ourselves with Him as He will reveal Himself and that we may know Him better. We then come to the conclusion that God is a lovable Being, and we are satisfied with Him and say: “It is my Father; let Him do as He pleases.”

When I first began to allow God to deal with me, relying on Him, taking Him at His Word, and set out fifty years ago simply relying on Him for myself, family, taxes, traveling expenses, and every other need, I rested on the simple promises I found in the sixth chapter of Matthew. Read Matthew 6: 25-34 carefully.



I believed the Word; I rested on it and practiced it

I took God at His word. A stranger, a foreigner in England, I knew seven languages and might have used them as a means of profitable employment, but I had consecrated myself to work for the Lord. I put my reliance in the God who has promised, and He has acted according to His Word. I've lacked nothing—nothing. I have had my trials, my difficulties, and my purse empty, but my receipts have accumulated thousands of dollars, while the work has gone on these 51 years.

Then, with regard to my pastoral work: For the past 51 years, I have had great difficulties, great trials, and perplexities. There will always be difficulties, always trials. But God has sustained me under them and delivered me out of them, and the work has gone on.

Now, this is not, as some have said, because I am a man of great mental power or blessed with energy and perseverance—these are not the reasons.

I have confided in God

It is because I have confided in God, because I have sought God, and He has cared for the Institution [or-

phanage], which, under His direction, has 100 schools, with masters and mistresses and other departments.

I do not carry the burden. And now in my 67th year, I have physical strength and mental vigor for as much work as when I was a young man. I am just as vigorous as at that time. How comes this? Because in the last half century of labor I've been able, with the simplicity of a child, to rely upon God. I have had my trials, but I have laid hold upon God, and so it has come to pass that I have been sustained. God not only gives us permission to cast our burdens upon Him, but He commands us to do so. Day by day I do it.

Dear brothers and sisters, do not, however, expect to obtain full faith at once. Begin in a little way. At first, I was able to trust the Lord for ten dollars, then for a hundred dollars, then for a thousand dollars, and now, with the greatest ease, I could trust Him for a million dollars, if there was occasion. But first, I should quietly, carefully, and deliberately examine to see whether what I was trusting for was something in accordance with His promises in His written Word.

Georg Müller



The Power of Faith

Faith in God does not necessarily act according to human logic, but it knows and sees that our mighty God is able to carry out all that must be accomplished.

Let us look at Elijah as he stood before the prophets of Baal. He built the altar, properly placed the sacrifice on it, and then thoroughly drenched everything with water. The water could not shake Elijah's faith. His faith already saw everything consumed, and God had fire enough to not only burn the sacrifice, but to consume the wood, stones, and water. This was a powerful display of God's power. It also showed that He was the God of fire, water, and rain. Elijah knew that it was as easy for God to withhold the rain as it was to send it.

If we consider God's power and might, and His willingness to do and give, we would not so easily limit Him. Faith, as in Elijah's case, saw the rain before it fell. The handful of flour fed three people for a whole year. Because there was a God in heaven, Elijah never had to face famine.

We see the same faith in the prophet Elisha. A woman who was deep in debt sought help from him. He asked her what she had in her house. She said: "Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil." Elisha answered her: "Go, borrow vessels from everywhere, from all your neighbors—empty vessels; do not gather just a few. And when you have come in, you shall shut the door behind you and your sons; then pour it into all those vessels, and set aside the full ones" (2 Kings 4:2-4). Again, we see his strong faith. He had no doubt that there would be enough oil.

Faith had its effect. Look at the woman pouring the oil into the vessels. All the vessels were filled, and she asked for more. She just wanted to pay off her debt, but faith extended itself beyond her debt. She still had enough for herself. Her faith was richly rewarded.

In 2 Kings 6, we read how the king of Syria surrounded the city of Dothan to capture Elisha. When his servant saw the great army, he exclaimed, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" But Elisha calmed him, saying, "Do not fear, for those who *are* with us are more than those who *are* with them." And Elisha prayed and said, 'LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.' Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain *was* full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha" (verses 15-17). Elisha saw the army of the Syrians, but he also saw the more powerful army on his side. He had experienced God over and over again as faithful and true, and knew that He was a God of love and power. He also knew that God would not abandon him in battle.

Faith looks beyond the seemingly impossible. It sees the things not yet there as if they were already there. Faith is completely satisfied and secure in God. The person of faith trusts fully in the word, "Thus says the Lord." We can all have such faith because it is simple to believe God, trust Him, and act accordingly.

Faith knows no boundaries
Than God's word alone;
It triumphs over every enemy,
The fullness is His alone.

Jennie M. Byers

At Your Word

At the beginning of His teaching ministry, Jesus preached by the Sea of Galilee from a fishing boat that belonged to Peter. After he finished teaching, he spoke to Peter, saying, “Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch” (Luke 5: 4). Despite being unsuccessful the previous night, Peter was moved to go out on a fishing expedition in response to the Lord’s word. Humanly speaking, it was unwise to try to catch anything during the day. But Peter must have already gained a strong trust in Jesus, because otherwise he probably would not have said, “At Your word I will let down the net” (verse 5).

When Peter and his companions obeyed the Savior’s command in trust, they caught a great multitude of fish so that the net broke. This great haul of fish was something supernatural, a miracle. It is therefore to be understood that Peter was amazed and sank down before Jesus. Then, when Jesus asked the fishermen to follow Him, they were ready to leave everything at His word.

The word of the Savior and the entire Word of God is a foundation of rock, a power. Yes, Jesus Himself is the Word. Through Him and His Word, heaven and earth were created. When Jesus speaks, something happens. It is not like people who often talk a lot with no effect.

God is not a man, and His words are not human words. Jesus Himself said, “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away” (Matthew 24:35). In general, we consider our earth to be very firmly established, but how much firmer does the word of God stand! The earth will pass away, but God’s word will last forever.

When Peter cast the net at the word of the Lord Jesus, he sensed something of the greatness and omnipotence of the divine Word. Faith in Jesus’ word had prevailed. Sometime later, Peter’s trust in Jesus’ word had already become so strong that he even dared to step out of the boat and walk on the water at His word. He believed that at Jesus’ word the water would support him like firm ground.

Believing the word of God is always a great blessing. It does not matter whether our mind can grasp it or not. Disbelief in the word of God brings harm and failure.

Adam and Eve did not believe, and what misfortune that brought! Noah and his family believed the word of God, and they were saved from the flood. All the others who did not believe perished. When Israel was about to enter the land of Canaan, they did not believe that they could defeat the giants and their cities with God’s help, and they were struck down. The generation after them believed and took the land. Their fathers could have had it if they had believed.

Faith brings salvation to body and soul. Unbelief, on the other hand, brings misfortune and harm in both the natural and spiritual life. What a blessing the Jewish people could have received during the time of Jesus’ life on earth! But they did not believe His words and rejected Him. Peter’s experience of the miraculous fishing trip certainly strengthened his faith. That is why it was not difficult for him to leave everything and follow Jesus. This faith did not only exist as long as Jesus was with His disciples on earth. After Jesus’ ascension and after Pentecost, we see Peter even stronger in this faith. The other disciples stood firm in this faith as well.

They are no longer here on earth, but the Word that was with them is still the same today. We have the same Word that God spoke to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets and apostles. They were never deceived by the word of the Lord. Should we not believe this proven Word today? Just as God testified to His Word in ancient times, so He testifies to us today. It will only depend on our faith.

The solid ground of this Word is experience. Should we still doubt? Dear reader, believe the Word! Cast out the net of faith, as God’s Word commands, and you will gain more than your heart and mind are capable of grasping! It cannot be otherwise, for heaven and earth will pass away rather than the divine Word with its promises. ■

“Have Faith!”

“So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!” (Luke 11: 9-13).

On the day after His glorious entry to Jerusalem, Jesus and His disciples were on the road near Bethany. He was hungry, so when He saw a fig tree with green leaves, He went to the tree expecting to find fruit. But He did not encounter a single fig (Mark 11:12-24). One Bible commentary speculates that the tree might have had more sun than most and, because of these good conditions, had sprouted green leaves a month earlier than expected, which would explain why there were leaves but no fruits. In any case, Jesus was disappointed and cursed the tree, saying, “Let no one eat fruit from you ever again.” The disciples heard these words and must have wondered why Jesus would say such a thing to a tree. Was it to teach them a piece of wisdom that they had not yet fully understood? Did He want to teach them a lesson? The next morning, they would understand. When they came by the tree again, they saw that it had dried out down to the roots. Yesterday it had still been fresh, green, promising, and seemingly healthy. Today, none of that was true. “Rabbi, look!” Peter exclaimed in surprise. “The fig tree which You cursed has withered away.” When Jesus saw the questioning looks of Peter and the other disciples, He simply said, “Have faith in God.” Pointing to the nearest mountain, He explained, “[W]hoever says to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will

have whatever he says. Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them” (Mark 11: 23-24).

When I recently reread this story, I was struck by the two words “Have faith.” I had to ask myself, “Do I really have faith, moment to moment and day to day?” I feel that the Lord was trying to make clear to His disciples that they should have faith at all times, because we need faith in every moment of our lives. People tend to say, “If only I could believe” or “I wish I had the faith this brother does” or “I am praying for faith, and I know the Lord will help me once my faith has grown.” So much is lost when we doubt! We often sway back and forth like a wave in the ocean. But not so Abraham, of whom we read that “He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform” (Romans 4: 20-21).

In the course of my pastoral duties, I was once called to the bedside of a Christian woman who suffered from laryngeal hemorrhages and was near death. On the way there, I prayed, asking God to heal her and let us claim His promises through our combined faith. When I arrived, I saw that she had a living faith. I also saw fresh blood spattered on the wall. The doctor had been there and done what he could, which was precious little. I sat down beside her and said, “I want to read something from God’s Word before we pray.” And when I opened my Bible to look for a fitting passage, my eyes fell on the story of the woman who had experienced hemorrhaging for twelve years. The words gripped me, and I read them aloud. I anointed her with oil according to James 5, and sent up a simple prayer of simple faith. Then I left. That was several years ago. God healed her that very hour, and she is still alive and well today.

Have faith in God! It is God’s gift to us. We do not need to wait for faith, and we do not need to hope to have it someday. We can have it now! ■

Noah Believed God

“By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (Hebrews 11:7).

Noah's faith is a great contrast to the unbelief prevalent in society before the flood. Godlessness had increased to such an extent, that we read that God regretted having created humanity. He resolved to give the people a grace period of 120 years. In Genesis 6:7, God says, “I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth . . . for I am sorry that I have made them.” But then, in verse 8, we see that “Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD.” It is astonishing that, among all the many people on Earth back then, there was only a single one who pleased God.

And it was to this one man, Noah, that God explained His plan of sending a flood to kill everything on Earth. To enable Noah and his family to escape, God commanded him to build an ark, including precise instructions for its construction and organization.

This must have come as a big surprise to Noah since there was absolutely no warning sign of that kind of natural disaster. The entire course of nature and human experience seemed to weigh against the possibility of such a great flood. If he were to build such a big ark, Noah would surely be mocked by everyone around him, by the whole world at the time. We can be certain that the devil pointed all this out to Noah to encourage him to disobey God.

But Noah knew that God had spoken. He knew that God would do what He had said. And that is why he began building the ark exactly the way God instructed. He was open with the people around him about why he was doing this, and he made sure they knew that God would follow through on His threat.

Regardless of the laughter and mockery, Noah stuck to God's word and did not let himself be swayed by what people said. He was determined to obey God.

In faith, he began building the ark on dry ground. And in faith, he continued working as planned, regardless of what the unbelievers said or did. Noah believed God's word, and that is why he warned unbelievers and preached repentance. He told them what a horrible reckoning they faced, intending to shock them out of their complacency and to get them to repent and turn their lives around. Although it all seemed in vain, he continued to warn, preach, and build.

Through faith, Noah saw the flood coming long before the waters rose. He believed what God had said. He did not look to the moon or the clouds or seek any other indication of a major flood approaching. God's word was enough for him, and he believed that it would happen. And then the great flood came.

Looking back, it is wonderful to know that after Noah had done everything God told him, God Himself sealed the door after him so that he would be safe during the flood. Nobody could harm him, and the rising water could not enter the ark.

Even today, we have nothing to fear if we obey God in all things. He will ensure our safety Himself.

Through faith, we can see what unbelievers cannot. Undoubtedly, people called Noah a fool when he built the ark on dry ground. Unbelievers still shake their heads today when children of God dare to build on God's promises.

Noah proved his faith by acting on it. He showed that he truly believed God not only in word, by faithfully warning the unbelievers, but also in deed, by tirelessly building the ark. Doubt and unbelief would have slowed his progress and can similarly hinder us today.

Sisters and brothers, have faith in God! Do not let yourselves be influenced by what people say. Let us believe God and do what He asks! ■

Obstacles to Faith

There is something beautiful about meeting men and women on whom we can rely—people who can be trusted to be sincere and faithful to us in happiness and adversity. If they have proven to be reliable in the most difficult situations and circumstances, we gain trust in them.

We believe and trust God because He has done much for us, and we have always found Him faithful to His promises. We can abound in the riches of His glory. He is a “present help” in all trouble. He protects us in days of sickness, trials, and tribulations. In light of these facts, why should we lose our confidence in Him or allow our faith to waver toward Him? We may not always have the wisdom to know what to do or which way will prove to be the right one in each circumstance. But it is precisely for such circumstances that James advises: “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

Peter writes to those who had experienced genuine salvation: “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to

self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Peter 1:5-7).

By developing these qualities, we can grow in grace. He goes on to say in verse 8, “For if these things are yours and abound, *you* will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” This will enable us to be strong in faith, “for if you do these things you will never stumble” (verse 10). But if we do not heed these things, there is a great danger that we will fall.

For the benefit of our own spiritual life and faith, it is good to regularly consider each of these gifts of grace in particular. And then undergo a thorough examination through the Word to find out whether we possess each of them abundantly. Someone may have patience and yet, by a little exercise, gain even more patience, or he may find out where more self-control or more brotherly love is needed. That will be a help to us.

There are many things that hinder the exercise of faith and lead to failure. Lack of faith or weakness in faith is not necessarily a sign that the person is not right with God. He may just find it difficult to grasp his privileges. However, a lack of proper humble standing

with God and our fellow man can be an obstacle to faith. Likewise, a lack of prayer or real confidence when prayer is offered can be an obstacle.

A critical spirit is very harmful to faith and spiritual life. It must be eliminated, or you will blame others for your failures or blame yourself for your own shortcomings. A critical spirit will eventually result in grumbling and complaining, just as the children of Israel grumbled against Moses and God and longed to return to Egypt, where they had to suffer so much under the harsh yoke of oppression.

This is followed by hatred and malice. You no longer talk to those who were your best friends, and you even rebuke God for things. From this springs disobedience and sin of various kinds.

Everything that causes us to lose spiritual vitality or that disturbs our contact with God also causes a lack of faith and trust. We can then no longer believe in the right way as we would like to. If we are aware of such a lack and do not eliminate it or make any effort to do so, this opens the door to doubt and mistrust. Unbelief moves in, and faith has lost its strength and power.

The tremendous muscular strength of a rugged athlete may

The Word of the Lord is True

bring him glory and admiration. But if he retires and leads an idle life, his muscles will soon weaken for lack of training.

If we do not use our faith and spiritual strength, our spiritual life and faith will be weakened. With time, spiritual leanness will develop, in which it will be difficult to grasp the promises of God and capture them as before.

Self-accusations, whether they are right or wrong, lead to self-condemnation, and often in cases where God does not condemn. This results in confusion, doubt, and lack of trust in self, others, and God. It also weakens our ability to have faith in God and to exercise it.

Another obstacle to the faith of many is tackling a major faith problem, such as moving a mountain of troubles, divine healing in sickness, or conversion of someone who denies God. It is better to apply faith to daily needs first, for when these big things are not fulfilled, the supposed faith collapses to the ground.

Make good use of your faith in the small things that surround you in daily life. Then, when greater things challenge you, faith will gain a foothold in the promises of God, and fulfillment will occur.

E. Byrum

“For the word of the Lord is right and true; He is faithful in all He does.” (Psalm 33: 4, NIV)

What a difference there is between human and divine promises!

If we could hear all the weeping, lamenting, moaning, and cursing that comes from hearts that have trusted human promises and been disappointed, we would be horrified.

How different it is with those who have based their lives on God’s Word. They boast: “For the word of the Lord is right and true; He is faithful in all He does.”

There has never been, nor will there ever be, one who has been put to shame by relying on God’s promises and assurances. God’s Word is the most reliable thing there is.

God wants to and has the power to make good on His promises. We humans often promise something in good faith, but then circumstances are unfavorable and we are unable to keep our promise. You sometimes read, “In case of force majeure, this or that agreement does not apply.” For our God, there is no “case of force majeure.” Everything that He once intended for us must be fulfilled on time.

How gloriously this truth has come to light in Jesus Christ! The fathers of the Old Covenant proclaimed salvation in Jesus with wonderful clarity on God’s behalf. Then centuries went by. The old promises of God seemed to be buried and forgotten—until His hour came. That is when the promises became “Yes” and “Amen” in Jesus! Therefore:

Hope on, though heart, grief-riven,
Hope, and courageous be,
Where anguish thee hath driven,
Thou shalt deliv’rance see.
God, from thy pit of sadness
Shall raise thee graciously;
Wait, and the sun of gladness
Thine eyes shall early see.

Yes, God keeps His word!

The Effect of Unbelief

“Then He went out from there and came to His own country Now He could do no mighty work there And He marveled because of their unbelief” (from Mark 6: 1-6).

How do we answer the question, “What does unbelief cause?” What answer do you think modern theologians would give? It is actually not difficult to find the right answer. We only need to think of the needs and conditions of our time. What does God’s Word tell us in response to this question? Following are a few quotations from the Bible that will make it clear.

The apostle Paul, a much-feared persecutor of Christians before his conversion, wrote in 1 Timothy 1: 13: “[A]lthough I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; . . . I obtained mercy because I did *it* ignorantly in unbelief.” Here we see how unbelief influenced this man.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul compares the high privileges of believing, converted people to a natural illustration. He compares these people, in a spiritual sense, to the branches grafted into the “olive tree,” into Christ. At the same time, he also speaks of those who were broken off of this “olive tree” because of their unbelief (see Romans 11). Their unbelief would not allow them to find Christ, nor to remain in Him.

In Hebrews 3, the writer goes back to the people of God in the Old Testament. Of these people, the Lord writes: “[Y]our fathers tested Me, tried Me, and saw My works forty years. Therefore I was angry with that generation, and said, “They always go astray in *their* heart, and they have not known My ways.” So I swore in my wrath, “They shall not enter My rest.” . . . So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (verses 9-11, 19). Hope and a wonderful entitlement were destroyed because of unbelief!

A warning is given to us: “Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in de-

parting from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today,’ lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin” (Hebrews 3: 12-13).

These examples make it clear how valuable faith is and what eternal detriment and loss comes from unbelief! Paul substantiates this with the words: “[T]he spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience” (Ephesians 2: 2). Further, he says: “[W]hose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4: 4).

In Mark 6, we read that Jesus returned to His hometown of Nazareth. On the Sabbath, He began to teach in the synagogue, and many who listened to Him were astonished at His teachings. Others, however, were offended by His teachings and rejected Him. Jesus was deeply astonished at the hardness of their hearts. This unbelief blocked what Jesus could have accomplished among them, and we read: “He could do no mighty work there” (verse 5).

In Mark 9, we are told of a father who knelt before Jesus and earnestly asked for the healing of his only, seriously ill child. Jesus first appealed to his faith, saying, “If you can believe.” And the father pleaded for mercy, saying, “Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!” (verses 23-24). What did this mean? This father openly confessed his own need. It was unbelief. The father’s faith was not yet true faith, for he was not free from unbelief. What should he do? He realized that his broken faith prevented the expected help. Therefore, he cried out expressing his unbelief and desire for faith to be created within him. Once the father found help,



Jesus was also able to help his son. Unbelief stood directly in the way of Jesus' ministry. This is largely still the case today. Someone said, "Saving faith often comes during 'quiet time' with Jesus." One need not remain in unbelief.

What is unbelief's effect today? It is the greatest obstacle to a revival that is so urgently needed. It prevents the redemptive work of the Holy Spirit, who desires to awaken much needed faith in all the world. Unbelief works directly against the will of God. According to Jeremiah 2:13, the Lord is called "the fountain of living waters." He is the source of light, healing, hope, comfort, peace, joy, and all blessings!

Unbelief separates from God. It closes all healing sources and brings us to a state of being "without God in the world" (see Ephesians 2:12). Unbelief leads to

inner impoverishment and eternal damnation. It closes every person's way to God, to salvation, to freedom, and to the only Savior, Jesus Christ. This is the deplorable condition of our time.

We see increasing unrest in the world and increasing animosity among people. We know of the disintegration of many families, of distress among our young people, and of many empty churches. These are the results of unbelief! Unbelief has also brought Christ, the blameless Savior of the world, to the cross and the persecution of His faithful followers even unto death. Nevertheless, salvation is still open to all. May all of us yet maintain a great faith today!

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THE TWELVE APOSTLES—ANDREW

1. In the background

Although Andrew and Peter were brothers, they had very different characters. Of the four disciples in the first group of four (Peter, Andrew, James, and John), we know the least about Andrew. This alone was a differentiating factor: Of this group, we know the most about Peter and the least about his brother.

Although these brothers were so different, they stuck together professionally and personally throughout their lives.

General:

- Brother of Peter (John 1: 35-42)

Origin:

- Originally from the small village of Bethsaida (John 1: 44)
- Later moved to the larger town of Capernaum, where he lived in a house with Peter (Mark 1: 29)

Occupation:

- Professional fisherman (along with his brother Peter)
- The brothers spent nights together on the Sea of Galilee and ran a fishing business in Capernaum (important commercial city on the north shore of the great Sea of Galilee, well-suited for the fishing trade)

Special Character Traits:

- One in the background
- He was an apostle of “small things”
- He saw the value of a single soul
- He trusted that Jesus could make something great out of something small

Andrew was one who mostly stayed in the background. He never played first fiddle. While Peter with his energetic nature was usually somewhere in front, Andrew was more of a quiet type who thought much more before he did or said something.

So it was quite natural that he led a life in the shadow of his much more famous brother. He is sometimes called “Peter’s brother”—as if that made him special.

2. Andrew led Peter to Jesus

Andrew was already a disciple of John the Baptist before meeting Jesus (John 1: 35-42). The second disciple mentioned in this story was most likely John. So the two followed Jesus and stayed with Him all day.

After this first encounter and fellowship with Jesus, Andrew was convinced: this was the Messiah! His first reaction seemed to say, “Where is my brother? He absolutely must know!” The Bible then says, “He brought him to Jesus.”

This action is indicative of Andrew’s character. He did nothing earth-shattering. It was seemingly no big deal to lead his brother to Jesus.—A small thing, and yet what a great impact it had!

He led this one person (his brother) to Jesus. This one then became a leader of the first church. On the day of Pentecost, Peter led 3000 people to salvation through Christ. A small act of Andrew in the background, but what a great effect!

3. An apostle of “small things”

Andrew had an eye for what many overlook: the value of the little things. They were seemingly small, simple things that he did, but they had a very great impact through Jesus’ hand and blessing.

3.1. *The value of a single soul*

Almost every time we meet Andrew in the Gospels, he brings someone to Jesus. The first was his broth-

er Peter. At the feeding of the five thousand, Andrew brought to Jesus the boy who had five loaves and two fish (John 6: 8ff).

When the Greeks wanted to see Jesus, they asked Philip, “Lord, we want to see Jesus.” And what did Philip do? He went to Andrew, and then they went together to see Jesus (John 12: 22). Why didn’t Philip bring the Greeks to Jesus himself? Perhaps he didn’t trust himself or he didn’t know exactly what to do. But he certainly knew that Andrew could introduce others to Jesus.

This was the “Andrew ministry”—a ministry to individual souls. He introduced individuals to Jesus, a seemingly small ministry, but how important, valuable, and necessary in the Kingdom of God.

Such a ministry is effective missionary work. We should all get to the point of leading individuals to Jesus like Andrew did. Maybe such a ministry seems too small to you, and you think, “That won’t accomplish much.” But Jesus says one soul is worth more than all the gold in the world (Matthew 16: 26).

The value of the soul is one thing. The second is that God can turn what seems to be a small service into a great blessing. The great evangelist D. L. Moody was led to Jesus by a plain Sunday School teacher. God turned this into a great blessing and used Moody to bring about a great revival in America. Thousands of people were led to Christ and blessed through Moody.

3.2. *Small gifts in Jesus’ hands*

Andrew learned that Jesus can wonderfully transform even the smallest gifts. We see this especially clearly in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6: 5-10). Again, it was nothing special that Andrew did. He saw that a boy had his lunch with him. Maybe the other disciples saw this boy as well. However, it did not even occur to them to bring the boy to Jesus. After all, in the sight of the great crowd, the boy hardly had anything at all.

By asking His disciples to give them something to eat (Matthew 14: 16), Jesus brought them into a quandary. They were at a loss. Philip was a quick thinker, perhaps even a mathematician. He did some quick math and concluded that 200 denarii was not enough to feed all the people. Two-hundred denarii was about the equivalent of 6 to 7 months’ wages (1 denarius = one day’s wages)—a lot of money, but too little for so many. The disciples did not know what to do.

At that moment, Andrew spoke up, “There is a lad here.” Of course, Andrew also knew that five loaves and two fish were nothing for this crowd. After all, he said, “[B]ut what are they among so many?” Yet somehow it seems as if he suspected that Jesus could do much even with such small gifts.

It was typical of Andrew not to despise these little things but to simply bring them to Jesus, and he was not disappointed! So little became so much that everyone was filled, and, in the end, there were even 12 baskets left over. Jesus did a great miracle, which Andrew had the privilege of participating in.

In Jesus’ eyes, no gift or offering is too small if it is brought to Him from the heart. Whatever we do for God—however small it may seem to us—let us do it faithfully. “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men” (Colossians 3: 23).

Andrew was one of those rare people who was willing to work in the background and support others. He did not become famous like his brother. He may not have been an impressive pillar but only a humble stone. But his name, too, along with the names of the other disciples, will stand on the foundations of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21: 14) because he was faithful in his service!

“He who is faithful in *what* is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in *what* is least is unjust also in much” (Luke 16: 10).

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We Are Standing on Solid Ground

A man was rowing on a lake with his wife and daughter. It was a beautiful day. He should have been happy. But he wasn't. The light boat swayed a little. The man was very anxious. "If we tip over," he thought, "we are lost. My wife can't swim, my daughter only a little." Worried, he looked at the shore. "First I'll save my wife," he mused.

Then the rowboat actually tipped over. He swam to shore with his wife and plunged back into the water.

"The boat!" his wife cried as he arrived with their daughter. Back again—the boat was recovered.

"The oar!" cried the daughter.

The man was almost at the end of his rope. But it had to be done! What good would the beautiful rowboat be without the oar? Where there is a will, there is a way! He was able to make the way there, but for the way back, he didn't have enough strength.

"It's over!" thought the man. "All worries were in vain! It's over!" But he sank only a little. He could hardly believe it—the water only reached up to his neck!

"What a fool I have been!" he cried. "So many

worries, so much fear, so much trouble! If only I had known that the ground was so close!"

Now the story starts all over again but in a very personal way. We ourselves are in the "boat," you in yours, I in mine, with all we have. It is true that it is a light, swaying boat, and the water has no firm support. But beneath it is solid ground! We know this in theory, but we act as if it is bottomless.

There are Christians who do only two things all their lives: either they perish with worry that their "boat" might tip over, or they "float" back and forth constantly without believing.

How beautiful the journey together on the boat could have been! The ground, Jesus Christ, was always there, very close under the surface of their worry-filled everyday life. But they did not dare to trust in the ground. We should know that no matter where and how far we go, even if it is to the end of the world, we will never come to a place where the hand of our Savior would not be with us.

Therefore: Have faith in God! ■

What is Faith Anyway?

"What is faith, anyway?" an unbelieving doctor asked his friend, a merchant, as they sat together in the latter's cozy living room.

The merchant smiled and called his eight-year-old son, whose entire focus was on busying himself with his toys at another table. "My dear Jan," said the merchant to the child, who had difficulty detaching himself from toys, "my dear Jan, quickly pack up your things and off to bed, on the double."

The child looked at his father with a long, pleading look. But then, as the father's face remained so resolute, he extinguished a tear in his eye, said not a word, gave the father a kiss, and hurried off. "That, doctor, is faith!"

Then he called the boy back and whispered in his ear, "If you bring home another report card as good as the last one, I'll take you to your aunt in the city during fall vacation." The boy cheered loudly as if he were already on his way. The cheering could be heard for a long time coming from the child's room.

The father repeated to his friend, "That, doctor, is faith. The boy has all he needs to become a man of faith. He only has to behave toward God as he does toward me today and has to give himself to Him so trustingly, humbly, and obediently. Then his faith will be perfected."

The doctor had become solemn and said quietly, "It is now clearer to me than through many sermons." ■

Faith



I remember one evening when a storm was raging outside and our father came in. My brother and I were sitting quite comfortably at the table playing a game.

“Quick, boys, take a lantern and head for town!” he said. “Head for town? Why, Father?”

“Because I said so! Go quickly; you will soon see why!”

So we went. After a short distance, we met a dear lady who was coming to see us. She had been delayed by all sorts of causes and had ended up walking in darkness. Father had ridden past her and had seen her. He had wanted to bring her home on his horse, but she was too afraid of the horse to take him up on the offer.

She was so happy to see us coming toward her. And she also made sure to reward us for giving up our playtime because of her. Joyfully, we arrived home with her.

Our mother used this opportunity to tell us what faith is: “See, boys, if you listen to God the same way and follow His will as you did today with your father, then you are true believers. Abraham had to go to a land he did not know. And he, like you today, went into

the darkness, not knowing where he would end up. He thought, ‘My God cannot want anything foolish.’ And you know, his obedience paid off. Faith has its root in joyful, childlike trust in God. But it always shows itself as humble obedience. He who understands this understands the whole Bible from beginning to end.”

This makes me think of another little experience. I once went to see a gentleman in his office in a town near us. He had a pile of gold pieces lying in front of him, more than I had ever seen before.

“Do you like them?” he asked, watching my astonished looks. “Of course I like them! So many gold pieces!”—“Take one!” was his reply. I turned red and pale, hot and cold. But I didn’t dare take one. “A gold piece for me?” That was too much!

“So take one,” he said again. “Do you think I am not rich enough to give you a gold piece?”

I finally decided to take one, but it was still like a dream to me for a long time. For many days, I couldn’t quite believe that I really owned it, although it was in my pocket.

Isn’t this how we often respond to God’s offer of grace? May God help us to reach out and trust Him completely! ■

Real-Life Faith *at Home*

In this issue, the idea of “faith” is addressed multiple times and illustrated in various ways. It is amazing how much can be said about faith. But that alone is not enough. Faith must also be lived out. Is there any better place to begin than in your family? Here, in the small circle where husband, wife, and children live together. In this community, we are to live a life of faith that is genuine when tested.

But what does it mean to live out the faith? Because there is a big difference between talking about faith and living out faith practically. James raises this thought. He asks the noteworthy question, “What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works?” Such a person does not live out faith. “He says he has faith,” but he gives the poor man no clothing and no food. James then concludes that a faith that is not lived out is a “dead faith.” Sadly, worthless (see James 2: 14-26).

Relating this thought to the family, it is fair to ask, “Am I just talking about faith, or am I actually living it within my four walls? And what does that look like in reality? How clearly do my wife/husband and children perceive my faith? Does my faith lighten their load?” These are questions which must be pondered at some point.

By the way, one could ponder these questions during personal devotions and Bible reading. That way we don’t just read a passage for the good Lord, but think about the meaning and ask how we can put that passage into practice. Through action, faith becomes living faith. The same can be done in family devotions. This can lead to a meaningful conversation about faith and living it out. Then children learn very early on that faith should be evident through our actions.

Let’s stick with the family for a while. How can I, as a father/mother, live out my faith in such a way that my life becomes “credible”? Likely some Bible passages immediately come to mind. But isn’t there a danger that I read them carelessly and nothing changes? When I reflect, I am reminded anew that I must take God’s Word seriously. It must be lived out. Let me share some of my thoughts (scriptural prompts) with you.

1. “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6: 33). Jesus’ words are very precious to me. They give meaning and direction to life. I believe in them, but how do I live them out? How do I as a father/mother act upon them so that my children experience my real faith and I can be an example to them? Aren’t there many opportunities? For example, when a general cleaning of the church facility is announced, and it’s a given that I help out; when my salary is paid and I give my offering; when it is mentioned that the sick and elderly are lonely and we, as a family, visit them shortly afterwards.

2. “Blessed *are* the peacemakers” (Matthew 5: 9). Especially in the relationship between husband and wife, parents and children, things can happen that endanger peace. Differing opinions clash, words are spoken, feelings are easily hurt, people feel misunderstood and treated unfairly. Tension is in the air. What now? Now is the time to live out your faith and be a peacemaker.

3. “Love does not seek its own” (1 Corinthians 13: 5). Love is not selfish, not seeking personal advan-



tage. “*me first*” are words that should not be spoken. Things don’t always have to go my way. It becomes so complicated, especially in the family circle, when everyone insists on their right and their opinion. It is precisely at this point that faith must become reality. What does this look like in practice? When I seek the welfare of my spouse and children, then I don’t take the biggest piece of cake. I can forgo buying something for myself and buy something for my spouse instead. Our children have a great advantage when they learn this principle at home. By doing so, we lay a valuable foundation for their lives that will later have a beneficial effect at school, at work, in the church family, and also in society.

4. “Forgive one another” (Colossians 3:13). The topic of “forgiveness” is mentioned relatively often in the Bible. One can conclude that it is absolutely necessary. And it is true. We essentially live by it. God forgives us, and we forgive each other for a wrong that has occurred. One man shared how his wife always becomes “historical” whenever something happens in their marriage. The other said, “You can’t mean historical, you mean ‘hysterical.’” “But yes,” he said, “she becomes ‘historical.’ She always drags up things from the past.”—That’s how it happens. But not in our case, right? It’s far better to grant one an-

other forgetful forgiveness and thus live together in harmony.

5. “Be thankful” (Colossians 3:15). The opposite of thankfulness is grumbling, whining, and complaining. This is evident by a critical and negative attitude. Imagine a home where gratitude is absent. There is grumbling at the dinner table about the meal. Negative comments are made about others. The mother does not hear a word of thanks. The father is the object of constant criticism, and all this in the presence of the children. Could we consider this as “dead” faith, as James called it? I want to be grateful—at home and around everyone. Will you join me? How about living out our faith today by gifting a word of thanks to our spouse?

That was just a small selection of Bible verses. It is highly recommended that we take them to heart. However, it is only the beginning. The Bible is a substantial volume. A songwriter wrote, “Ev’ry precept You have spoken is essential to our life.” Next time you pick up your Bible, why not say softly, “O treasured Word of God! Help me live these words!” God will help us do so.

There is no greater endorsement for Christianity than genuine faith.

Harry Semenjuk



Wayward Children

Part 3

Open Rebellion

M. Schmelzle

“Then He said: ‘A certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, “Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.” So he divided to them his livelihood.” (Luke 15: 11-12)

Here we are told about a father who had two sons. The father was very wealthy. He had a great fortune, which in those days consisted mainly of land, cattle, servants, and maids. In Jesus’ time, a father ruled like a king. The children belonged to him, and they depended on him financially and socially. Families lived together and were part of the father’s household. Only when the father had blessed his children and died could a son establish his own household, with the eldest now becoming the new head of the clan. The two sons enjoyed the same upbringing. When we read the parable, we may realize that this upbringing was built on a foundation of love. The father loved both sons very much and did not let them lack anything. He could absolutely not be said to have been guilty of anything towards them. No, he was just, forbearing, and understanding.

We are told that the younger son demanded his independence and freedom. He wanted the freedom to make his own decisions, to lead his

life as he saw fit, good, and meaningful, a desire that went completely against the values of the society of that time because, at that time, the family had a much higher value than freedom.

Since the inheritance was usually passed to the sons only after the father’s death, the younger son’s demand shows that he could not wait for his own father’s death in order to finally get the inheritance. His desire for the inheritance showed his lack of love, respect, and appreciation for his father.

By making this demand, the son forced his father to make a very difficult choice. Usually, in those days, such a problem was solved by banishment. The rebellious child was cast out. The son deserved to be expelled from his father’s house and thus not only be left without family and protection but also disinherited.

When a child turns against his father and mother, great pain results. The child rebels and sees the parents’ attentiveness and care as a nuisance and the sheltered home as a gilded cage. They are constantly told what to do; they can never do what they like. They always have to justify themselves. The walls close in; they feel constricted and feel they can no longer breathe. They no longer see the good things—the warmth

*When someone has said goodbye inwardly,
he can seldom be held back.*

and love of their parents' home, the worries of their parents when the children come home late, the earnest prayers and sleepless nights. All this seems to be worth nothing. On the contrary, some children seem to be especially angry about it and desire to just get out! They often behave in the same way with regard to the teaching of the Word of God. They rebel against the Word that is preached. It's as if these young people believe they see things especially clearly and have more perspective than their parents or other adult brothers and sisters.

Sometimes it seems like they can hardly wait for their 18th birthday to finally turn their back on the church, and many don't even wait that long. The world beckons and they want to enjoy life. How painful to have to see a child choose a path where parents or even the church—and above all, God—play no role or only a very small one.

How the father must have felt when his younger son presented him with his demand. Perhaps he had already observed his son's dissatisfaction for some time. Perhaps he showed him even more love when he noticed this. But when someone has said goodbye inwardly, he can seldom be held back. There the son stands now before him, without respect and appreciation. His words are

like a slap in the face. They are tantamount to the uttered words, "I wish you were dead at last, that I might get my inheritance!"

In such a case, it is important to stay in control of your emotions, to remain calm, not to become abusive, not to bring reproach, to show love even in this situation. Why? So that when the child comes to it's senses one day, they remember the loving home of their parents and remember how beautiful it actually was there, especially when many a child comes to the realization that their life was wasted or misspent.

But what if, when you say goodbye to the child, many an accusation or harsh word is thrown at them, some threat or accusation? These are then the final words exchanged that are etched in stone, so to speak. Not only that: they are sometimes like spears thrown at the departing person. Many a spear hits, bores into the heart, and causes great wounds. Will the son come home again someday? Will he long for home? Or will he remember the last words full of bitterness, anger, and pain?

It is an almost unbearable situation, but even with this you can turn to the Savior and draw on God's mercy and strength.

- To be continued -

How an Atheist Found the Lord

Michael was a young man of 24, tall and strong. He worked in a large locksmith's shop which also built safes. Here he was considered the most capable worker. He also earned a nice sum of money. Since he was a sociable and thoroughly solid person, his colleagues liked him. No one had ever seen him drunk, and nothing negative could be said against him.

But his mother was very worried and often sighed when she thought of him. She was a God-fearing, believing woman, while her son had become an atheist. He wanted to show the world that a person could cope and be accomplished even without God. He had received a good Christian upbringing. Later, however, he made friends with a clever, smart person who mocked and ridiculed faith. Seduced by this man's ungodly speeches, he turned his back on God and God's Word. "I don't see why I need Christianity," he told his mother. "It is good for women or old, sickly men or those who cannot be well-behaved without religion. I am strong and healthy and have a long life ahead of me. And no one can say that I am not well-behaved."

Among the freethinkers who worked in the workshop, he was a leader. One evening, he gave a very funny speech to his friends. In his talk, he also bashed faith, as well as the Word of God. When he finished his speech, he left the hall to thunderous applause. But God, who in His love and faithfulness pursued him, so arranged it that he met an old preacher, whom he had known from childhood, on the street in front of the pub. By the sad face of the servant of God, Michael could tell that his words had been heard through the open window.

He tried to slip past, but he could not, for the old witness of the Lord put his hand on his arm and said, "God has given you a gift for speaking and the power to stir up the passions and feelings of other people. May He forgive you for misusing your gift! You may one day be caught in some terrible danger, in some trap. Then you will realize His power. But it may be too late!"—After being celebrated so much earlier, now he made his way home in silence.

About half a year later, a large iron strongbox had been made in the workshop to be embedded into the wall of a bank. At the suggestion of a worker, the locks had been fitted with a peculiar trick so that no one who did not know the secret could open the strong-

box, even if he was in possession of the keys. There were only two keys to this safe. One was held by the master locksmith, the other by the young locksmith. Before this valuable piece was to be delivered, the colleagues came by to admire it. Michael opened the safe to show them the strength of the walls and the door, which in turn could so easily move. He went inside the safe, showed the hinges, and moved the door. And there, suddenly, before he knew it, the door fell shut!

The ringing of the bolts and bars showed him only too well how splendidly everything worked. When he remembered that the master was absent with his key and that he himself carried the other one in his pocket, a terrible fright came over him. He knew that it was impossible to open the door. He could not hear any sound from the outside either.

The air began to get heavy. He had to admit to himself that he might suffocate before relief would come. He now stood alone in the darkness. Then he remembered those words of the preacher about the trap and that he had said that it might then be too late. Now that God had led him in such a peculiar way and was speaking to him very directly, he realized that there is a God who will judge people one day.

For the first time in years, he fell to his knees, laid his head against the cold iron wall, and asked the Lord, if he were to die, to forgive him his sins for Christ's sake. Soon, his head was buzzing. The pain became greater, even unbearable, and he fell unconscious. He had a dim memory of a choking sensation. He thought he heard voices in the distance; he felt he was dying.

The master came in time with the other key. The unconscious man was not yet dead. When he regained consciousness, he was lying in his bed. His mother took his hand and said, "Let us thank God who saved you!" He was too weak to speak, but he prayed along as his mother gave thanks for the preservation of his life.

After a few days, when he had recovered a little, he told his colleagues who were visiting him what he had experienced and done when he had been locked in the strongbox. From now on, his life was to belong to God.

Dear reader, you may not be an atheist, but are you a true Christian? There are so very many who are called Christians but clearly show by their walk that they are not. Are you a Christian? Oh, do not rest until you have been given the certainty that you are a Christian and belong to Jesus! ■

I Am Certain

*Oh, I am certain Jesus stands on shore
When on the sea the mighty storm does roar;
My boat in turmoil tossing wild until
He lifts His hand, commanding: "Peace, be still."*

*Oh, I am certain that He hears my cry
When in the storms of life no peace is nigh
Because my frightened heart is suff'ring pain;
And though it's dark, He comforts me again.*

*Oh, I am certain that He knows the hour
When storm winds die,
the dark clouds cease their showers;
And nothing future, now or in the past,
Can dim the sunshine that will shine at last.*

*Oh, I am certain neither life nor death,
Nor any living creature that has breath
Can separate me from the love of God,
For He knows all my ways upon this sod.*

*Oh, I am certain and with joy proclaim
That Christ has saved me from my sin and shame;
And He will lead me onwards to that shore
Where I will praise His name forevermore.*

L. H. R.

Announcements

Easter Conference 2023

April 7-10, 2023

Place: Hamm, Germany
Langewanneweg 248

Further information:
www.gghamm.de

Pentecost Conference 2023

June 29-30, 2019

Place: Herford, Germany
Zimmerstraße 2

Further information:
www.gghf.de

Camp Meeting in Blaubeuren, Germany

August 12-19, 2023

A photograph of a woman with her hair pulled back, wearing a black top and a patterned scarf, looking out a window. The window shows a blurred outdoor scene. The text 'God Will Make a Way' is overlaid in the top left, and two questions are overlaid on the right side of the image.

God Will Make a Way

*How could she become
certain of God?
How could she find out what
God was really like?*

The winds of God blew over the land. Faithful witnesses had risen up, led by the Holy Spirit and His power as they proclaimed the clear gospel. As true followers of Christ, they scattered the good seed in obedience to God's Word. Many a seed fell on fertile soil.

Gertrud, the daughter of a wealthy man, had been listening attentively to the Sunday sermons in the church she attended. Her soul developed an anxious restlessness. She became more reserved and quieter than usual as she went about the house during the week. She had not found the courage to speak to anyone about what she was agonizing over. These heavy thoughts had been occupying her whole being constantly. She acutely recognized a contradiction between God's commandments and the worldview of most people.

Gertrud began to read her Bible regularly, which unsettled her even more. One thing soon became clear to her: the God who not only promised forgiveness of sins and a fulfilling life to those who surrender to Him, also desired to be the center of their whole lives. Helping, comforting, but also expectant and punish-

ing, God wanted to influence all of their actions. He did not only want to be worshiped on Sundays, on special occasions, at meal times, or at special family events. No! With every thought, every word, and every action, they should worship this God. But who could help her with the correct knowledge and understanding of God? How could she become undeniably sure of God? How could she find out what God was really like?

Weeks passed before Gertrud found peace and accepted His truth. The once so joyful and lively girl became more and more reticent. Soon, her parents began to worry about the health of their child.

Seasons changed, and autumn arrived in the country. Here and there, leaves took on a hue of shining purple and gold. The air was still warm, and many days were filled with sunshine and blue skies. Gertrud decided to use the lingering pleasant days of the season to visit an out-of-town friend for a few days. She finished packing her suitcase as she prepared to embark on her journey the next morning.

As she had begun to do regularly, she folded her hands that evening and prayed: "Lord God, show

Yourself to me as You are! Give me clarity and certainty about what You expect from a child of God!”

Early the next morning, she bid her parents goodbye and went to the train station, bought her ticket, and boarded the train. She was alone in the compartment and sat quietly in her corner. Completely wrapped up in her thoughts, she paid little attention to what was going on around her.

The train had already made a few stops. At a small rural station, there seemed to be a longer stop. Gertrud took a quick look out the window. The platform was almost deserted; there was not much to see here. She turned her attention back to her thoughts and hardly took notice as the train slowly started to move.

Suddenly, there was a flurry of activity—the sound of someone running, officials shouting back and forth, and a pleading cry of a woman’s voice! What was happening? Startled, Gertrud straightened up. The door of her compartment burst open, as the conductor and the stationmaster together pushed in a breathless, frenzied woman.

Involuntarily, Gertrud jumped up. She grasped and pulled the obviously exhausted woman fully inside the compartment just as the door slammed shut.

It all happened just in time. Already the train was moving at a faster pace; the buildings and the station were quickly disappearing.

Gertrud sunk back into her corner. She was so alarmed that her heart throbbed heavily and loudly. She glanced at the person opposite her. She was a middle-aged woman. Quite beside herself from her hectic run, she struggled for breath. She incessantly wiped the beads of sweat from her forehead. Gradually, she seemed to calm down. As she looked around her, the eyes of the two women met.

“That was close!” said Gertrud with a smile. The woman’s eyes began to shine.

“It was an answer to prayer!” she said with a deep breath.

“How was that an answer to prayer?” A slight tremor ran through the girl’s body.

“Oh, it was an answer to prayer!” the woman repeated with the same wonderful gleam in her eyes. “Didn’t you see it? The officials who usually restrain and discipline anyone trying to get on a moving train helped me themselves and actually pushed me in!”

“Yes, but why?”

“I had to get on this train!” said the woman. “A letter had come so late, and I couldn’t make it sooner. So I

ran all the way and just kept pleading, ‘Lord, you know I have to catch the train! Help me, please!’ That’s when He helped.”

“Is God really bothered by such trivial things?” asked Gertrude, astonished and shaken to the core. “Why would He pay attention to that?”

Almost pityingly, the woman looked over at Gertrud. “God takes care of everything,” she said, “even the smallest things of our lives. Oh, He is faithful! The more one entrusts to Him, the more gloriously He reveals Himself to us. I have experienced it! Oh, I know Him!”

At these words, it was as if a bright light fell into Gertrud’s soul. As if dazzled by this light, she closed her eyes for a moment.

So that was it! This was the way to get to know God: trust Him and entrust Him with everything that moves your heart. “The more you entrust yourself to Him,” the woman had said, “the more gloriously He reveals Himself.” Trust leads to the knowledge of God, to certainty.

At the same time as this realization and confidence filled Gertrud’s heart, a stream of joy flowed in as well. As if freed from a heavy burden, she breathed a deep sigh of relief. Tears ran down her cheeks, happy tears of joy.

She was granted only a short time to travel together with that woman. By the third or fourth stop, she had already reached the destination of her journey. But Gertrud never forgot this short time, the few minutes they were allowed to talk together about what filled both of their hearts.

She returned home a changed person, and at the same time, her old, joyful, determined, and energetic self. The difference was that her joy and energy now rested on eternal ground.

From that day on, she entrusted to God the big and small things, the heavenly and earthly things, and was truly able to experience His love and caring grace abundantly. Her joyful, confident faith influenced others, and her calm trust strengthened many.

A few years later, she became the wife of a clergyman. Like herself, he was a confident believer in God and also a faithful shepherd of his congregation. Together, hand in hand, they walked the narrow path of life. The almighty hand of God held them as their souls trusted in Him.

S. Everius

My Faith Will Stand

I'm standing firm on solid ground,
For Christ is my foundation;
No pain nor joy is so profound
To rob me of salvation.
The world, it may sink in decay,
But trusting Him I still can say:
He shields me in temptation.

He is the rock, the fortress strong,
The source of signs and wonders;
And all who trust in Him belong
To those who won't be plundered.
I trust the Lord and His dear Word;
I'll walk with Him in sweet accord,
In sunshine and in thunder.

However He will guide and lead,
Through rivers deep or shallow,
In faith with joy I'll gladly yield,
And blessings they will follow.
If it's His will, then I'll be still,
The cup of joy I know He'll fill;
His fields were not left fallow.

Should life be tough and hard to take,
I know He'll help me bear it.
What comes my way is no mistake;
In grace my Lord will share it;
And if my plight does not seem right,
He never will abuse His might;
I'll persevere and merit.

The seal of faith will always stand,
And should it falter? Never!
No one can pluck me from His hand,
No foe my bond can sever.
Come what may, what He will say
Is certain and will never sway;
I'll praise the Lord forever.

K. J. P. Spitta