



Foundation of Faith

**Are Your Gifts
Given Out Of Genuine Gratitude?**

**The Tithe—
and God's Blessings**

Out Of Oil

Ephesians 5:20

The Harvest Shall Not Cease

Gratitude and Giving

Content

GRATITUDE AND GIVING

**4 Give Thanks to the Lord!
Try Giving Thanks**

5 Out Of Oil

**6 Are Your Gifts Given Out of
Genuine Gratitude?**

7 "Give to God the things that are God's"

8 The Garden Of The Lord

*Our life is to be a garden of the Lord that produces
fruit to the glory of God.*

10 Food For Thought On Thanksgiving

12 Radio Broadcast

The Harvest Shall Not Cease

*We experience the fulfillment of this promise every
year. Let us thank God for it.*

26 The Tithe—And God's Blessings

*Two examples of how giving the tithe was applied
and how God reacted.*

3 Editorial

Youth Page

**14 I Didn't Expect That!
Seek First the Kingdom of God!**

15 ... Notes from School (Part 9)

Children's Corner

17 You Shall Praise Me

Senior's Page

18 Ephesians 5:20

The Lord's Prayer

21 Amen (Part 18)

Something To Think About

22 What We Should Know About The Bible

23 The Lost Bible

Report

24 Camp Meeting 2018

11 An Experience With God

Story

16 How Much Do You Value Your Bible?

28 Put The Word Into Practice (Poem)

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

God's Word exhorts us, "Offer to God thanksgiving, and pay your vows to the Most High. Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:14-15).

How often in our lives do we encounter difficulties and situations where we don't know a way out and are in need of help! Thankfully we can call out to the Most High, Who has given us His promise: "I will deliver you!" But then God expects thanks from us, and we should praise Him.

In Psalm 107, we are prompted four times, "Oh, that men would give thanks to the Lord for His goodness, and for His wonderful works to the children of men" (verses 8, 15, 21, 31). The Psalmist shows us several situations in which we can find ourselves:

- in sin*
- astray on desolate paths*
- hungry and thirsty both physically and spiritually*
- disobedient to the Word of God*
- plagued with afflictions*
- terminally ill without help*
- in storms of life where the soul despairs with fear*

Because God has heard our prayers, supplications, and cries, we should thank the Lord.

When our Lord, the Son of God, walked on earth and helped so many, He expected thanks! Ten leprous men stood in the distance and raised their voices and called: "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!" The Lord healed them all in His divine mercy. But only one came and fell at His feet and gave Him thanks. Then Jesus asked, "But where are the nine?" (Please read Luke 17:11-19.)

My dear reader, which group do you wish to belong to? Certainly, we would all say, "I want to thank the Lord! I want to pay my vows to the Most High and praise Him!"

H. D. Nimz

Give Thanks To The Lord!

Is it our deepest desire to give thanks to the Lord? For many, that is not the case. They simply accept what God does for them without any further thought. With their own eyes, they see how a beautiful stalk of wheat grows from a small seed. However, they do not see the Creator. They don't even contemplate that millions of people are nourished that way. The days of hunger are long forgotten, and they are among those who have food in abundance. And in prosperous times thankfulness often vanishes. Thanksgiving becomes perhaps like an indifferent nod to tradition—because one wants to be polite. After all, most of us are not harvesting anymore, but are building and producing every day. Ultimately, that is our accomplishment. Who can still truly identify with the psalmist, “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season” (Psalm 145:15)?

When natural disasters, wars, sicknesses, and hardships strike, help is typically facilitated by other people. Therefore, many purposely do not thank God. They say, “We earned it all ourselves. It's all due to our own efforts.”

Can we as God's children thank the Lord? Not everyone feels true thankfulness to God in their hearts, although they may desire to. They don't personally know the Giver. Do you merely have an anonymous benefactor? Nevertheless, God's love for all of humanity is evident; He allows the sun to rise over the righteous and the unrighteous. God cares for all. Many people know the God of creation and have experienced His help. However, God wants to be more than Creator and Sustainer to us. Through Jesus, God has shown Himself to be “Father” to us. He not only cares for our physical well-being but also for our soul. He provides bread so that we may be filled, and He also gave the whole world His Son, the Bread of Life.

Honor God as your Creator. Draw near to Him through Jesus Christ and experience Him as your Father. Thank Him for everything! You will receive further blessings from Him.

Arthur E. Lange

Try Giving Thanks

A deeply distressed woman went to her pastor. She wanted to pour out her heart to him and receive comfort and advice. He was very busy at that moment with something important. He led the woman into another room and asked her to wait for a few minutes.

There she sat, completely lost in her depressing thoughts. As she looked around the room, she saw a beautifully framed print with only three words on it, staring at her in big letters: “Try giving thanks!”

“Yes, who can do that!” she thought and sighed. “With all my troubles, I have no reason to thank anyone!” Reluctantly, she turned away. But then she heard a voice within her: “Nothing to thank for? Truly nothing?” She became restless. She had come here to be comforted!

“Try giving thanks!” These words would not let her go. Hadn't she formerly learned the Bible verse from Ephesians 5:20, “Giving thanks always for all things to God the Father”?—But how little she had done this. Had she ever once truly thanked God from her heart? Suddenly she was at peace, knowing what she had to do.

When the pastor opened the door a little while later to invite his guest in, the room was empty!

*Lord, I can never thank You enough!
Each and every breath shall thank You,
For each beat of my heart that has passed,
Until on the day it beats its last.
Every great and small thought shall thank You!
No other do I want to speak than . . .
“I thank You, Lord Jesus, I thank You!”*

Out Of Oil

When a machine starts squeaking and making unusual noises, we say, “It needs to be oiled.” Even the best quality machine can become dry if not oiled.

This can also occur in the Christian’s life. We can lead a flawless life but at the same time be “out of oil,” so that we start to “creak at the joints” or complain and grumble. Why does this happen? The reason is that we do not give the Lord enough praise and thanks. Precious soul, give more praise and thanks to the Lord. We read the words of Jesus in Luke 19:40, “I tell you that if these [the disciples] should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out.” Praise lifts us heavenward, and by giving praise, we receive joy. Being thankful protects us from faltering, and we become filled with strength.

Why did God give us a tongue? Certainly not for useless gossip or to discuss in detail the flaws of others. Usually when such topics arise, one person seems to know more than the next. Precious soul, it is very unworthy for us as Christians to use our tongues in this fashion. Remember, we must give account for every careless word that we speak (Matthew 12:36).

Paul wrote to Timothy, “Shun profane and idle babblings” (1 Timothy 6:20; 2 Timothy 2:16). We should use our tongue for a better purpose. We should be praising and thanking God. The more we do this, the less room there will be in our minds for other thoughts. Satan can tolerate most things, but he cannot endure it when we praise and thank God.

Do we have enough reason to praise God? I would have to say that we have so much to be thankful for that there is not a single tongue that could praise God enough. David wrote in Psalm 143:5, “I remember the days of old.” Take a minute to think back to the time before you received salvation. You were bound in many sins until Jesus freed you from them. Is this not reason enough for you to praise and thank your Lord? Paul wrote to the Colossians, “Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light. He has delivered us from the

power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love” (Colossians 1:12-13). We should never forget this gift and never cease to give thanks to our Savior.

But this is not the only thing for which we should be thankful. Let us not forget to thank God for food, clothing, and shelter. Perhaps you can’t afford as much as other people in this respect. Praise God for what you have. And for what you don’t have, thank God as well, for you can do without it.

There are people who are plagued with worry. If the devil can’t get you in any other way, he will try with worry. He whispers, “These are hard times. What will tomorrow bring?” What should a child of God do when the devil comes in this manner? Should we validate him? If he should come to you in this way, then follow the example of our Lord and Master. Say, for it is written, “Therefore do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:31-34). In light of this, can one still worry? When worries come, cast them away. “[Cast] all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

What about the health God blesses you with? This is one of the best gifts God gives you. Perhaps there is someone who complains and grumbles about food that is not quite to his taste. But what would the best and most delicious foods benefit you if you couldn’t eat them because you are ill? Therefore, if you are healthy, enjoy the simple meals with thanks.

Be encouraged to always give God praise and thanks for salvation, health, food, clothing, and shelter. Praise and thanksgiving prevent us from drying up spiritually.

Rudolf Boettcher

Are Your Gifts Given Out Of Genuine Gratitude?

The Psalmist calls out, “What shall I render to the LORD for all His benefits toward me?” (Psalm 116:12). This spirit of thankfulness, that acknowledges God’s goodness to us, and aims to live in a way that is worthy of Him, must also be in us as we serve Him.

However, there are two less commendable reasons why some people are quick and eager to serve God and to give: First is the belief that giving is an absolute must; and second, the hope that giving will improve our material well-being. But how can we truly demonstrate our sincere and overflowing gratitude to the Lord?

The Blessings Received

It is impossible to list all of the blessings we have received from God. Many of the spiritual blessings cannot be adequately explained in words, nor can our daily blessings be counted. But what we can do is summarize all of the blessings and say as James did, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17).

The greatest blessing is not found in the mere possession of earthly riches, but rather in how we use them. The better we put to use any of these things, the greater and more precious will be the blessings we receive. What a privilege to use our possessions in the service of our God! Certainly it is the wish of every child of God to serve and glorify Him with everything it has.

Surrendering to God

The true Christian will surrender its entire life to God’s service. No longer do our lives belong to us, but rather to God. We no longer have the desire to go our own ways. We do not consider any of our possessions to be our own, for everything belongs to God.

A child of God is pleased to know that God is the true owner of all his possessions. A friend is not satisfied with the simple promise that I am his friend. No, he is far happier when he sees visible signs of friendship. This also holds true with our heavenly Father, Who wants to see evidence of gratitude for all of the many benefits we receive from Him.

Something important to consider when a Christian gives is the mindset of giving. The mindset of the widow who gave two mites is what encourages us. In order for our gifts to have true worth, they must be given with a sincere and generous heart. A gift given with reluctance, even if it is large, is worthless before God. Our heart’s condition is revealed by the way we show our gratitude towards God.

The Appropriate Gift

A woman gave her grandchildren damaged tableware for Christmas. Such a gift is appreciated when one is poor and can’t afford to give something better. But in another situation it would be observed as an insult. This is precisely how it is with the gifts we give to God. If they are to be pleasing, they should be given in proper proportion to our possessions.

We find a commendable example of giving in the ancient Jews who regularly gave a tenth of their income to the Lord. Less than the tithe was not viewed as satisfactory. Those who gave less were said to infringe on God’s possessions.

In the New Testament, we also read about giving a regular and specific amount. One should give according to the portion received from God. It is not a set percentage; however, if we have the correct mindset, we will give according to our earthly possessions. It is an indication of love and gratitude, a mirror that reveals how we stand before God. There are many who give

abundantly out of love and gratitude. Others, however, only “love” abundantly with words, but not in deeds or truth.

The Portion

The question often raised is, “What portion of my possessions am I required to give?” Many Christians give the tenth of their income to the Lord, not because the New Testament expects this of them. Since God expected

this in the Old Testament, it appears to be the right thing in our time as well.

This does not mean that exactly ten percent is the correct amount for every Christian. Some Christians feel they would like to give more. However, a true steward of God who wants to serve the Lord with all of his possessions and show Him gratitude will have the view that at least ten percent is the appropriate amount to lay on God’s altar.

A. F. Gray

“Give to God the things that are God’s”

When Herod’s servants came to Jesus to conspire against Him and entrap Him, asking if it is lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, Jesus answered, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Matthew 22:21). How easy it is to forget the last part of Jesus’ answer: “Give to God the things that are God’s.” How often is this command simply neglected. We are constantly receiving a multitude of blessings from the hand of God and do not think about giving back to God what belongs to Him.

The apostle Paul gives the church at Corinth sound advice about giving, which is sadly ignored today: “On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (1 Corinthians 16:2).

By nature, most people are more inclined to receive than to give. As Christians, though, we should remember that we are indebted to God. Everything we own we have first received from the Lord. Therefore, they aren’t actually our possessions, rather only borrowed goods God has entrusted us with. He has the first and greatest entitlement to what we consider ours. The Holy Scriptures describe us as stewards and managers rather than owners. The profit is not ours, but belongs to the actual owner.

We owe an incredible amount to God, “who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). Our heavenly Father gave us His most precious possession, His only begotten Son. And that Son gave His life and His blood for us. How great is our debt!

Since our earthly government is entitled to make claims to our worldly goods, how much more should God be entitled to them! He gave us everything we own,

and we should honor Him with our possessions and serve Him with them. We can help to build His kingdom with our contributions. Jesus relinquished everything for our sakes. He, Who was unequivocally wealthy, became poor for our sakes in order to help us. Is it possible to walk “in His footsteps” without contributing something toward the furthering of His kingdom? Impossible! How often do we sing and say, “All to Jesus I surrender, all to Him I freely give”? Have we consecrated all to Him, or are those just empty, spoken promises? May the Lord help us to earnestly examine ourselves so that our walk matches our profession of faith.

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle reveals the best method of offering. It is not enough to give now and then, when we happen to feel like it or when it may be convenient. No, our support for God’s work should be a regular occurrence. How wise is the instruction to lay something aside, “On the first day of the week.” This is not too often nor too seldom, and makes it possible for everyone. If all of God’s children would regularly do this, God’s work would make steady progress. No area of mission work would lack necessary resources.

This collection for the Lord should not only be a regular occurrence but also a personal one. “Let each one of you,” the apostle says. Every individual should participate in this; not only the wealthy but also the poor. Everyone has equal rights and therefore also equal obligations. Everyone can contribute something. The Lord has provided enough for everyone to be able, even with very little, to serve Him and gather up treasures in heaven. The widow in the temple was truly poor. “Two mites” were the extent of her assets, but she did not neglect to offer her minuscule amount into the treasury, though it was all she had.

The Lord greatly honored her actions and recommended we follow her example. The Lord isn't impressed by how much we give but by the motives and intentions of our giving. Therefore, it would be wrong not to give anything because we don't have a lot to give. If you cannot give ten talents, then at least give the Lord the one talent you have received, that you would not be found an unprofitable servant.

Our giving should be voluntary. God does not want a forced offering, but rather, one given freely and lovingly. "For God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). In Old Testament times certain rules determined how much each person was to give. In the Christian household of freedom and grace, we are no longer governed by threatening laws. Instead, the saving grace of God and our love for Jesus stir us to give an offering out of obedience and gratitude. Nonetheless, as Jesus lamented about the Scribes and Pharisees, He also voiced His concern in matters of giving the tenth. They "neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These

[they] ought to have done, without leaving the others undone" (Matthew 23:23).

A great blessing rests on giving. Nowhere in Scripture do we find that receiving conveys a promise of blessings, but giving does. "Give, and it will be given to you" (Luke 6:38). "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35). The widow of Zarephath only had a little flour and a bit of oil. She shared it with the prophet of the Lord, and because of that had enough to last the entire time of the drought. Giving blesses the giver, and consequently, the receiver.

Generosity is a manifestation of spiritual life. Our contribution to or withholding from God's work is the thermometer of our Christianity and the condition of our souls. A person's attachment to his money is a good indication of his relationship to his God. A person who has nothing left to give his God is a Christian by name only. Mary received the glowing report: "She has done what she could" (Mark 14:8). Can this be said of your life as well?

GRATITUDE AND GIVING

The Garden Of The Lord

"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed." (Genesis 2:8)

In the garden of the Lord, man received an assignment: to cultivate, to protect, and to preserve the garden (Genesis 2:15). But Adam was not only to work, he was allowed to eat the fruit of all the trees, with one exception: "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die" (v. 16-17; to die spiritually, to be separated from God by disobedience and sin).

Dear reader, we know all too well that Adam and Eve were driven out of the garden by the Lord God, because of their disobedience. With cherubim and a flaming sword, He guarded the way to the tree of life (read Genesis 3:23-24).

We also know the consequences of the terrible fall of man. Fellowship between the creation and his Creator was lost. Adversity, tribulation, and pain were the result.

The curse of God weighed on humanity. Hardship and grief, thistles and thorns became his portion, and in the sweat of his brow he would eat his bread until he died and returned to dust (see Genesis 3:16-19). The glory, the joy, and the blessing in the garden of the Lord had been lost.

But the almighty yet merciful God already had a plan and made a promise that One would come and crush the serpent's head. Admittedly, He would need to take the curse and penalty for sin and disobedience on Himself to create something entirely new. And this divine newness would not happen in the natural but in the spiritual realm: a garden of the Lord like Eden for the soul, the inner man, and for His church.

"For the LORD will comfort Zion, He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the LORD; joy and gladness will be found in it, thanksgiving and the voice of



melody” (Isaiah 51:3). Just as there are many places on earth where water is lacking and the soil does not produce fruit or harvest, so too is the sin-corrupted heart like a desert: dissatisfied, defiant, despondent, rebellious, and without joy and peace in this world.

The prophet Isaiah proclaims 700 years before Christ’s coming that the Lord will comfort His people and create something new. For in darkness, unbelief, and hopelessness, a light is promised, yes, the Light of the world for all who believe. And we read, “The LORD will guide you continually, and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters do not fail” (Isaiah 58:11).

The Son of God, Jesus Christ, our Savior, has come to seek and save what is lost. He is also the Divine Sower Who spreads the seed, and desires that all people open their hearts and receive the ever-living Word to bring forth fruit—“some a hundredfold, some sixty and some thirty” (Matthew 13:23).

We can compare the life of every believer with a garden, and this should be a garden of the Lord. Just as once in Eden Adam was given the task to cultivate, protect, and preserve the garden, so we all have the responsibility before God to work with our talents and our abilities, according to what is in our power.

We are to serve the Lord of the harvest faithfully. With the help of the Word of God’s instruction and prayer, we should take care that good seed is sown in our heart’s gar-

den; that the weeds with the roots are removed; that every day we draw grace upon grace out of His abundance; that our heart’s garden is watered abundantly. There the good seed—love, joy, peace, patience, temperance and righteousness—should sprout well, bloom and bear fruit that pleases God.

The weeds the evil one secretly desires to spread, to wrongly influence us in our thinking, judgments, and decisions are to be located and quickly pulled out before they come up and take root.

Only if our garden is nourished, weeded, and watered regularly with the pure water of the Word of God, does it bring forth good fruit to the glory of God.

Difficulties and trials, icy north winds, and hot south winds may also come upon this “garden” of a faithful believer. The Holy Scripture testifies that this is even permitted by the Lord: “Awake, O north wind, and come, O south! Blow upon my garden, that its spices may flow out. Let my beloved come to his garden and eat its pleasant fruits” (Song of Solomon 4:16).

In all trials and tribulations, we can look to God, trust Him, and know that even the storms of life help us cling to God, love Him, and remain faithful to Him until He calls us home.

Dear soul, how are you doing? Is your life like the garden of the Lord, which brings plenty of fruit? God grant this to all of us!

H. D. Nimz



GRATITUDE AND GIVING

Food For Thought On Thanksgiving

“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest . . . shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22). God has once again kept this promise. Once again, the farmers were able to sow and harvest. Once again, God allowed the planted seeds to sprout and grow. Once again, as He now has for many years, He provided the conditions for a good harvest.

The farmers among us may often have worried, “Will the planted seeds sprout? Will they produce and bear ripe fruit? Will there be good weather for the harvest?” And from a human point of view, these worries were at times truthfully justified. Whether a cold hoarfrost threatened to destroy the spring blossoms, a long drought hindered growth, or heavy rain made it nearly impossible to bring in the crops, nature’s power left us helpless. Once again, we had to recognize that God “is exalted by His power” (Job 36:22), that everything depends on God’s blessings, and that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom despite all of the achievements of science and technology. With this realization, many a fervent prayer must have risen to the Creator and Sustainer of all things.

Unfortunately, mankind’s sense of dependence on God is waning. People believe that they can rely on their own achievements and knowledge. Despite all of this, God looks out for His fallen creation time and time again. In His mercy, He made the sun rise on the evil and on the good, and He sent rain on the just and on the unjust this year yet again (see Matthew 5:45). He granted yet another harvest to sustain His creation and to fulfill the word of the psalmist, “The eyes of all look expectantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:15-16).

The grace of God, revealed through His harvest blessings, has moved people to reflection and contemplation from time immemorial—if their hearts were not completely hardened. This is the origin of the widespread custom of dedicating a special day of thanks to God.

The Israelites were supposed to be thankful to God and helpful to their neighbors. They were allowed to enjoy their new harvest only once they had offered their first fruits to God. We, too, have good reason to thank God for the rich harvest.

Unfortunately, true thankfulness has become rarer in these times of plenty. Yet we can be reminded of the importance of thanking God daily for the things He gives us by His grace!

David praised the grace of God through beautiful verse: “You visit the earth and water it, You greatly enrich it; . . . You provide their grain You water its ridges abundantly, You settle its furrows; You make it soft with showers, You bless its growth The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered with grain; they shout for joy, they also sing” (Psalm 65:9-13). Joy and thankfulness resound in these words. Shall we not also join in the worship of the Creator and Sustainer of all things?

Jesus Christ, the Son of God, compares Himself to the wheat kernel that had to fall to earth and die in order to bear fruit (John 12:24). In the same way, as He freely gave His life, He became the firstborn of a vast number of people who believe in Him and who were reborn to a new, eternal life as His first fruit.

Each life is a cycle of spiritual sowing and harvest. It is governed by the principle that “whatever a man sows, that he will also reap” (Galatians 6:7). Those who build their lives on what is visible and who orientate themselves by the natural world will harvest destruction from the flesh. In contrast, those who direct their senses to

what is eternal and orientate themselves by the spiritual world will harvest eternal life from the Spirit who reveals God’s will to them.

The seed determines the harvest. This principle applies to all people, including those certain of their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Through daily example, Christians should sow seeds that promise eternal fruit. When they appear before Christ’s throne of judgment on that great harvest day, they will come bearing fruit (see 2 Corinthians 5:10).

We often sow seeds of sorrow, working with tear-filled eyes. However, Scripture tells us that those who sow with tears will harvest with rejoicing: “He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him” (Psalm 126:6).

The Lord’s coming is near. The Supreme Judge of the world is standing before the door and waiting—as did the farmers—to harvest the earth’s precious fruit. What will He find? Has His mercy led us to repentance? God still has patience with the unrepentant and ungrateful, but at some point, the sickle will be raised, and the harvest will begin. What will that harvest yield?

May the commemoration of this year’s harvest give us food for thought regarding the last, great harvest in eternity.

W. Sch.

An Experience With God

“For He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.” (Psalm 91:11)

On June 22, 2018, the funeral of Bro. R. Hiemstra took place in Falkensee near Berlin. We were on our way home on the highway. It was raining heavily and I drove in the left lane at around 120 km/h (75 mph). I suddenly noticed that the windshield wipers had stopped working. I was in trouble. What was I to do now?

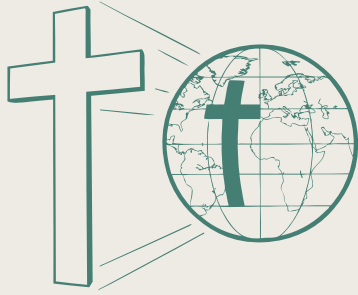
I stepped on the brakes a few times to warn the vehicles behind me. I could only dimly see the vehicles ahead of me—one in the middle lane and another in the right. I signaled right and changed into the middle lane and then again into the right so I could safely stop on the shoulder. My heart was filled with gratitude that there was no accident.

I turned the engine off, restarted it and the wipers moved a little, but then stopped once again. At a service station I asked whether a mechanic could repair the windshield wiper system. There was no one available. We had to drive about another 320 km (199 mi) to Hamm and did not know whether the clouds would bring further rain or not.

We silently prayed that God would hold off the rain for the rest of the drive. God answered our prayers and we arrived safely at home. Brothers from the congregation later determined that rods in the windshield wiper system of the 18 year old car were rusty and needed to be oiled.

With this testimony, I would like to give God thanks, honor, and praise for His protection on our journey.

Herbert Kowalski,
Hamm, Germany



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

The Harvest Shall Not Cease

“While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest . . . shall not cease.” (Genesis 8:22)

What an amazing assurance! What a precious promise! Have we ever considered what would happen if the harvest really ceased? Supposing that God limited the promise of a harvest only to the year 2200, we would immediately have cause for great concern, and would anxiously wonder what would happen next.

We are reminded by the Word of God why we have it so good. The answer lies in the very remarkable words, “Seedtime and harvest . . . shall not cease.” Since our Father in Heaven is faithful to His Word, we have been allowed to bring in a harvest once again this year. And because the harvest is such an immeasurable and irreplaceable blessing, we again decorate our churches once more for Thanksgiving and celebrate with thankful and joyful hearts in honor of our God.

We need to be prepared for Thanksgiving. A preacher writes, “With some helpers, we decorated the sanctuary for Thanksgiving. Under the ‘harvest crown,’* we spread out some of the field crops, the garden vegetables, as well as a variety of beautiful fruits. And everywhere in between, the various flowers shone through in their magnificent colors. Everything we presented was to be an indication of how the Lord our God had so richly given to us again this year.

“We placed a jug of water on the altar. It quenches our thirst and waters the plants and animals. We will give thanks for the rain and for the water in streams and riv-

ers. We will also place a bowl of earth, because out of the fertile soil, the many fruits have grown.

“But what will I say to the congregation tomorrow?” this man asked himself. ‘I will speak of the richness of creation, but also how God’s gifts are misused. How we pollute and waste the water; how we exploit and poison the soil, how we let plants, flowers and trees die!’ And with that we are really directed to a sad state of affairs, or should we say a ‘sin’?

“Being thankful should be at the forefront of a Thanksgiving Day celebration. Thankful for our daily bread, thankful for the sun, wind, and rain; thankful for our health, strength, and work; thankful for the peace in our country, for the joys and sorrows; thankful for God’s help, for His blessings on our soul, for the precious Word of God. We give thanks for Jesus Christ, for His grace and for the many blessings through Him. And last but not least, giving thanks for every step we take and for every breath God gives us!”

The aforementioned preacher finally remained alone in the church. He sat down and began to ponder his life. Then he continued writing, “What have I all been given in my life! My country, my freedom, prosperity, God’s guidance, the many blessings . . . And as the individual stages of my life pass before me and I quietly look back, a prayer wells up inside of me!”

May each one of us experience true thanksgiving and an offering of godly prayer!



We know from God's Word that the two brothers, Cain and Abel, felt the inner need to bring sacrifices to the God of Heaven and then had a very remarkable experience. Cain's sacrifice was rejected, and how that must have frightened him! This teaches us not to bring our Lord an offering of thanks with just any kind of haphazard attitude.

So when and why does this not work? Let's take a look at one example: I believe someone who has often thrown bread into the garbage, who has carelessly allowed many delicious foods to be spoiled and ruined, who has transgressed against the Word of God, or who has not respected or cherished the many spiritual blessings is not worthy of giving an offering of thanks. He can be sure he lacks the necessary conditions for giving God a thank offering, and the Lord will not accept it. The godly thing to do is to repent and seek forgiveness and only then bring an offering of thanks.

Jesus explains this as follows: "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matthew 5:23-24). So, if reconciliation with our neighbor is necessary, then how much more is it necessary to be reconciled with God before we bring Him our offering of thanks. Perhaps this is the reason why our Thanksgiving celebrations are often lacking in genuine gratitude.

We all have sufficient reason to be thankful. But our hearts must be blameless before God so we can freely and joyfully come before Him with our offerings of thanks. This is the prerequisite for blessed, authentic Thanksgiving celebrations. It remains my wish and prayer that the Lord would grant it to us.

*German/Austrian tradition which often consists of fabricating a "crown" from ears of grain and flowers.

I Didn't Expect That!

Have you ever heard someone say, “That’s not what I expected”? Maybe you have used that expression yourself. Often, things happen that we do not expect, and sometimes we are faced with tasks that we never anticipated. If we look back in history or even in our own lives, this is obvious. We find countless examples of totally unexpected events that happen. It is not uncommon, especially for young people who have made a commitment to follow Christ, that life may suddenly take a turn and follow a course previously unanticipated.

There are examples in the Bible where this was the case. Consider the life of Joseph. He would never have expected to become ruler in the land of Egypt. Or Moses, when he fled for his life from Pharaoh, would never have expected to one day become the leader of the children of Israel. Ruth never expected the great reward she received for the faithfulness she exhibited to her mother-in-law. And David, the youngest of the boys in his family, who tended his father’s sheep, probably never dreamed of becoming the King of the land. When Peter was still a fisherman tending his nets, do you think he expected one day to leave them all behind to become a fisher of men?

Have you ever considered that Jesus may want to use you in a similar manner and that your life might follow a different course? Your career may be a good one, but it would be wrong to think that once you have decided on a career, this is the course you must continue to follow. There are people who are unwilling to consider whether the path they are on is the one the Lord wants for them. In that case, the eternal values that God has given them may start to decay.

It is good for us, especially as young Christians, to expect God to be able to use us for His glory. God is no respecter of persons. He does not look at how much money or how much education we have. Rather, He looks at our heart. Often, those who are not highly esteemed in the eyes of the world are chosen so He may confound those who think they are strong (see 1 Corinthians 1:28). It was not the leaders of the Jewish people who became the heralds of the Gospel, but the despised fishermen of Galilee whom God chose for the task. God looks into the depths of our hearts and gives grace to the humble.

How are you using the talents, aptitudes, and gifts God has given you? Have you considered developing them so that they can be used to the glory of God? How sad and frightful it is when God calls us and we have neglected our talent! When all seems desolate, it takes considerable effort, time, and resolve to restore what has been neglected. Let us ask God to give us the necessary insight to seriously consider the great worth of our talents so we would better use them for the Lord.

It is not the education you have, the money you have, nor the resources you have that make you useful in the kingdom of God. It is the Holy Spirit alone Who is able to make you successful and useful in God’s service. Without Him, we are without the strength we need, without the Comforter, and without a leader. Only He can give you the power to overcome every challenge that comes your way as you labor in God’s kingdom. Therefore, whoever you are, do your part, be filled with the Holy Spirit, and be certain the Lord Jesus wants to use you to be a blessing.

Seek First the Kingdom of God!

I was still a young man when I met someone one day who told me his life story.

“When I moved from home, my mother gave me this verse as a reminder: ‘Seek first the kingdom of God.’ But I thought, first, I want to make something of my life and become rich. There will still be enough time afterward to seek God’s kingdom.

“I wandered from village to village without finding work, and on Sunday I went to church. To my astonish-

ment, the text of the sermon centered on the same verse: ‘Seek first the kingdom of God.’ God’s Word convicted me deeply. I was convinced the prayers of my mother accompanied me. Perhaps she had written the pastor for my sake? I felt uncomfortable. I could not put the verse out of my mind.

“I went to another town and went to a church again the next Sunday. Once again, the text was read, ‘Seek first the kingdom of God.’ I clearly saw God working this

through the prayers of my mother. However, I still stuck with my intent to become rich first and then seek the kingdom of God afterward.

“Numerous months passed by before I finally went to church again. And once again the same scripture greeted me: ‘Seek first the kingdom of God.’ I suppressed the voice of my conscience again and decided to avoid the Word of God.

“Several years went by until my mother passed away, and this verse entered my mind in a new way again. The Word of God pursued me. Now I decided to seek the kingdom of God and to seek salvation.” The man continued on, crying, “But it didn’t work. The Word of God no longer impacted me. My heart is as hard as a stone.”

I myself was far from God at that time, and these things seemed incomprehensible to me. But when I later found Jesus, I thought about the one who told me this story, and inquired about him. I found out he was in a psychiatric clinic. He was usually quiet, but to everyone who approached him, he pointed at them with his finger and called out, “Seek first the kingdom of God!”

Later, I heard that the man had been released. I went to visit him at his house. This poor, sick man sat in his rocking chair. His gaze was blank. He pointed his finger at me and said, “Young man, seek first the kingdom of God.” His comprehension was gone, but the Word of God had been burned deep into his soul.

Therefore, young people, when God’s voice of warning reaches your hearts, do not harden your hearts. For a time may come when God will harden your hearts!

... Notes from School (Part 9)

“For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?” (1 Corinthians 4:7).

I needed the answer to my friend’s objection. We had just received the results of an exam and were overjoyed. My cousin and I said, “Thanks be to God that we passed!” It was to this that my friend objected. “Why thank God? We studied hard for this exam—that’s why we passed. Why should we thank God?” Well, we truly had done our best in preparing for this exam—but was that really enough?

I received the answer a few weeks later. The next exam was scheduled on a Tuesday. I got very sick the weekend before. Studying was the last thing on my mind. By Monday afternoon I started feeling better and was able to write the exam on Tuesday. When I received the result, I could wholeheartedly say, “Thanks be to God!” He had truly helped me here. Then I realized how much of what we take for granted is actually God’s grace and help. When He allows sudden changes to take place, we are soon at our wit’s end and fail dismally. This is why I continue to say, “Thanks be to God! From the bottom of my heart.”

Patricia J. Günter

VERSE OF THE MONTH

“As for man, his days are like grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourishes. For the wind passes over it, and it is gone, and its place remembers it no more” (Psalm 103:15-16).

The forests, fields, and meadows barely seem to have shown life and began blooming when we observe once more that autumn has arrived, and the landscape becomes desolate. So it is in our lives. Scarcely has one arrived at his “prime of life,” when it is at its end.

As a young person, you are just entering the prime of life and seldom think about how short a time the prime is. Perhaps you are busy enjoying your life or are trying to make it develop according to your own desires.

What are you doing with your prime time? Give it to your Creator, and ask Him to make something useful and magnificent of it to His glory. Would you like a full life that glorifies God? Then do not delay!

How Much Do You Value Your Bible?

One evening any years ago, two young travelers arrived in the city of Warrington and asked to stay at the homeless shelter for the night. With amazement, the manager of the shelter looked at the two boys who appeared to be approximately 13 and 11. Each of them carried a small bundle on his back, the whole of their belongings, which they had brought along from London.

Even though their clothes were soiled from the dusty country roads, these were not your regular vagabonds. The good impression they made on the host was further elevated when they told their story in child-like manner.

A few weeks previously, these two boys had lived in the shelter of their parents' loving home in London, where they experienced a joyful, carefree life. Then, a terrible outbreak of typhoid fever took the lives of both parents. They were left helpless and alone in a big, strange world where they knew no one and were without home or friends. Their only remaining relative was an uncle who lived in a faraway city near the sea. They had never seen him before, but their father had told them about him. They were trying to seek out this uncle in order to find a place of refuge. Shortly after their parents were buried, the poor, lonely boys embarked on their journey with their few possessions in bundles on their backs and headed for Liverpool. Tired and exhausted they arrived in Warrington that evening.

When the boys opened their bundles in front of the host, he discovered that the younger boy had a carefully wrapped Bible.

"You have no money nor other means," the manager of the shelter said to the child. "Don't you want to sell me your Bible? I'll give you five shillings for it."—"Oh, no!" exclaimed the child, as he started to cry out in fear. "I cannot sell my Bible. I'd rather starve."

"There are many wonderful books. Why do you love your Bible so much?" the man continued to ask.—"The Bible is my best friend," answered the boy.—"How is that? What has your Bible done for you that you find such great joy in it?"

The boy explained, "I was seven years old when I visited Sunday school in London. My teacher was so friendly and taught me to read my Bible. He showed me from the Bible that I was a sinner and that God had to punish sin. But he also showed me that the same righteous God is love and that He sent His only begotten Son, Jesus, into the world to die for sinners. And that anyone who believes in the Lord Jesus and loves Him because He died for us, can be freed from their sins. God freed me from all my sins. And now I am His child and read about the love of my Savior every day in His Word."

To further test him, the manager offered him six shillings for the Bible.

"No," he explained, "I cannot part with my Bible. It always helped me along the way. Whenever I sat down feeling tired and hungry and would read in my Bible, I always got enough new strength to keep going."

The lad experienced what the psalmist had encountered: "In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul" (Psalm 94:19).

Eventually he was asked, "What will you do when you finally arrive in Liverpool and your uncle refuses to take you in?"

He gave an answer that would put most experienced Christians to shame. He replied, "My Bible says, when my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord will take care of me" (see Psalm 27:10).

The man could go no further in his test. He was moved. He allowed the boys to stay and offered them a cheery bedroom. There, the young orphans knelt by their beds before they lay down to rest, and thanked their heavenly Father for the goodness He had shown them and committed their future into the hands of the One whose eyes and ears are open to those who are alone and suffering, to the One Who said, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me" (Psalm 50:15).

The next morning, the young travelers were refreshed and strengthened as they continued their journey towards Liverpool.



CHILDREN'S CORNER

You Shall Praise Me

Inge loved going to Sunday School. It warmed her heart! Her favorite song was, "I love to go, I love to go, I love to go to Sunday School." Her beloved Sunday School teacher told the stories so poignantly as if she herself had sat at the feet of Jesus.

One Sunday, she heard the story of the ten lepers. How could they have been so ungrateful after the Savior had healed them? Should they not have fallen down before Him and stammered out their thanks? How easy it should be to tell others what the Lord had done for them. If she should ever be in a similar situation, she did not want to be guilty of being ungrateful, since it says in Psalm 50:15, "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me."

One afternoon, Inge was sitting at the kitchen table. Her jam sandwich, which usually tasted so good, did not want to go down. Her father sat stooped in his chair, moaning in pain. Toothaches can be extremely painful. She had never experienced it herself, but she had seen some of her friends crying because of the pain.

It really bothered her to see her father in such pain. She could not continue eating. She jumped up and hur-

ried to her bedroom. "Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you"! Yes, there was a way out! She knelt beside her bed and prayed, "Lord, You Who can perform miracles, please help us now. Dad's toothache is so bad that I cannot watch him suffer. You are our only hope! Please help him for the sake of Your love. Amen."

Calmly, she returned to her seat in the kitchen. She picked up her bread and resumed eating. Her father had become quiet. Then he said in amazement, "How is that possible? I just had a raging toothache, and all of a sudden it is gone. How can that be?"

How does this story continue? Inge had called on God in her distress, and God had answered; what was the next step? To praise God! But Inge's father did not want to know anything about God. He was very strict, and for the first time, she was afraid to speak of God and her experience.

What do you do when God answers your prayer and helps you in times of need? Do you thank Him and tell others about your experience? God will hear it, rejoice in you, and bless you.

Paula Meitzel



Senior's Page

EPHESIANS 5:20

The words of this Bible verse are an excellent life motto. Many of God's children have been a blessing by living accordingly. Do you also want your life to be a blessing to others? Then live according to this verse!

Do you know what is written in Ephesians 5:20? Most certainly we have read this verse often. It is worth looking at more closely, because if it is applied to our lives, it may change them completely, naturally for the better. Paul writes, "Give thanks always to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ for all things." Just a moment—this is too easy to read or gloss over. To live according to this verse is another challenge altogether, especially if you're on the other side of 50 years. Yet we certainly have reasons to be thankful.

Over the years, I have visited many older brothers and sisters. I can still remember the effect many of these visits had on me. The Ephesians 5:20 sisters and brothers pass before me in my thoughts. I must say that these people definitely impacted my life. Later, I held the funerals for some of them, and though they are long gone, the blessings they gave remain with me.

What kind of people are these Ephesians 5:20 sisters and brothers? Surely we imagine, compared to us, they led a problem-free life and therefore could be thankful. Generally we accept that problems and thankfulness are not often spoken of together. That was not the case with them. Often it was just the opposite—they carried heavy loads, yet in spite of that, they had thankful hearts. They were people who surely lived according to Ephesians 5:20.

You might think, "If only you knew how I am doing and what I am going through. How could I even think about being thankful?" That difficult situations exist is surely true, and that some people experience more hardships than others is also true. That temptations and challenges are part of life cannot be denied. If you think of these difficult situations in light of Ephesians 5:20 (and thank God, the Father, every time and for everything in the name of Jesus Christ), then the following question

naturally arises: Is it possible to live according to Ephesians 5:20 in difficult times?

Let's think about the writer of this verse. He introduces himself at the beginning of the letter (Ephesians 1:1) as "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ." The letter to the Ephesians is one of the "prison letters" (Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, and Philippians). At the time of writing these letters, Paul was a prisoner in Rome. He mentions this two times in Ephesians. In chapter 3:1, we read, "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus" and in chapter 4:1, he begins with the following words: "I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you." For the sake of Jesus, he had given up his freedom. Part of his time was spent in prison and part of it under house arrest in his own home. As a prisoner, he lived under the most primitive conditions where he experienced "hunger and thirst" and also "frost and a lack of necessary clothing" (1 Corinthians 11:27), and much more. This sorely-tested Paul, "the prisoner of Christ Jesus," is not only an example of a thankful man, but he also demands that we be thankful at all times and for everything. Ephesians 5:20 is not the only place where this occurs. He also writes to the Colossians to be, "rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving" (2:7). To the Philippian church, he writes, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:6). The challenge to be thankful is a common thread throughout all of his letters and throughout the Bible.

Is it not odd that we must be told to be thankful? With small children, it is understandable that they need to be reminded to say, "thank you," after they have received a candy. Oh, that it would not be necessary for us to be reminded to be thankful! It would be better to say as Paul said again and again in his letters, "I thank my God."

Through my thanking either by words or by my internal character and thoughts, I acknowledge God as the Giver of all things. Think about this. If God in heaven had not sent His Son to us humans to rescue us from our guilt, shame, and sin, we would have been hopelessly lost. Aging without hope is unfathomable. And shouldn't we be thankful for this? How often has God raised us up through His living and powerful Word? That would certainly be a reason for thankfulness. Answered prayers are another reminder of the need for thankfulness. If I were to mention all the blessings I have received, I would almost need to write a book. Have we eaten a meal today?

You answer, three: breakfast, lunch, and supper. We also have roofs over our heads. We have comfortable beds, and we most certainly have more comfort than Paul had. Good, we agree that we should be thankful—probably more thankful than we tend to be.

More difficult are the words "for everything." Why are these words so difficult? The reason is that we humans have a limited vision. We do not understand many things and very seldom find an answer to our "Why?" If we are unable to find answers, life becomes difficult. At times like these, we express our thankfulness by completely trusting in the Lord, because He knows what He is doing, even though we do not understand. Everything that happens to us must first pass by Him. Without His permission, nothing happens. He holds the "reins" of all happenings in the world in His hands. My thankfulness is my acknowledgment and understanding that this is true and that I trust His ways and leading. If I believe the words of Jesus that without His will not even one hair falls from my head (Luke 21:18), then I should not find being thankful difficult.

Through thankfulness, I honor God. I proclaim before my children, my grandchildren, the church, and the whole world that God is good, and I trust Him because He does everything right. We can hardly imagine what an impact such a stand would have on future generations. From another angle, thankfulness is an encouragement for my spiritual brothers and sisters to trust God. It is an example for the youth and shows them the value of following and serving God. And, thanking helps us personally the most. Thanking gives us new courage and confidence. Thanking lifts us up and spurs us on to endure to the end. Thanking directs my thoughts into a positive pattern. Thanking brings me closer to God and furthers contentment.

Should I become depressed and words of thankfulness hardly cross my lips, I am able to speak to the Lord about my situation and leave it with Him. Such a soul-searching talk causes the dark clouds to vanish and encourages and allows us to become thankful people again.

Would you like to be recognized as an Ephesians 5:20 sister or brother? Renew your resolve today to be thankful. Should negativity raise its head, do not forget that our motto is Ephesians 5:20. Do we want to try this? I wonder if the people around us will notice the changes we have made. I hope so. May God bless you.

Harry Semenjok



The Lord's Prayer

by Gerhard Mielke - Part 18: Amen

We have come to the last word in the Lord's prayer. That word is Amen.

What Does Amen Mean?

Amen means verily, truly, that is the way it is. The Greek Dictionary of the New Testament defines it as: amen, truly, or indeed. The word comes from the Hebrew language, is used in Greek and from there was transferred into Latin, and from the Latin it found its way into English and German, as well as into most other languages.

In the King James Version the word has been translated from the Hebrew as "So be it." And I answered and said, "So be it, LORD" (Jeremiah 11:5). Sometimes it is not translated, but just left as it is: "the prophet Jeremiah said, 'Amen! The LORD do so'" (Jeremiah 28:6). This gives us insight into what is meant when the word is used at the end of a prayer. "Amen, the Lord do so," or "So be it, Lord." The word also means truly or faithful or certain.

Amen Is One of the Names of God

Since we know what Amen means, we can easily understand why it is one of the names of God. The phrase translated as "one true God" found in Isaiah 65:16 is "Elohei Amen" in Hebrew. Our God is the God Amen or the faithful God or the one true God.

In Revelation we read, "These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the cre-

ation of God 'To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne'" (Revelation 3:14, 21).

Here Jesus is called Amen. First of all this confirms His deity. Secondly, it emphasizes one of His attributes, namely faithfulness. The Lord is faithful, and true. And since He is faithful and true so are His words: "For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us" (2 Corinthians 1:20). In Christ, the Old Testament prophecies given in the Torah, Psalms, and the Prophets have been fulfilled. Jesus once said, "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). Note that the word translated "assuredly" here is "Amen" in the original Greek version. Jesus came to fulfill the law. In everything He did, Jesus was clear in His motive to bring to completion all God ordained. Even in the darkest hours of His life, He said, "Thy will be done." No one was Amen, true, faithful, and without sin except Jesus. Now we are to follow in His footsteps in being faithful and true in all that we do.

Abraham Believed God

Amen and the verb *aman* have the same Hebrew root. As a verb the causative form (hiphil) can be translated as

trust, believe, or have assurance in. “Abraham believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (James 2:23). In Genesis 15:6, we read that Abraham “believed the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness.” This word “believed” is the causative of *aman* or amen. So we can say that Abraham caused what God said to be amen for himself. It was certain, he took it as fact. He believed! How about us? Do we read God’s word and say, “Amen”? Do you live out the Word of God and make it Amen in your life?

How else is the word Amen used?

In the New King James Bible the word Amen does not occur in Mark, Luke, or John, except once at the very end, as the last word in each of these gospels. In the Greek New Testament, the word occurs much more often. For example, in the gospel of John, Amen occurs 51 times in Greek, but only once in English. It is noteworthy that except for the Lord’s prayer in Matthew, the prayers of Jesus do not end with Amen. So prayers do not need to end with the word Amen, although that is our custom. Nevertheless, it is a good custom. The letters of Paul, Peter, and Jude all end with “Amen.” However, the letters of James and the third letter of John do not.

Many preachers end their sermons with “Amen.” Some children then automatically reach for the hymnals. Once when Brother Sonnenberg said “Amen,” using it during his sermon, one of the little fellows thought the sermon was finished. He was surprised when Brother Sonnenberg kept on preaching. It is a good habit to affirm the sermon by saying “Amen” to the preacher’s “Amen.” Also, when someone prays, we have the privilege of following that prayer, and when “Amen” is said we can add our affirmation to the prayer by saying a loud “Amen.” Of course, for the person praying it is necessary to speak loudly and clearly so that the prayer can be understood and the congregation can say “Amen.” In another context, Paul says, “If you bless with the spirit, how will he who occupies the place of the uninformed say ‘Amen’ at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?” (1 Corinthians 14:16). When we pray publicly, let us make sure we are understood.

The Example of Jesus

In the New Testament, Jesus used the word “Amen” quite often. It is usually translated as truly, verily or assuredly. I will list some of these scriptures, leaving the word

“Amen” in the verse as it is in the original Greek, instead of using the English translation.

“And whoever gives one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple, Amen, I say to you, he shall by no means lose his reward” (Matthew 10:42).

“Amen, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3).

“Amen, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and be cast into the sea,’ it will be done.” (Matthew 21:21).

“So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, “Amen, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury” (Mark 12:43).

“And Jesus said to him, ‘Amen, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise’” (Luke 23:43).

Twenty-five times, John uses a double Amen in his version of the gospel. It is translated as ‘verily, verily’ or ‘most assuredly.’ Here are some of these scriptures:

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God’” (John 3:3).

“Amen, Amen, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life” (John 5:24).

“Amen, Amen, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live” (John 5:25).

“Then Jesus said to them again, “Amen, Amen, I say to you, I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7).

“Amen, Amen, I say to you, he who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me” (John 3:20).

“And in that day you will ask Me nothing. Amen, Amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you” (John 16:23).

So Jesus, who is called “Amen” (Revelation 3:14), often uses the word Amen when He expresses important truths that are Amen. And in order to teach us how to pray, Jesus gave us the Lord’s prayer, which also ends with “Amen.” So be it. Every word in the Lord’s prayer is significant. May the content of the Lord’s prayer be manifested practically in each of our lives. I hope this series has been a blessing to you. Amen.

What We Should Know About The Bible

“Something is killing all the joy in my life,” a non-believer once confided in a friend. “What is it?” his friend responded with concern. He answered: “I’m afraid that the Bible will turn out to be true after all!”

This man’s fear was absolutely justified, for one thing is certain: The Bible is the Truth! If we believe that, this faith will do great things in our lives. In contrast to non-believers, who are oppressed by the fear that the Bible could be true, Christians enjoy the certainty of knowing that it is true.

The Bible is exactly what it claims to be, the Word of God. Please note that I am not saying that it contains the Word of God; I am saying that it is the Word of God. It is up to us to accept or reject it.

The Bible itself claims divine inspiration. In 2 Timothy 3:16, we read that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God.” If we continue on reading through verse 17, we learn that the doctrine of inspiration has a very practical relevance to our lives and experiences, being “profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

The Bible is the Word spoken or inspired by God through people who “were moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). It was accepted as such by the early Church, as described in 1 Thessalonians 2:13: “because when you received the Word of God which you heard from us, you welcomed it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the Word of God, which also effectively works in you who believe.”

Further evidence for the Bible’s divine inspiration is found in its content, which the respective authors could never have written without the aid of divine revelation:

“How that by revelation He made known to me the mystery (as I have briefly written already, . . .), which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to His holy apostles and prophets” (Ephesians 3:3-5). The fact is that the Bible reveals truths the human mind could never have grasped without illumination from God. The people who wrote the Bible were themselves barely able to understand the revelations the Lord made through them, as is evidenced in 1 Peter 1:10-12: “Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you, searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. To them it was revealed that, not to themselves, but to us they were ministering.” What the prophets said could in no way be attributed to their own powers of reasoning nor to any innate wisdom; it was rather the product of inspiration and revelation.

The Bible is based on prophecies that are either already fulfilled, currently being fulfilled, or going to be fulfilled. Over and over, we read about events that occurred so that the prophets’ words might be fulfilled (see Matthew 12:17).

Even more evidence is provided by the wonderful harmony and unity of the Bible’s teachings, despite the fact that it comprises 66 books written over 16 centuries by at least 36 different authors, all coming from a single source: God!

The greatest piece of evidence, however, is the living proof of the Bible's foundational principle in us. It truly changes people's lives by completely reforming their characters. Thousands of men and women of our time prove both by word and deed that they are born again "through the word of God which lives and abides forever" (1 Peter 1:23). If we have received divine life through

the power of the Word, it enables us to live and grow in grace and knowledge.

Yes, we should believe in the entirety of the Bible, for "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4).

E. Martin

The Lost Bible

The most precious thing God gave and entrusted to the people of Israel was the Book of God's Revelation. We believe nothing could have been more esteemed or more sacred to them than this book. Now 2 Kings chapters 22 and 23 report of a time when it was so unfamiliar that they knew nothing about it. Suddenly, this Holy Scripture is found again.

In the previous selected chapters, we are told of the nation's condition when they lost the Scriptures. We see that the temple was in a very sad state during that time. The people were not interested in the house of God, allowing it to become decayed and dilapidated. Nobody cared about it; even the priests stood by indifferently.

And the state of the royal palace? One king after another, who did not want to know about God and led the people into sin, ascended the throne. This is what it looked like without the Word of God in the land. A life without the Bible, a people without a Bible, begins to decay. All moral forces are lost, among the lofty and the low.

And you? Is the Holy Scripture still a lost book to you or does it accompany you daily and give you strength and comfort for the day? It doesn't depend on much speaking about the Bible or praising it with lofty words, rather the question should be, "Is the Bible really your most valuable book?"

And now the families. Where are the people in our country who have a Bible in their pockets? A businessman once said very correctly, "If I have a Bible in my pocket, then there is no room for a lot of other things." What he meant by that, we all understand: there is no room for worthless or evil things. Maybe one could add: You can't just go where you want to go.

But why is the Bible often lost? Not literally, but if you don't occupy yourself with its contents, you won't know the value found there. Some people lose their Bible because they critique it. There was a time when they thought highly of the Word of God; but then they suddenly recognized it as the most censured book of our culture. They became afraid and thought maybe it wasn't all true after all.

A mentally ill person was in a church during a sermon. Suddenly he got up, ran to a pillar and shouted, "Now I will shake the church down!" There was a great panic, until finally a reasonable man said, "Let him try it."

Many people think they can shake the Bible. Let them try it! The Bible vindicates itself. There is no book that has such power, even in our time. Just try it and see what a transformation it will make in your life, if you read the Word of God every day and live by it.

*Where no Bible in the home is found,
Bleakness and sorrow freely abound;
And soon the evil one comes around!*

The Bible must become your book in life and in death; in gloomy and sunny days, where you always take out of it what you need for today. It is important that you read the Bible for yourself and not for others.

Don't you also want to try it and approach God's Word with a sincere heart and highlight the passages which speak to you? If you are faithful in searching the Scriptures for a year, you'll have a whole new Bible. People without God's Word are powerless, but those who intrinsically absorb it are filled with power and strength.

E. Lohmann

REPORT

Camp Meeting 2018

“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly.” John 10:10

After a trip in the hot summer heat through a countryside showing clear signs of drought, this theme was a welcome contrast. For weeks the temperatures in Germany had been extraordinarily high. In the prior week they even climbed above 30°C (86°F) a number of times. Everywhere there was talk about the effects of this heat wave—but Christ is the fountain of living waters; here we find life in abundance. We clearly sensed the need to draw from this well and be refreshed. Sunday and Monday were quite warm, but bearable. However, when we woke up on Tuesday, it was cool and rainy. And so began days of ideal temperatures

for such meetings. While in the rest of Germany, including within the surrounding 100 km (62 m), temperatures rose to nearly 39°C (102°F), God granted us a comfortable 24°C (75°F), a gift we gratefully accepted from His hand.

God gave us His Word in doctrine and practical application, exactly what we need in this day and age. Several testified that prior to these meetings, they had gone through great trials and difficulties. Yet during these meetings they had become encouraged and strengthened. The Word was not only our comfort and compass, but also our admonishment and instruction. We started each day by having morning devotions together, after



Pastors' Song



Gathering after the Evening Service



Overview of the Gathering

which we had a morning service. The afternoon services were partially testimony services or used for special services for certain age groups. This was followed by another service in the evening. Many from various congregations contributed in organizing the services. There was much singing and praying. God blessed us with a very informal, relaxed atmosphere of love. Because no one needed to worry about food or accommodations, we could enjoy every moment and allow God to fill our souls. For many, the divine goal of following Christ according to the Bible became more of a priority in their lives.

On Thursday, the main topic was the great privilege of divine healing. The abundance of God's promises, as well as the many faith-filled accounts of healing in Scripture and from the present age encouraged many to seek

divine healing for their own illnesses. The accounts from those who experienced divine healing during the last camp meeting were touching. It is wonderful that we can experience the fulfillment of divine promises even today.

Even though this was the 4th camp meeting we were able to attend, there were still many opportunities to meet others from other congregations for the first time. Many children and young people came, which delighted the hearts of the elderly (Zechariah 8:4-5).

We returned home with thankful hearts. Many stated their intention of attending again next year from August 17th-24th, 2019, in Blaubeuren. Additional accounts, pictures and information can be found at:

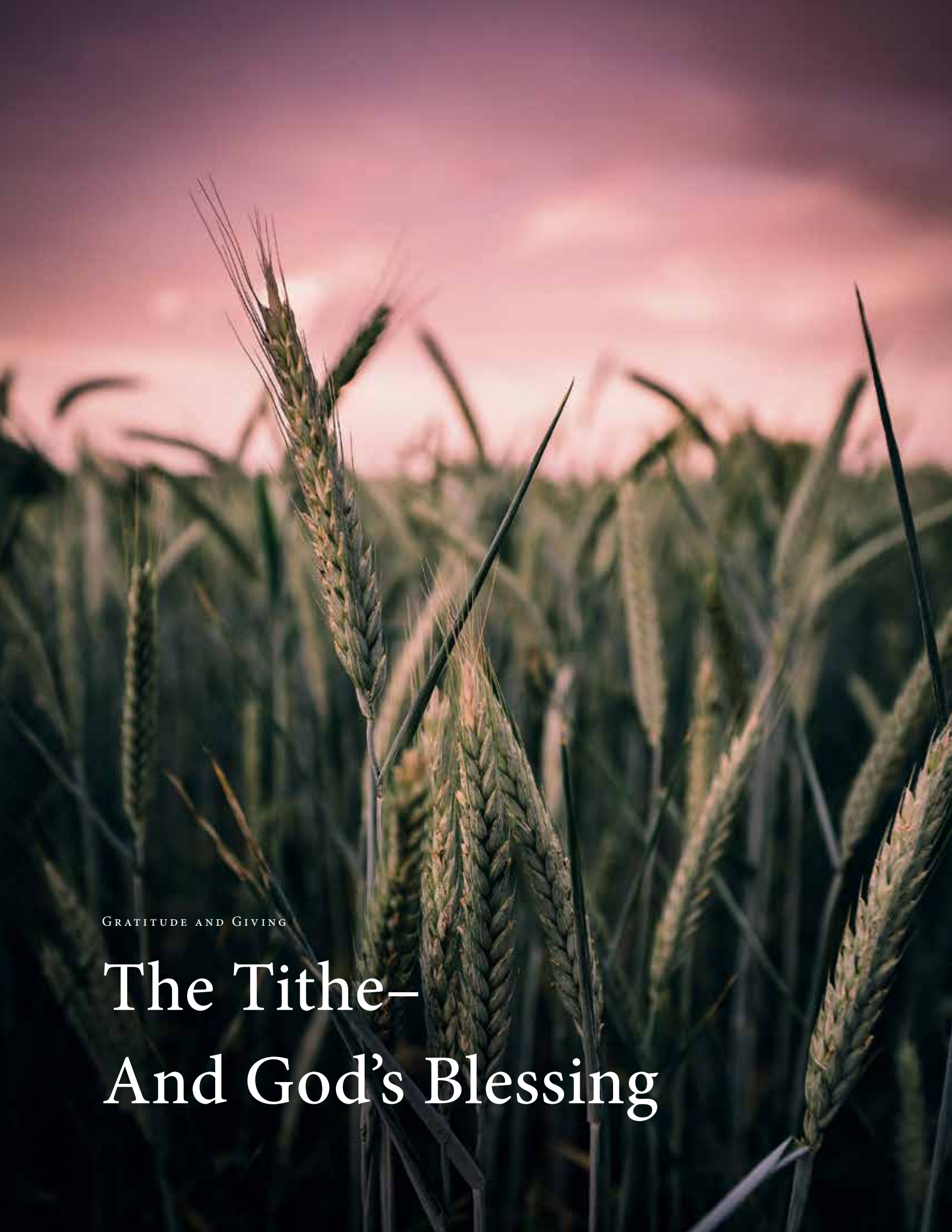
www.lagerversammlung.de

Hermann Vogt



Children's Song





GRATITUDE AND GIVING

The Tithe— And God's Blessing

The narrow-gauge railway moved slowly through the dry, desert-like landscape towards Grootfontein in South Africa. The few passengers who were on the train complained about the unusual drought they were experiencing. They also told me about an incredible occurrence. It had rained on one single farm and that farmer was the only one who was able to harvest corn that year. Little did I know, it was the farm to which I was headed. I had been invited to preach there at a faith conference. Once I arrived, I discovered the reason why it had only rained there.

Two godly brothers had put their savings together and purchased a large parcel of land from the government. They decided to follow the commandment in Malachi 3:10 and gave God a tenth of all their earnings. During the first year they faithfully kept their promise. Their large farm was fenced in with barbed-wire. Then they dug for water and found some, built a home, plowed a portion of the land, and raised a good herd of cattle. Their undertaking seemed to succeed under the blessing of the Lord. Every year, their earnings increased. Naturally, their tithe which they gave for God's work also increased.

After they had worked like this under God's blessing for about 6 years, the tithe amounted to a hefty sum. One of the brothers felt that it was unrealistic to simply put that amount of money into God's work without further consideration. When their income was small, it was easy to do. But, after God had blessed them, it became more difficult to do. "After all, we worked very hard for this," he reasoned, "and you can't just give that much away." The younger of the two tried to hold his ground, but after some time, he gave in and they reduced their tithe by a fraction.

The next year, most of their livestock died and they harvested no corn. Everything seemed to fail. "I want to start giving a tenth again," said the younger brother. "God blessed us when we did, and it's not worth short-changing the Lord." Yet the older one argued it happened that way by chance. "Good," said the younger brother, "we will split the farm in half. You can have the house. I will build a new one and will remain faithful to the Lord by giving at least the tithe."

Just like that it was said and done. The large farm was divided. One man dug another well, found water and began to build another house. When I got there, the walls had just been erected and the corrugated

metal roof was put into place. Everything was still quite primitive. But, next to the new home was a lush field full of glorious corn plants from which over 2,500 sacks of corn were harvested. Indeed, the rain fell only on this farm and just a little on the brother's farm beside it.

The brother attended the faith conference and complained about the monkeys who had destroyed the meager amount of corn that had grown on his portion of the land. He led me through his pathetic cornfield and showed me how the monkeys came down from the hills and destroyed the entire field by breaking off the husks of corn. When the corn is too hard or too soft and does not please their gums, they simply throw it away or place one piece after another under their arm where it eventually falls down. In this manner, they can ruin an entire field. "If the monkeys would at least eat the corn instead of destroying it, it wouldn't be so bad," he commented.

"You don't need to get so worked up over this," I replied. "We preachers experience the same thing when we share the Word of God. For one it is too hard, for the other it is too soft, and whatever is left over they push onto their neighbor. If they would at least "eat" the Word, more people could be helped." He found no words to defend himself, but he also did not find grace to repent and turn back to God, and give God what is His. The tenth of our income does not belong to us, but to the Lord.

A year later, he wrote me a letter about a large water collection dam that he had built to water his land. One morning, his son worked at the foot of the high reservoir wall while the dam was full of water. Suddenly, the wall broke and his son fell to his death. Fifteen years later, I learned that the farmer had lost his entire farm and became a beggar who traveled from one farm to the next.

On the other hand, his brother, who found grace and served God, and continued giving his tenth, remained the most prosperous farmer in the region. He experienced that the more he gave to the Lord, the more was returned to him. His entire household was devoted to God.

It is and always will be true that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil (1 Timothy 6:10), while righteousness yields great promise for the present and future life to come.

J. R. Gschwend

Put the Word Into Practice

*Christ came to do the will of God the Father;
Our humble Savior left His glory willingly,
Emptied Himself because to Him you matter:
A full salvation Jesus wrought for you and me.
O look to Him, for He is our example;
He came to do the will of God who reigns above,
And so must we, for only that is ample.
All those who do His will shall see the God of love.
You claim you know the will of God the Father;
You were instructed since you were a little child.
Examine yourself in every single matter;
Do you strive to live a holy life that's undefiled?*

*Have you received the loving Savior gladly,
And invited Jesus into your heart to stay?
Those who reject Him, He abandons sadly;
You'll have no regrets if you follow Him always.
Have you visited the sick and those in need?
Have you fed the hungry and given them relief?
And for all things can you thank the Lord indeed,
Even for those who have caused you worry and grief?*

*Do you love the brethren, all those born again,
Even if a brother may have done you wrong?
Can you forgive those who have given you pain,
And not pout and carry a grudge for very long?*

*Are you content, not caring to get even,
Nor seek revenge, as retribution you contrive?
Have you forsaken sin, to live in freedom?
Is your devotion to God active and alive?*

*Those who do His will, the Lord calls "friends";
They're firmly planted in the Church of God.
Their hope transcends the grave when this life ends,
For they live for God's glory here upon this sod.*

*The expectation for the coin he preserved
That slothful servant knew, but refused to do it.
We know God's will, and yet heaven is reserved
Not for those who know it, but for those who do it.*

*If I hear "Well done," then I will not be sorry;
God's precious Word will never, ever pass away.
In word and deed I wish to bring Him glory;
Yes, praise God now, and soon in heaven's endless day!*

Edeltraud Nimz