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WE BELIEVE:

The all-wise loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer.

He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.

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Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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Blessed Assurance

By Ellen G. White

“P recious light has been permitted to shine upon our pathway, and around us are the angels of heaven, who are interested in our welfare. God is willing to do great things for His people, and He has promised that if we ask we shall receive; but many fail to grasp the promises of blessed assurance and help. These precious promises are to be fulfilled to those who keep the commandments of God, and who do those things that are pleasing in His sight. We should praise God for His abundant goodness, and manifest our love to Him by our obedience. The love of Christ manifested toward us in His life of humiliation and self-denial, in His death on Calvary, should call forth songs of gratitude from our lips. The hope of His soon coming should fill us with sacred joy, and we should lay hold of the merits of the divine character of Him who endured insult, mockery, shame, and death in our behalf. . . .” —*The Signs of the Times*, December 8, 1890

“How many who ask a blessing of the Lord would be surprised should they receive their request. Of what is this want of expectation that our prayers will be answered, a proof?—It proves that we have no definite belief that the blessing will be granted, that we have no genuine faith that God will hear, that we do not watch for the answer, so that when it is received, we may connect it with the prayers we have offered. . . .

“Unbelief is the sin that so easily besets us; and this sin is obnoxious to God. However secret is its working in the heart, the guilty one stands revealed and convicted before heaven. The Redeemer of the world has pledged His word, saying, ‘Ask, and it shall be given

you.’ Is it any marvel then that the blessing of God is withheld when you dishonor His name by your unbelief? Who is it that has made to you these promises? It is He who ‘so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life’ Who is it that says, ‘Ask, and it shall be given you’? Who is it that stands before the great multitude holding forth the divine promise?—It is He who came into the world to rescue us from the bondage of Satan, and make us free men and women in Christ Jesus.

“Then come to God with full assurance of faith, knowing that He who hath promised is faithful, and will fulfill His word. . . . Having asked the Lord for good things, as a hungry child asks his parent for bread, believe from your heart that the Heavenly Father giveth not the Spirit by measure unto you; for to them that ask in faith the Holy Spirit will be given in its fullness, as free as the river that proceedeth from the throne of God, slaking the thirst of all who will come and drink. Come, then, feeling that all Heaven invites you. Come, then, in steadfast faith, knowing that all Heaven welcomes you. Fasten your soul on the blessed assurance, God has spoken this promise, God has invited me, not to mock me, not to disappoint me, for before I knocked, He was unlocking the door for me; while I was yet speaking, He answered, ‘Here I am.’ Then put away this distrust of God; come to Him now, and let all the angels of God have occasion for rejoicing, as they see those who are athirst partaking of the waters of life.” —*The Signs of the Times*, September 12, 1892



Spring Time

Adapted from a sermon by Timo Martin

Once again, spring time has returned to our country. Everything is so beautiful. The grass is green, the trees are budding, all the flowers are blooming. The air feels warm and pleasant. We see the birds returning to delight us with their singing. The whole of nature seems to have come back to life. The cold winter is past, the ice and snow are gone.

Just a short while ago, everything was dead, lifeless, and cold. It is a marvelous transformation, a change that makes us all happy. “For, lo, the winter is past, the rain is over and gone; The flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land; The fig tree putteth forth her green figs, and the vines with the tender grape give a good smell. Arise, my love, my fair one, and come away.” Song of Solomon 2:11–13

In the spring time, there is warmth and sunshine, yet still some people are sad and unhappy. What spoils their joy? When everything looks so beautiful, there is still something ugly, something that spoils this world, and it is the people; the inhabitants of this planet have spoiled it, so that many do not enjoy living here.

I have seen many luxurious homes surrounded by beautiful gardens. They are richly furnished, extremely comfortable, yet everyone in those homes look

unhappy. Most of the time there is strife and quarreling. The members of the family are very cold towards each other.

Is there no sunshine that could shine into human hearts and melt the ice and remove the coldness? How wonderful it would be if the whole human family would put away hatred, ill feelings, bitterness, and blend together in loving fellowship.

If we do not know how to accomplish this, can God do it? After all, He is omnipotent; nothing is too hard for Him. But, God has tried His best to bring the human family into unity.

“And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt Me and My vineyard. What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” Isaiah 5:3–4. God is asking, what more could have been done in My vineyard, that I have not already done? Then, why did it bring forth wild grapes?

God says, “When I tried to bring peace, why is there strife? When I tried to bring happiness, why is there sadness and misery?”

“Ye Shall Know Them by Their Fruits.”

Matthew 7:16

“Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Matthew 7:16–20

Jesus spoke of two kinds of trees—good trees and corrupt trees. How do we know which is a good tree and which is a corrupt and evil tree? The appearance is deceiving, many corrupt trees look good from the outside. Jesus said, “Ye shall know them by their fruits.” The fruit is the produce of the character.

Paul writes in Galatians about the good fruit that is produced:

- Love—love to God above all and to his neighbor as to himself. He loves all people. He no longer knows how to hate.
- Joy—he is always smiling, always cheerful.
- Peace that passes understanding, he is always calm and serene.
- Longsuffering towards others, tolerant. Patient as Job was, even when everything seems to go wrong. Patient towards those who are slow and even irritating.
- Gentleness and kindness. It is wonderful to live with a gentle person. Even if you make mistakes, he understands. He may not have the class and the style that the world appreciates, but true gentleness guarantees a happy home life.
- Goodness covers all the good qualities. A good person is generous, kind, forgiving, wishing no evil to anyone. He is understanding and unselfish. True goodness is Christlikeness.
- Faith. He believes and trusts in God. By faith he is able to do the impossible, to overcome sin, to gain perfection, to receive justification.
- Meekness or humility is the secret of unity. Very few talented, successful people have the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit.
- Temperance is the last on the list, but it is not the easiest to learn. Temperance goes directly against the old human nature.

If someone has all of these fruits, he is a good person. He has continuous sunshine in his heart. He lives in the summer.

The other class are called corrupt trees. Their fruit is different. Paul writes about them in 2 Timothy chapter three.

- Having a form of godliness, but they are lovers of themselves, selfish. They want to gratify all their desires and lusts, their appetites. They have very little love to their fellow men.
- Covetous—they are never satisfied. They are unhappy because they do not have all they want. They are always wanting more. God has not given them His wisdom. They complain easily.
- Boasters—they love to show off. “Can everyone see what I can do?” They want to show others what they can accomplish.
- Proud—spiritual pride is the worst kind of pride, considering ourselves better than others is evil and satanic.
- Disobedient to parents. There will not be one child in heaven who is disobedient to his parents.
- Unthankful—ingratitude is directly from Satan. God had made him the highest being in the universe, wise, beautiful, in a high position. He gave him more power than to anyone else, yet Satan was unthankful and hated God.
- Trucebreakers. They think very lightly of baptismal vows, marriage vows, or any promise that they have made.
- Despisers of those who are good. They see nothing special in the children of God. They do not admire them, neither do they copy them. Even Christ Himself is nothing great in their eyes. They do not spend their time with Him, beholding Him.
- Lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They would rather watch television than read the Bible. Their favourite conversation is of the world, fashion, music, jokes. They may have a form of godliness, but they are corrupt trees.

The whole world fits into one or the other class. Professed Christians fit into one or the other class, depending on whom they associate with—Christ or Satan.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches:
He that abideth in Me, and I in him,
the same bringeth forth much fruit.”

John 15:5

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.” John 15:5. Whoever abides in Christ brings forth the fruit of love, gentleness, kindness and patience.

On the other hand we read, “Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it.” John 8:44. These were the religious leaders that Jesus was speaking to.

If our roots are in Christ, our fruit is good. If our roots are in Satan, our fruit is corrupt and evil. Roots refer to our mind, thoughts, and our heart. Our mind may not be in the person of Satan, but in the things he offers. Satan has a very cheap character. There is nothing noble, or great, or good in him. Also, his followers have a cheap character. They are worthless. They may have a high education, all class and style, and have a great personality. But yet their selfishness and jealousies make them very cheap in character. They are good only to be cast into the lake of fire.

Once in a while we learn of someone with a little greatness, but it is one in a million. When Isaac made a well, the herdsmen of Gerar took it. Instead of fighting over it, he dug another well. And when this well was taken by other herdsmen, he dug a third well. This is true greatness. Isaac had a noble character. He learned this gentle character in his childhood when at an early age he stretched himself on the altar at his old father’s request, to be sacrificed as an offering to God.

Joseph had a noble character, even though his brothers hated him and tried to kill him. He saved their lives, gave them gifts and the best part of the land to live in. He could have taken revenge on them, but instead he showed kindness.

David could have killed his enemy, Saul, in the cave. But he would not go against his openly-vowed enemy. David still loved Saul. How often people turn against

their friends, for the smallest reasons. Saul had no real reason to hate David.

To do good to those who hate you and ignore you is divine. It is holiness. It is a great and noble character to sacrifice your goods, your time, and your money, to save others.

Why did Paul give up all and go to the Gentile countries to preach the gospel, to be hated and finally be put to death? His great character did not allow him to live a selfish life.

Why did Christ die for me and you? Can you see the greatness in it? Do you admire Him for doing it? Do you often think about it, and thank Him for it—that One so great and powerful would love the lowly sinner, who sacrifices all for Him?

Here in our world, leaders, rulers, the heads of governments regard themselves very highly, their own lives and positions. They will do all that is possible to secure their own safety and position, while masses of their subjects are killed and sacrificed mercilessly as worthless beings.

This is Satan’s character. He did not love the fallen angels. He tried to persuade them to be with him in his war against Christ and God. The angels were used for his selfish purposes. Satan uses men and women for his selfish purposes, but he does not love them nor does he care for them; if they would be lost or become insane, or end up in prison, he laughs at them.

This metamorphosis, or transformation of character, which takes place in nature in the spring time, can take place in us, as we pull our roots out of Satan and plant them in Christ. Immediately we begin to produce good fruit. Then we can overcome. And as overcomers, we will be in heaven and inherit all things.

In the time of Noah, it was not a question of who happened to wander up and walk into the ark by chance, who was saved. No, those who overcame their sins, they were led by the Spirit of God into the ark of safety.

Those who are led by the Spirit of God today will be brought, sooner or later, into the family of God. Human knowledge and wisdom has nothing to do with it. We must be in Christ, bearing good fruits, and then the Spirit of God will lead us to safety.

Being in Christ means that our mind and heart are in Him. We think of Him, we look upon His character, we admire Him. And we bear good fruit. Being in Satan means that our mind is in the world. Ambitions fill our mind. Our conversation is worldly, because that is what we think about. Whom we love, they are who we keep in our mind; they are who we think of all day long.

We can change our loyalty—it is possible. In our personal life, this change can happen today. Let the sunshine into your heart. Let Jesus in, and the ice will melt. The coldness will disappear. Flowers will come out, and you will have spring time and summer in your heart. Then you will bear good fruit for others to enjoy. Your love, your joy, your peace, will be so catching that whoever is with you will enjoy this wonderful fruit.

“And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.” Ephesians 3:19. When we know the love of God by experience, then we will be filled with His fullness. Then we are no longer poor, or lacking anything. Through the connection with Christ, the fullness of God fills us. All is well with us. But the moment this connection is broken, we are miserable, poor, blind, and naked. We are lacking everything, and we are unhappy while the sun is shining.

Let us enjoy this spring time, and thank God for it, and we will be the happiest people, always smiling and praising God.

Amen





The Meaning of *Life*

By Makoto
Matsumoto (ON)

The question, “What is the meaning of my life?” is one we grapple with repeatedly throughout our journey. In childhood, we wonder, “What will I become when I grow up?” In our youth, we ask, “How should I shape my future? Am I making the most of these formative years?”

As we enter adulthood, the questions deepen: “Is my family the purpose of my existence? What about my personal dreams and ambitions? How will life change when my children grow up?”

In later years, reflection takes center stage: “Was my life meaningful? Did I leave a lasting legacy?”

At every stage, we are often haunted by a core set of questions: “Am I living fully? Is my life meaningful? Am I using my time wisely? Am I on the right path? Will all my efforts amount to something worthwhile in the end?”

According to the World

The meaning of life used to be suggested by the needs of the society. When the government required increased productivity and more materials, they taught people that a meaningful life is one of working hard. When society required higher technology

and skills, they told people that a valuable life is one of education, academics, career, and achievement. When the economy needed the consumption of items and services to grow, companies advertised that “flexing” and chasing after each one’s pleasure and desire is a meaningful life.

However, the Bible tells us that none of these can show us the true meaning of life. About hard work, the Bible says: “What profit hath a man of all his labour which he taketh under the sun?” Ecclesiastes 1:3

Some think it is a good life if we own a house and a successful business. But the Bible says, “I made me great works; I builded me houses; I planted me vineyards: . . . Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me: for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Ecclesiastes 2:4, 17

Some believe academic achievement gives them meaning, but the Bible says, “Then said I in my heart, As it happeneth to the fool, so it happeneth even to me; and why was I then more wise? Then I said in my heart, that this also is vanity.” Ecclesiastes 2:15

How about money? “He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase: this is also vanity. When goods increase, they are increased that eat them: and what good is there to the owners thereof, saving the beholding of them with their eyes?” Ecclesiastes 5:10–11

Then, is pleasure-seeking the answer, as the new generation suggests? “I said in mine heart, Go to now, I will prove thee with mirth, therefore enjoy pleasure: and, behold, this also is vanity.” Ecclesiastes 2:1

The Bible clearly denies all our ideas about the meaning of life. It does not involve hard work, family, education, career, or pleasure. Please don’t take me wrong. I’m not stating that diligent work, education, or family are unimportant. They just cannot be our meaning in life. So, what kind of life is truly meaningful?

Moses as a Child and Youth: Born with a Purpose

There was a baby born with a very clear purpose in his life. “By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.” Hebrews 11:23. As we know well from the story, he was rescued miraculously by the princess of Egypt from the king’s decree to kill all the Israelite male babies.

It is not hard to imagine how Moses’ mother repeatedly told him about his miraculous rescue until he left for

the Egyptian palace at the age of 12 so that he would remember that God had a special purpose for him. Indeed, Moses did not forget. He always remembered that he was born to rescue the Israelites from slavery.

“The elders of Israel were taught by angels that the time for their deliverance was near, and that Moses was the man whom God would employ to accomplish this work. Angels instructed Moses also that Jehovah had chosen him to break the bondage of His people. He, supposing that they were to obtain their freedom by force of arms, expected to lead the Hebrew host against the armies of Egypt, and having this in view, he guarded his affections, lest in his attachment to his foster mother or to Pharaoh he would not be free to do the will of God.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 245

With a clear dream, the young Moses worked hard. He studied hard and worked hard. As the Egyptian palace had chosen him to be the next Pharaoh, he could receive the highest education and training. This talented, intelligent, and passionate young man took every opportunity to be ready for the purpose of his life: to save Israel!

However, one day, all his efforts and dreams were denied. “And it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out unto his brethren, and looked on their burdens: and he spied an Egyptian smiting an Hebrew, one of his brethren. And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And when he went out the second day, behold, two men of the Hebrews strove together: and he said to him that did the wrong, Wherefore smitest thou thy fellow? And he said, Who made thee a prince and a judge over us? intendest thou to kill me, as thou killedst the Egyptian? And Moses feared, and said, Surely this thing is known. Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian: and he sat down by a well.” Exodus 2:11–15

As Moses had killed an Egyptian, a rumour spread in the kingdom that he was planning a coup. So, Moses had to escape from the country and never come back. His meaning of life seemed to be denied him. Everything he had done—his work, study, and efforts—to save his people seemed to be in vain. His dedication was for nothing. He lived to this point, always thinking he existed to save the Israelites.

He was at the age of 40 when this happened. It is not old, but not young enough to re-format the meaning of life. With a broken heart and being lost in the path of life, he had to find what made his life meaningful.

Moses as an Adult: Called to Give Up on Peaceful Life

It was not easy to let go of his dreams, but he finally found a new meaning in life in a new land with new people. He became a shepherd, got married, and had children. He was happy with his peaceful life. He found the meaning of life in being a husband, a father, and a humble shepherd.

He was reaching the age of 80, and he thought he lived a good life. The ambition of his younger age remained a good memory. He wished to enjoy this simple life for the rest of his life. His life was valuable enough if he could be a good husband and a good father.

That is when God caused another dramatic turn in his life. God denied him the meaning of life that Moses had newly found. And He said, Moses' purpose in life is to save Israel. "Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth My people the children of Israel out of Egypt." Exodus 3:10

Moses did not want to go. He was happy with his life. He was afraid of change. So he refused the calling five times—not once but five times—despite God's assurance and promises for each excuse Moses made (Exodus 3:11–4:17).

Well, why did God wait so long, then? Did He wait until Moses found a new purpose in life so that He could torture him with another dramatic change of life?

"Man would have dispensed with that long period of toil and obscurity, deeming it a great loss of time. But Infinite Wisdom called him who was to become the leader of his people to spend forty years in the humble work of a shepherd. The habits of caretaking, of self-forgetfulness and tender solicitude for his flock, thus developed, would prepare him to become the compassionate, longsuffering shepherd of Israel. No advantage that human training or culture could bestow, could be a substitute for this experience.

"Moses had been learning much that he must unlearn. The influences that had surrounded him in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the dissipation on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur of architecture and sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character. Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life to renounce error and accept truth, but God would be his



helper when the conflict should be too severe for human strength." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 247

When Moses ran away from Egypt, his life seemed to be lost, just like Joseph's when he was sold to Egypt and when he was imprisoned. However, their lives were not off track. Their meaning of life had never changed and had always stayed the same. Even though they could not see it, God guided every event and stage of their lives toward the purpose they were born for. Moses' time as a shepherd or Joseph's time as a slave or prisoner seems to be a waste in human eyes. However, it was a necessary step toward their purpose, in God's eyes.

There are moments in our lives when our actions appear meaningless and vain. However, let us remember, as long as we follow God, it is never a waste. Even when we feel lost, it is a step towards our meaning of life. "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Isaiah 48:17

From Moses' perspective, he might not have seen all of God's providences. It could have looked like the meaning of life he had established after much disappointment was denied once again. It seemed like God was demanding he follow another purpose in life. Yet, once he accepted his mission, he carried it out faithfully.



Moses as an Older Adult: Seemingly Meaningless Life

He spent another 40 years pursuing this new meaning of life—to save Israel. And how did it go? It was not an easy one. They kept complaining and murmuring, causing trouble and headaches. They never, never listened. And in the end, how many made it to Canaan? Only two! After all this hard work and sacrifice, only two! And even Moses himself was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. When he sat down to face the last moment of his life, he was all alone. No other human was there to witness his end.

From a human perspective, after 120 years of curves and challenges, his meaning in life seemed denied again. His works, efforts, and tears seemed all in vain. It looked like he had wasted his life for nothing, leaving nothing but a failure.

"In solitude Moses reviewed his life of vicissitudes and hardships since he turned from courtly honors and from a prospective kingdom in Egypt, to cast in his lot with God's chosen people. He called to mind those long years in the desert with the flocks of Jethro, the appearance of the Angel in the burning bush, and his own call to deliver Israel. Again he beheld the mighty miracles of God's power displayed in behalf of the chosen people, and His long-suffering mercy during the

years of their wandering and rebellion. Notwithstanding all that God had wrought for them, notwithstanding his own prayers and labors, only two of all the adults in the vast army that left Egypt had been found so faithful that they could enter the Promised Land. As Moses reviewed the result of his labors, his life of trial and sacrifice seemed to have been almost in vain.

"Yet he did not regret the burdens he had borne. He knew that his mission and work were of God's own appointing. When first called to become the leader of Israel from bondage, he shrank from the responsibility; but since he had taken up the work he had not cast aside the burden. Even when the Lord had proposed to release him, and destroy rebellious Israel, Moses could not consent. Though his trials had been great, he had enjoyed special tokens of God's favor; he had obtained a rich experience during the sojourn in the wilderness, in witnessing the manifestations of God's power and glory, and in the communion of His love; he felt that he had made a wise decision in choosing to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 471

After many curves, Moses finally found the true meaning of life. It was not in numbers. It was not in the army. It was not at work. It was not in the stability of life. It was not in achievement. It was in walking with Jesus.

Since I moved to Canada, I have never owned a car, not even to the moment as I am writing this article. Occasionally, I drive a rental car or another brethren's car. When that happens, my wife would worry a lot about whether I would get into an accident, as it has been a long time since I drove a car in Japan. Then I used to answer: "Well if I can die soon, it's a privilege for me to be on a fast track. I can skip the last day events and wake up during the special resurrection."

But ever since I learned the story of Moses, I have never said it again. I learned that life is worth living because of the time we spend with God. In a human relationship, we love each other more as we spend more time together. Just as my fellowship with Canadian brethren are deeper today than when I attended the Canadian church for the first time, and just as my love towards my wife is deeper today than when I first met her, our love towards God gets deeper and deeper as we spend more time with God.

We do not need to find the meaning of life from a grand plan or achievement. We do not need to find the meaning of life from somewhere far away. Living today with God. Living today according to His plan. That is the only true meaning of our life. "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:13

Moses' life seemed to be in vain. It seemed that his meaning of life was denied and shifted multiple times. It seemed that his lifelong works had failed. However, Moses was happy. Moses found the true meaning of life. He walked every step of his life with God, which was enough. He did not need to see the result of his life. He did not need to know what his legacy was. He was with God. God had led his life. That is all he needed to know.

Moses might not have known, but we know today that God guided him every step of the way, even when it looked like he was lost. And we know that his life was not in vain. Indeed, his legacy became one of the most significant influences on humanity.

Let us leave the meaning of life in God's hands. If we live according to His will today, He will use our life in the right place for the proper purpose, making our life meaningful.

"The humblest and poorest of the disciples of Jesus can be a blessing to others. They may not realize that they are doing any special good, but by their unconscious influence they may start waves of blessing that will widen and deepen, and the blessed results they may never know until the day of final reward. They do not feel or know that they are doing anything great. They are not required to weary themselves with anxiety about success. They have only to go forward quietly, doing faithfully the work that God's providence assigns, and their life will not be in vain. Their own souls will be growing more and more into the likeness of Christ; they are workers together with God in this life and are thus fitting for the higher work and the unshadowed joy of the life to come." —*Steps to Christ*, p. 83

Though I am still young, God has already drastically changed my life several times. There have been curves, hills, and valleys. Life is unpredictable, and I am tempted to be afraid when I think about the future. Sometimes, I am tempted to think my current life is lost and wasted.

But if I can talk to myself from 10 years ago, I can confidently tell him: "God has been good to me. So do not be afraid." So I am sure that if myself from 10 years later can talk to me today, he will say: "God has been good to me and will keep being good to me in the future. So, life is worth living, just because He lives."

My dear brothers and sisters, the question, "What is the meaning of my life?" is one we grapple with repeatedly throughout our journey. When the question comes back to our hearts, let us remember that it is not ourselves who give meaning to our lives. It is not family, work, fame, honour, reputation, achievement, education, or anything else. It is God who gives meaning to our lives. It is neither our past nor our future that makes our lives meaningful. If we walk with God today, our lives have meaning. Let us be faithful to the duty God has laid on us today.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Matthew 6:33–34

I would like to conclude with the Bible verse found in Isaiah 48:17, which says: "Thus saith the Lord, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Amen.

"I am the Lord thy God... which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Isaiah 48:17

I AM THE PHARISEE

By Emanuel Ciprio (Italy)

Adapted from "L'osservatore del sabato, Vol. 40, No. 4"

"And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." Luke 18:9-14

Dear readers, how many times have we read this parable? How many times have we heard it read in church or quoted it

ourselves during a reflection? Presumably, many times. Rightfully so, you might say—it is one of the most famous parables Jesus told and, in some ways, also one of the most striking. It clearly shows the difference between self-righteousness and the grace of God. But that is not the main focus here. Instead, we will reflect on why Jesus told this parable in the first place. The reason

is found in verse 9: "And He spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others."

What drove Jesus to tell this parable was prejudice and the sense of superiority that arises in some hearts.

Let us read another parable:

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain

descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it." Matthew 7:24–27.

This parable is also very well known. Once again, Jesus leaves His listeners with an important and foundational teaching. What connection ties these two parables together? Let us look at a few verses earlier in the same chapter of Matthew to better understand the context:

"Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye." Matthew 7:1–5

There is something we often fail to realize in our Christian walk: the Pharisee is me.

What does this mean? Often, when we read these parables or reflect on them, we instinctively identify with the publican or the wise man who built his house on the rock. We assume we are on the right side, doing the right thing. Rarely do we see ourselves in the foolish man who built on sand or in the Pharisee. And yet, the reality is that more often, we are the Pharisee rather than the publican. As a result, we are quick to judge, quick to point fingers, and we feel superior to those around us. Deep inside, we think our condition is not so bad, and in fact, we are keen and quick to spot the faults and flaws in others. But Jesus said, "with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged." We become our own standard.

How often do the calls and appeals from God really touch us? When reproofs, admonitions, and warnings come, do we truly feel they are directed at us? Or do the words simply roll off, because we think we're doing fine?

"Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." Matthew 26:35. Do you remember these words? Peter said them after Jesus warned him that he would deny Him. But Peter, like many of us, was self-confident. He would never deny the Master. He was not like the others—he would not run. That is what he believed in his heart. But Jesus warned him: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41. Peter did not realize his true condition—just as many of us today fail to see ours. When the warnings come from the Lord, we think they are meant for someone else. We feel strong and ready. Nothing could ever make us flee from Christ. But we do not realize we

are relying on our own strength, not on the strength of the One who gave His life for us. And our strength is not enough—in fact, it often fails us completely.

"And he is full of self-praise. He looks it, he walks it, he prays it. Drawing apart from others as if to say, 'Come not near to me; for I am holier than thou' (Isaiah 65:5), he stands and prays 'with himself.' Wholly self-satisfied, he thinks that God and men regard him with the same complacency. . . . Whoever trusts in himself that he is righteous, will despise others. As the Pharisee judges himself by other men, so he judges other men by himself. His righteousness is estimated by theirs, and the worse they are the more righteous by contrast he appears. His self-righteousness leads to accusing. 'Other men' he condemns as transgressors of God's law. Thus he is making manifest the very spirit of Satan, the accuser of the brethren. . . . For each of the classes represented by the Pharisee and the publican there is a lesson in the history of the apostle Peter. In his early discipleship Peter thought himself strong. Like the Pharisee, in his own estimation he was 'not as other men are.' When Christ on the eve of His betrayal forewarned His disciples, 'All ye shall be offended because of Me this night,' Peter confidently declared, 'Although all shall be offended, yet will not I.' Mark 14:27, 29. Peter did not know his own danger. Self-confidence misled him. He thought himself able to withstand temptation; but in a few short hours the test came, and with cursing and swearing he denied his Lord. . . . The evil that led to Peter's fall and that shut out the Pharisee from communion with God is proving the ruin of thousands today. There is nothing so offensive to God or so dangerous to the human soul as pride and self-sufficiency. Of all sins it is the most hopeless, the most incurable." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 150–154

We today are not immune to these same feelings. The Lord's warning to the church of Laodicea still applies: "Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked." Revelation 3:17. These words are directed at us, yet though we often repeat them, they rarely move us deeply. We fail to see our real condition and how desperately we need God's mercy.

Our attitude risks following the path of the rich young ruler: he thought he was already keeping all of God's commandments. But when Jesus pointed out what he lacked—when He touched his exposed nerve—the young man went away sorrowful. Let us not make the same mistake. Let us not lull ourselves in the comfort of self-sufficiency.

Matthew chapter 7 gives us further light: "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be

“Examine yourselves, *whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves.* Know ye not your own selves, *how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?*

2 Corinthians 13:5

which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:13–14

Notice those words: not only do few walk the narrow path, but few even *find* it. The narrow way must be found. Are we sure we have truly found it? Are we sure of the path we are on? Perhaps we think we are headed the right way and look down on others, assuming we are walking the road of salvation. But we need to open our eyes; we need to buy eye salve from the Master “that thou mayest see.” Revelation 3:18. We must examine ourselves in light of Christ’s character. Then we will see our flaws, and we will feel our need for His mercy and grace.

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.” Matthew 7:17–20

Let us ask ourselves: what are my fruits? What am I doing with the talents God has given me? If we are truly walking the narrow path—if we are indeed the publican, or the wise man who built on the rock, or the faithful disciple following Christ—then where are our fruits?

“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” 2 Corinthians 13:5

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to

Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.” Matthew 7:21–23

These are the words with which Christ ends His discourse before the parable. They are strong and hard to hear—but they must lead us to true self-examination. They must prompt us to ask: where am I building my house? How do I pray? How do I judge those around me? Am I truly walking the narrow way? Have I found it? For whom and for what am I labouring? Where are my thoughts and energies directed?

Brothers and sisters, let us not feel secure just because we go to church on Sabbath or because of the truth we know. Unless there is a change in our lives—unless we are grafted into Christ—we are still in danger.

Let us open our eyes. Christianity begins with honest self-awareness; recognizing our true condition is necessary in order to feel our need for Christ. We must look into the mirror of God’s law, we must compare ourselves with His character. Only then will the darkness that blinds us begin to lift, and we will see ourselves as we really are. Then, having seen ourselves, we will run to Christ for cleansing, to be clothed in His righteousness and washed in His blood.

So my final appeal to each of us is this: let us recognize that *I* am the Pharisee in the parable, *I* am the one building my house on the sand, and *I* am the one in desperate need of Christ’s transforming power. Let us pray to the Lord and allow ourselves to be changed, so that we will no longer be lukewarm, but decisively and fully committed to Christ. Amen.



Only with the Help of God

Experiences from
the Life of Johannes Altwein

Part

5

NIGHT RIDE

Once while driving my car at night, there was poor visibility. The lights of oncoming traffic blinded me. I cannot explain why, but I suddenly felt an urge to stop the car. My wife asked me: "Why are you stopping?" I didn't know it myself. When the oncoming traffic decreased and I could see better, I caught sight of a group of four or five people just in front of me, riding their bicycles. I shudder to think what could have happened had I not listened to my inner voice.

God's guardian angel had made me stop to protect that group of bike riders. Up to the present day I am so grateful that an accident was averted that way.

MY INNER VOICE

Over the weekend we had Adventist visitors from the Rhineland. After the Sabbath service we had lunch together. However, I felt an urge to visit a sick woman, a fellow believer in a nursing home. I thought it was almost impolite to leave the group, but nevertheless, I excused myself and went to visit Sister Rind. We had a good conversation for about an hour and then prayed together before I left.

She smiled at me, waving goodbye while I stood at the doorway. After I had closed the door, I was overcome by a strong feeling that I would not see her alive again. Unfortunately, she died the next morning.

It is important to pay attention to God's voice. I am so thankful that I listened to the voice of God. Had I, for convenience, postponed my visit to the following day, I would not have been able to see sister Rind and have a last conversation and prayer with her.

WHEN THE PRISON GUARD CRIED

After those severe years of war and persecution it was a great privilege for us to attend meetings and conferences again with our fellow believers. It was such a joy. When a conference was planned in Solingen, I knew, to get there, we would have to cross the border again. Fellow-believers from abroad, who had been separated from us for years, would be present too. Even brother Kozel from Argentina was there.

Through the preaching of the word during the conference I was inspired to work for God. The message was the source of my enthusiasm. I found a like-minded person in brother Rudi Sabat. Like me, he came from the "Russian Occupied Zone". This is how it was called in those days. As I was only 17 years old at the time, I was glad to have someone experienced by my side, for he was almost twice as old as me. Our first missionary leaflet: "Burning questions of the present time!" was meant to make people reflect and bring them closer to God. There was still enough space in our luggage for a thousand of those leaflets, which we distributed after the conference.

Our mission was to start around Schweinfurt, where we were invited by dear fellow-believers. Since we did not have any money for fares, we had to hitchhike, but at that time, there were not many cars on the streets, but mainly trucks. Truck drivers were not willing to stop for us. Thus, we decided to jump on the trucks on sharp bends or steep mountains, where they had to slow down anyway. We jumped between the vehicle and the trailer. As you can imagine, that was not always an easy task.

I remember especially one incident when we had to jump off a truck again. Since we neither knew where the truck was going, nor where we were exactly, we chose a place to jump off which we thought was suitable, simply because of the slow speed of the truck. We threw both backpacks off the truck to the side of the road and Rudi jumped, but meanwhile the driver accelerated, so it became too dangerous for me to jump too at the same time. I had to wait for the next opportunity, which was in the middle of a village. Then I started walking my way back and finally I saw Rudi coming towards me, tired and weary from carrying both backpacks, but we were overjoyed to have found each other, since he didn't have a clue where the truck had taken me.

However, we were not always so lucky as to get a lift. Sometimes we just had to walk for a day.

When we had reached the area of the border, we were picked up by an American military patrol. They wanted to see our passports. When they noticed that we had come from East Germany, we were ordered to get into their Jeep. They started driving, but unfortunately not in our desired direction, but to a prison. Rudi was taken into a prison cell, and I was taken to the young criminals. However, we did not really regret it, for this was an opportunity for us to eat and sleep for free for the night. We were even allowed to take our Bible and some missionary leaflets into our cell. The next morning, when we met during the daily round in the prison yard, Rudi happily told me: "Now I know why we ended up here. I had the opportunity to talk about the truth with the prisoners. I had worship and prayed with them." Rudi was overjoyed.

Later in the day we were called for interrogation. They questioned us about the situation in the Soviet Occupied Zone, especially regarding military movements and exercises. Our statements were recorded in writing. Only then did it become clear to us why we had been picked up. After the interrogation we were taken to a judge, who acquitted us.

A prison guard came and opened the door of our prison cells. We thought that we were free to go wherever we wanted, for they had returned our backpacks. However, the prison guard let us know that we would

be picked up by a Jeep and be taken back to the Eastern border again. Rudi explained that we did not want to go back to the East, since we were here for a purpose. Each of us had a thousand missionary leaflets, which we wanted to spread in the country. The guard did not seem to be interested in our petition and he returned curtly: "This is not possible. People are always taken back to the East from here, without exception!" Thereupon Rudi replied: "If God does not want us to go back now, you will not get a Jeep for us." Very self-assured the guard returned harshly: "This will not happen. We have a lot of Jeeps!" Bravely Rudi asked: "Do you want to work against God?" Without wavering, the prison guard called the Americans to get the Jeep, but in vain. There was not one Jeep available. This never happened before. Suddenly, the prison guard looked at us, totally stunned and then started crying bitterly. We never expected anything like that from the harsh prison guard. Compassionately, Rudi asked: "Is there anything we can do for you?" After a short pause, he said: "If you have such a close connection to God, can you please pray for my wife? She is very ill." Of course, we promised to gladly do so, and he calmed down again and thanked us very cordially. After that he apologized for treating us harshly before, explaining that this was the tone of the prison. We understood.

From then on, we were free to go wherever we wanted.

This happened on Friday night, and we needed a place to sleep again. So, we went to the police station and explained our situation to them. They allowed us to sleep in the "sober" cell. There we celebrated the beginning of the Sabbath and left our future to our heavenly Father. When we looked out of the small window on Sabbath morning, we saw a truck on the street with the letters "Road Construction Schweinfurt". This was exactly our destination. We grabbed our belongings and ran. Rudi inquired of the truck driver whether that was the direction he was going to, and if we could get a lift. He agreed and then I knew that the last stage of our journey would start. Shortly before the beginning of the Sabbath service, we arrived at our dear fellow-believers' house, where they were already eagerly waiting for us. In view of our outward appearance, what can I say, they jokingly welcomed us with the words: "Come in, you dusty brothers."

With the support of our fellow believers who were always ready to make sacrifices, and thankful to God for His guidance, we were able to plan our missionary work for the upcoming weeks.

PAYING ATTENTION TO GOD'S VOICE

During my last employment before I migrated to Australia (1982) I had a colleague with whom I often

worked together. One day in 1973, when I was on the road on behalf of our company, I had a certain feeling as if someone said to me: "Go and see your colleague at his home!" At first, I thought: "How can this be? It is during working hours!" However, my urge to go and see him became increasingly strong, so I made up my mind and went to see him.

His children opened the door. I asked them: "Is your daddy home?" The next second he stood in front of me. Astonished and enraged he asked: "What did you come here for?" I answered hesitantly: "I don't know, I just felt as if some higher authority talked to me, and I simply needed to obey." "Come in", he said, leading me into the back room so we would not be disturbed. After he had closed the door behind him, he said straightaway: "I will kill my wife because she betrayed me. I caught her in the act of adultery." He cried bitterly, saying: "We are a family, and now that!" I knew for sure that if I did not react correctly now, a disaster would happen, because he was very impulsive by nature. In his rage he could do anything. Silently, I begged God for help. I listened to him attentively as he told me about his miserable state. I knew that he was working other jobs next to his main occupation, until late at night. So, I said to him: "Maybe your wife felt neglected. You cannot make her solely responsible." I told him not to harm her, but to try to be always good to her in the future if he wants to win her love. Our discussion went on for hours. Then I said to him: "I will not leave this house until you solemnly promise me, with a firm handshake, that you won't harm her." Finally, he shook my hand and assured me that he would not do any harm to his wife.

Even though they got divorced, he was always helpful towards her and treated her in a friendly manner. Later, she got married again to another co-worker. He too got married again to a work colleague. My wife and I were present at his wedding.

Surprisingly both women became good friends. It just turned out that both new couples moved onto the same floor of a multi-story building, and they all got along quite well together. One time, when my colleagues and I were sitting together, he pointed at me, saying: "If this man would not exist, I would be in prison today." And to me he said: "I don't know what you have done with me. I am always good to my first wife; I simply can't do otherwise." Unfortunately, in 1998 he had a heart attack and died at the age of 57. Some years later his second wife visited us in Australia. When I told his first wife that he was ready to kill her after he found out about her affair, she was very moved. After a short silence she said: "You have saved my life. Knowing him, he would have done it." Listening to the voice of God prevented so much damage to that family including their children. They would have lost both parents.

Image: Johannes and Karla Altwein

HEAVY RAINS

I have been living in Australia now for many years, and my God has been here with me just the same.

In 2005 I planted several hundred trees with a friend in Queensland, Australia. A short time later, he asked me to come up again to help him with the construction of an irrigation system for the new plantation. My friend and I live about a five-hour drive away. When I arrived, he seemed to be distressed. After a long dry season, heavy rain and possible floods were forecast for the whole region. Now he was not sure whether he did the right thing calling me to come all the way to help him, because not much could be accomplished in the torrential rain in Queensland.

I calmed him down by telling him that I had prayed for an undisturbed outcome of our project. I assured him that we could confidently start our work even though pitch-black clouds were gathering in the sky. The ground condition there is not suitable for heavy rainfall, it is a deep, black, sticky soil. In wet weather you almost get "stilts" underneath your shoes.

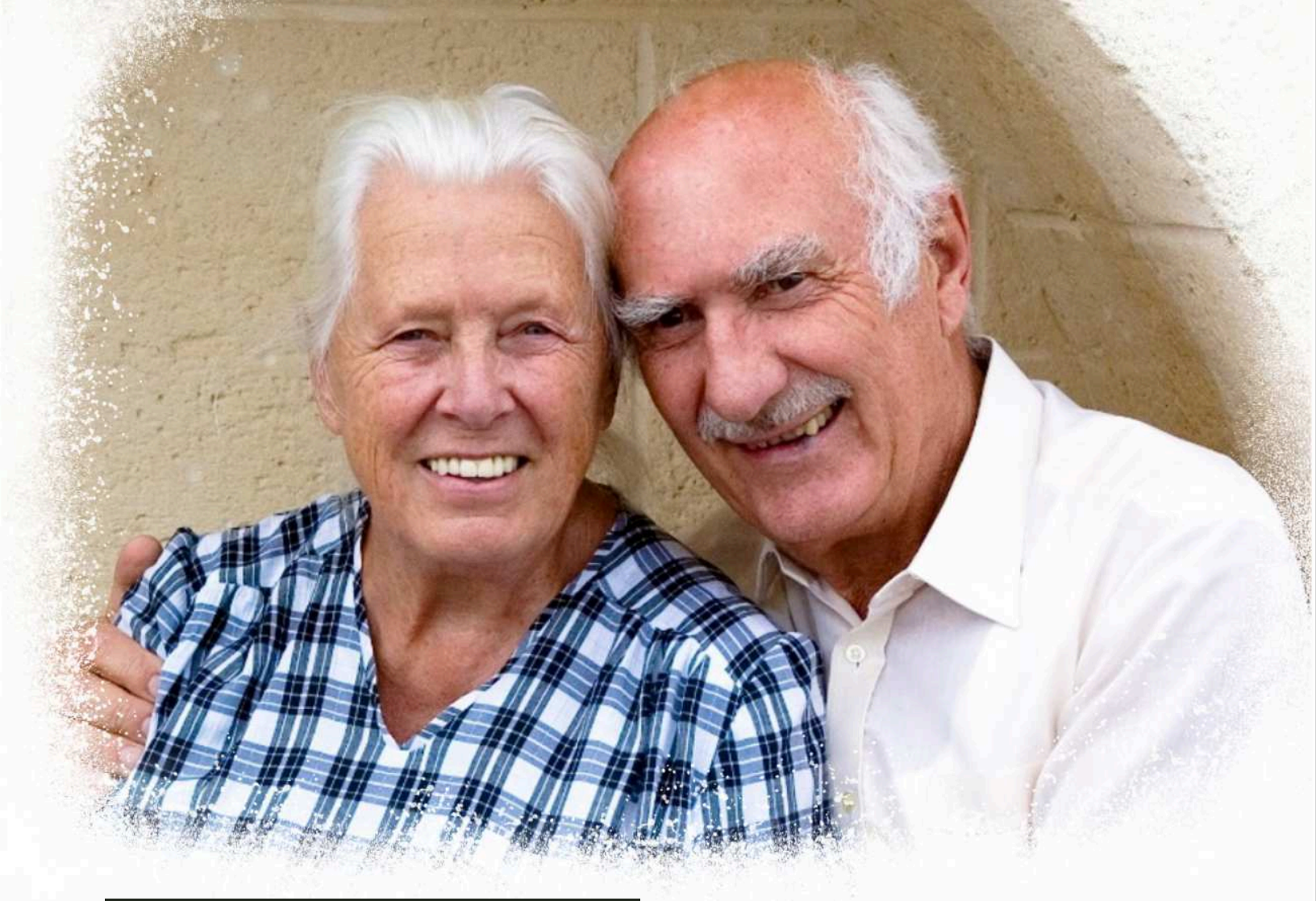
It already started to rain on one part of his approximately 40-acre plot of land. It was very heavy rain, a typical tropical downpour. My friend quickly wanted to put away the tools, but I reminded him that I had prayed for good working conditions, so we cannot just pack up and go, but should trust God and continue working.

So, we worked - and worked. There was such heavy rainfall from all directions, that we could hardly see the road or his neighbor's house, and yet, the rain did not reach the area where we worked. It was as if the rain was cut off from our dry little island, which was surrounded by floods, and this was repeated every day.

On the fourth day my friend's wife drove to the nearby town to do some shopping. Everybody was talking about those heavy downpours. They were the main subject of conversation. She could hardly drive because the water on the streets was about ankle-deep.

Meanwhile, we were still working, without getting wet, until our irrigation system was completed. Nobody from the whole region would have believed, that precisely, that spot had been spared from the rain.

My prayer had been heard. Once again, it had proved worthwhile to be confident and to hold on to my faith, even though circumstances seemingly forecast the opposite.



AN EXPERIENCE IN THE MIDST OF WAR MADNESS

My wife Karla was also blessed with having her own experiences with the Lord, during the madness of war. As a child she lived in Cologne, a city which was brought down to rubble through bomb attacks. She lived with her family on the ground floor of a three-story building.

Her family also believed firmly in God. In those days, to protect their own lives from the National Socialists, they had to hide their precious Bibles and Christian books from them. They also needed to protect these books from the bomb attacks. For this purpose, they built a wooden box, which they hid down in the storage cellar of their house. In emergencies, the cellar could also be used as a bomb shelter. They placed the books on the top of another wooden box, in which they were hiding their potatoes. These potatoes were food for the family for the whole winter.

This following miracle happened at the start of October 1944. At the sound of the bomb alarm, the grandmother, mother and three children went down into the shelter part of the cellar. The official nearest bunker,

where the whole neighborhood was running to as fast as their legs could carry them, would have been a much safer place to be in a bomb attack, but grandmother had a broken hip, so the whole family stayed with her at home.

Through the bomb attack the electricity was cut, so they lit some candles and prayed earnestly for God's protection. Every time a bomb hit the ground nearby, they could hear the dreadful crashing, and felt the ground shake tremendously. Suddenly, air pressure and dust blew their candles out, and then they knew what had happened. After the enormous dust cloud finally settled a little bit, Karla's 16-year-old brother Bernie walked through the cellar. When he looked up, he could see from there through the first floor, the second floor, the third floor, and then through the roof of their house into the open sky. Immediately he shouted: "We have to get out of here, we have a bomb in the house!" Through an opening they all rushed to safety to the neighbor's house on the left, and they wondered why the bomb did not explode.

Sometime later when everything had settled, they found out what happened. A 600 kg bomb shot through the roof of the three-story building and landed

directly in that cellar, exactly on the box with the precious books. The bomb was supposed to explode and at the same time release phosphorus in all directions to incinerate everything around it. But it fell at such an angle, that its detonator broke, which was meant to set it off, and this, by the grace of God, allowed the bomb to fail its purpose.

The wooden box was shredded into a million pieces, and so was the box of potatoes. All disappeared into dust. But all the Bibles, and the books, were untouched. Only one of the books, which are still in our possession today, got a little pressure mark on some of its pages, and the whole family did not have one scratch. God did not let a mere 600 kg bomb destroy His word, nor His people.

The house to the right ended up in flames because it was hit by a firebomb, but it had no people in it, since they all sheltered in the bunker nearby. The next house was hit by the same type of bomb as Karla's house, and it totally collapsed. Seventeen people were burnt alive under the rubble. Karla's brother could still communicate with the entrapped neighbors, but there was no time to dig out any one of them, before the fire claimed them all.

We sincerely thank our Father in heaven for His protection and help throughout our lives. I am so glad that God protected Karla and her family during that terrible time. We can see if we trust the Lord, He will look after us.

CONCLUSION

This booklet tells only some of the experiences we had with our Heavenly Father. We could tell you many more experiences, but we hope that the ones we have shared with you will give you a good idea of what God is capable of, if only we trust Him.

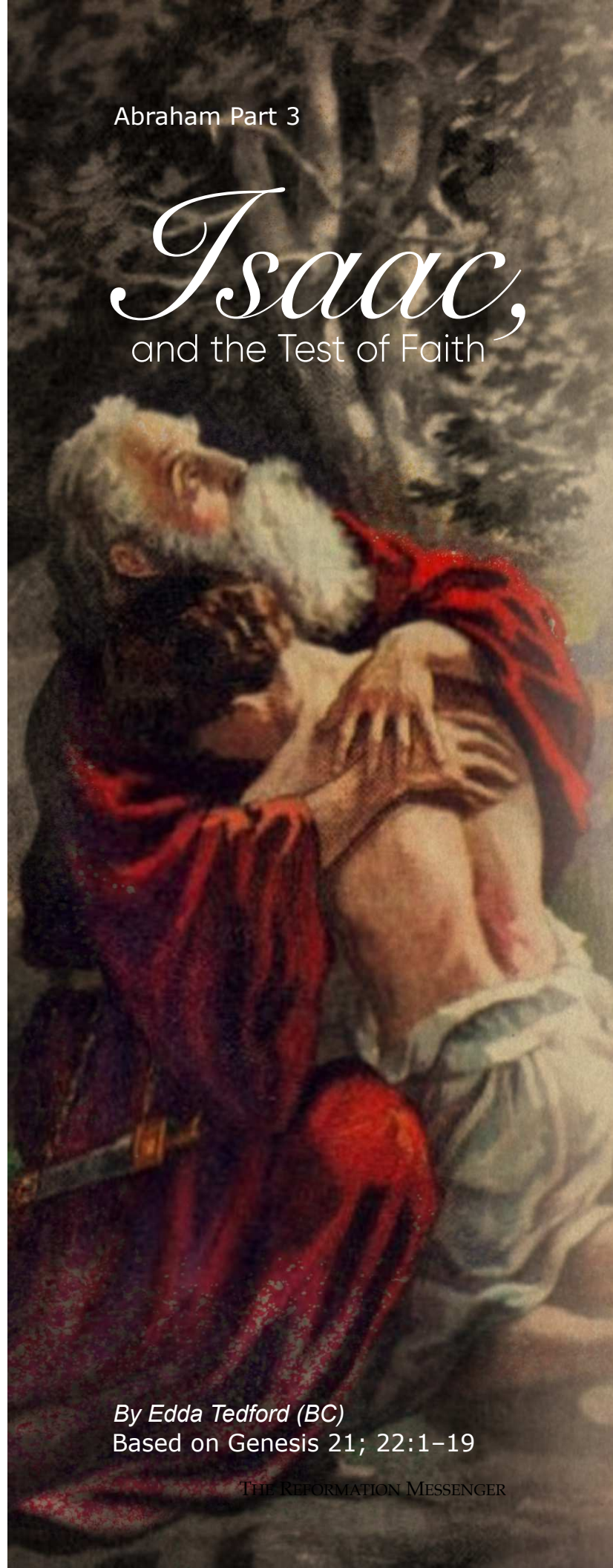
I wish to close our experiences with a quotation from Hebrews 12:1-2:

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us. Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God."

Amen.

Abraham Part 3

Isaac, and the Test of Faith



By Edda Tedford (BC)
Based on Genesis 21; 22:1-19

And Sarah 90, conceived as the LORD had
 promised, and did bear a son
 To 100 years old Abraham.
 They both did laugh when the thing (Isaac)
 impossible, was made possible!
 By the wonder of God's love!
 And baby Isaac grew and became a handsome
 boy to his parent's joy.
 The day of his weaning was the occasion for a
 joyous celebration.
 Then Sarah saw the son of Hagar, Ishmael her
 son Isaac mocking,
 And with indignation Sarah says to Abraham
 this thing:
 "Cast out Hagar and Ishmael her son – he shall
 not be heir
 Together with Isaac my son!"
 Hearing this deeply did grieve Abraham,
 For he loved Ishmael, now almost a young man.
 But God did say to do as Sarah told,
 For in Isaac shall his seed be called. And He of
 Ishmael will make a nation –
 This shall be for him a consolation.
 Then in the morning the next day, Abraham sent
 Hagar with her son away...

.....

Years have passed, Isaac grew into a happy
 youth, becoming a young man,
 The very much beloved of Abraham.
 Then one day God spoke to him: "Abraham!"
 And he answered: "Here I am."
 God said that he shall take Isaac his beloved son,
 the only one,
 Go into the land of Moriah, unto a mountain be
 shown to him,
 There to offer Isaac for a burnt offering...
 Did he hear right? Is this a horrible delusion,
 playing havoc with his mind,
 The worst of its kind?
 But the words, ...Isaac...a burnt offering... still
 ringing in his ears,
 Confirming his fears, it was God's familiar voice,
 –
 It was no illusion! He has no choice!...
 Abraham hearing this command was knocked
 almost to the ground,
 Shaken to the core and astonished very sore.
 He was perturbed, perplexed, benumbed. How
 could this be to offer up his son!?
 He had lost his first one, and now give up the
 second, promised one?
 The shock sat deep; he could not sleep...
 But very early in the morning, not saying anyone
 a word,
 Abraham set out doing as he was told.

Takes his ass, two servants, fire, wood, wakes up
 Isaac,
 Then went on his way on this anguish laden day.
 Never was a journey such ordeal, to this
 command was no appeal –
 The weight of grief pressed upon his heart,
 Caused Abraham bent forward made the going
 upward very hard.
 He was strangely quiet, so that Isaac wondered,
 why his father did not talk
 He usually was doing on a walk.
 Isaac deeply loved his father, and regard for
 Abraham's age,
 Let him not inquire of the matter.
 Wearied from the strain upon his sorrow-stricken
 mind and the way of that day,
 Abraham after intense prayer for help divine and
 strength,
 Gave his tired body rest at length.
 Next day Abraham was distraught, for constantly
 the thought was ringing in his ears to offer Isaac
 up his beloved son (Ishmael was not in God's
 plan),
 That gave him such dreadful fears – how could
 he do this awful thing –
 Isaac – him to kill him! –
 Finally, the sun went down, all from the trekking
 tired did lay down,
 Beneath a starry sky for a night to rest and
 sleeping tight.
 Only Abraham was wide awake, no sleep fell on
 his brow
 For being stunned in these two days not able
 thinking clear,
 Suddenly the promise God had spoken did
 appear
 that "in Isaac shall thine seed be called!"
 Was now to him a token in his so dark gloom –
 for hope to give it room:
 God could Isaac raise to life! Nevertheless, he
 must do that thing –
 Offer up Isaac for a burnt offering!
 That very thought quite overwhelmed him, he
 shuddered at the task
 Raising his hand against his son, but must do it –
 for God's command to him
 was on!
 Awakened by a sunbeam, Abraham looked at
 Isaac close beside him,
 His eyes gazing at this precious youth, almost
 took his breath away,
 For it is the day, where he and Isaac would
 depart.
 With great effort he got up, went away a space
 Where he could pray, pouring out to God his
 anguish,
 Pleading fervently for strength and guidance to

lead him to the place –
For that dreadful, heart wrenching sacrifice. –
While on the way coming from a plain
God showed Abraham the mountain.
There for a moment he could not move, was
liked paralyzed
The reality thus emphasized – the inevitable is
near, terrifying him with fear.

.....

He slowly dragged along, every step is
strenuous, laborious,
It seemed to him so very wrong he has to slay his
son!
A sudden temptation urges him: "Stop! Go back!
Flee this cruel, brutal,
Murderous command!"
No! No! No! God has spoken, I must obey –
Make no delay! I will not flinch, though it costs
me everything!
I will do my duty; may God be with me with His
pity...
Then told his servants with the ass to stay, while
he with Isaac worship yonder,
Then return, and meanwhile they should wait.
With Isaac on the way, he in his innocence did
say: "Father,
Here is the fire and the wood, but where is the
lamb?"
Then his father stood, tremors surging through
his body saying trembling
That God Himself for the burned offering the
lamb will be providing.
At last arriving at the place, Abraham slow in
pace,
The stones did gather to build an altar, then like
in a haze.
Puts the wood in place, he shudders at the
thought,
What now to do he ought.
He looks at Isaac with horror to do him any
harm
To this loving boy – it is to him sheer terror.
Bursting into tears, he embraces Isaac trembling
saying,
That God commanded to offer him for the burnt
offering...
He feels the shock surging through the body of
his son,
They hold each other very tight quite long,
Their tears mingling in their anguish, it seems
they cannot let loose their embrace.
Then Isaac yields, he makes no protest, but tries
to do his best
To help his father's pain to let himself be slain.
His father taught him God is just and loves him,

he will not run away
To offend Him, but willingly, in no way resistant,
he does not understand
That he has to die, but only God does know it
why...
He helped Abraham to tie his hands, was laid
upon the altar.
In that heartrending moment took Abraham
every ounce of strength
To lift his hand feeling like a ton
To thrust down the knife into the heart of his so
dear son...

In that moment his hand is stayed, a voice from
Heaven calls: "Abraham!"
He answers: "Here I am." "Lay not thine hand
upon the lad,
For now I know that thou fearest God, seeing
thou hast not withheld thy son,
Thine only son from Me!"
The words thrill through his body, mind and ear,
fill him with godly, holy fear,
He looks and oh – a ram quite near, caught in the
thicket there,
Oh – God indeed did provide Himself the
sacrifice!
He quickly unties Isaac and instead of him, offers
up the ram
for the burnt offering.
Son and father bow before the LORD, worship
Him in sweet accord,
With solemn gratitude honoring His holy name
for being united once again.
The voice from Heaven the blessing to Abraham
repeating
The covenant confirming, his seed will multiply
like the stars in the sky,
In his seed all nations will be blessed, because he
has obeyed God's word.
The LORD by Himself had sworn this, because
he did not withhold
his son, his only son from Him.
Now the heavy weight and strain upon Abraham
is lifting, new strength through his veins is
flowing, fresh vigor fills his bowed down frame,
And with a joyous countenance, he and happy
Isaac came
to join the servants, returning home looking
forward for the promises to come. Amen.

End of Part 3. To be continued.

Lentil Patties

By Franziska S. Pedersen (ON)



NOTE:

Brown Lentils have numerous health benefits such as fiber which aids digestion. The fiber content also helps to stabilize blood sugar, making them beneficial for individuals managing diabetes.

They are low in fat, are gluten-free, and are rich in vitamins and minerals, such as iron, potassium, folate and many more, all contributing to good health.

The walnut is rich in anti-oxidants; it may decrease inflammation, and helps in lowering blood pressure. It has greater anti-oxidant benefits than any other common nut. It is also rich in vitamin E and melatonin.

Flax seed improves blood sugar, easing symptoms of arthritis and helps in preventing constipation.

Rolled Oats are also rich in fiber which helps to lower cholesterol and reduce the risk of coronary artery disease and colorectal cancer. They are a good source of essential vitamins and minerals such as, iron, magnesium, copper, zinc, B vitamins etc.

Onions and garlic help boost our immune system. They are a good source of Vitamin C and B6 and are rich in many minerals. Garlic also fights bacteria and fungi.

INGREDIENTS:

- 2 Cups cooked brown lentils, mashed
- 1 Cup walnut pieces
- ½ Cup rolled oats
- ½ Cup bread crumbs
- 4 Tbsp. ground flax seed
- 3 Tbsp. soya sauce or Bragg, liquid soy seasoning
- 1 Onion, chopped fine
- 3 Cloves garlic, minced
- 1 tsp. salt
- ½ tsp. sage
- 1 tsp. marjoram
- ½ cup water
- 1 Cup parsley, minced

INSTRUCTIONS:

- Pour the ½ cup water into a small bowl;
- Add the oats and the flax seed and let sit while you measure out all the other ingredients into a large bowl.
- Add the mixture to the large bowl and stir well together until all is moist.
- Form into patties.
- Makes about 17 patties, each 2" (5 cm) in diameter.
- Bake in preheated oven at 375 F (190 C) until light brown on bottom.
- Flip patties over and cook until done.

These Patties are healthy and delicious. You can serve these as part of your dinner together with cooked carrots, yellow cooked potatoes, spinach sauce and a tossed green romaine salad, with tomato, cucumber, bell pepper and onion slices, or red beet salad containing raw onion.

Abundant

Dear readers, thank you for following this series of articles focused on the fascinating theme: "The Character of God." With this issue, we have finally arrived at the final installment. The text we have been analyzing is found in Exodus 34:6:

"And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

"Abundant in truth."

Let us focus our attention on this final segment. In Hebrews, this expression is translated as *emet*, a term that appears at least 330 times in the Old Testament, and which literally means truth or stability. This term is related to another Hebrew expression we commonly use: *amen*, which is translated as "verily" or "so be it." Therefore, the term *emet* conveys a concept of certainty or something firm and reliable. Consider the episode in which Moses had to keep his hands raised for Israel to defeat their enemies, the Amalekites, on the battlefield: "But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the

one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady (*emet*) until the going down of the sun." Exodus 17:12

Emet is also used as an adjective to describe a person who is trustworthy, reliable, or upright in their ways. In Exodus 18:21, the Lord instructs Moses on the qualities to look for in selecting leaders who would help him bear the burden of governance: "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth (*emet*), hating covetousness..."

Therefore, when we read that the Lord is "abundant in truth", it does not mean only that He is a God of truth, but also that He is trustworthy and faithful, worthy of our full confidence. Now we understand why Moses, referring to the Lord, calls Him a Rock: he experienced God's faithful character firsthand; he learned throughout his life to trust in the Lord:

"Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and keep His commandments to a thousand generations." Deuteronomy 7:9



in Truth

By Ylenia Gallo (ON)

In other words, the term *emet* expresses truth, which for the Christian means believing what God says and leaning confidently on Him.

It is interesting to note that the Hebrew expression for “to trust” is simply a verb form of *emet*, which becomes *he’emin* (to believe, to have faith), literally meaning “to consider someone trustworthy.”

In the Old Testament, the first man who learned to trust in God and in His promises was Abraham: “And he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.” Genesis 15:6. Even though it seemed impossible, he placed his trust in the Lord and believed that He would fulfill His promise of a rich and numerous offspring.

And the Lord did not fail to keep His promise. Generation after generation, the Lord continued to prove Himself faithful to the people of Israel—especially to His beloved servant David, who from his youth demonstrated firm trust in the Lord, responding to God’s faithfulness with obedience. In 2 Samuel 7:12, 16, the Lord promises: “And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy

bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. . . . And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever.” This prophetic message was fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Paul, in his letter to the Romans, writes: “Now I say that Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers.” Romans 15:8. The Son came into this world as a representative of the Father’s character, to demonstrate His faithfulness.

How grateful we should feel toward the Lord for His faithfulness! In Him, we find a solid rock, a safe refuge at all times. His Word is truth, and His promises never fail to be fulfilled.

Dear friends, do not grow weary of bringing your petitions to the Lord. He is faithful to hear your prayers and answer your requests, according to His promises.

Remember that our God is full of *emet*, and with every *amen* that our lips utter, the Lord reminds us that He is worthy of our complete trust.

May the Lord bless you!

Amen.



I will provide *you with* time

By Emmanuel Salamba (Malawi)

Who of you have read “*Table Talk*” by Martin Luther? This book had almost gone into extinction due to the edict passed by Emperor Rudolph II to burn all copies and put to death all who would be found in its possession. However, God’s providence overturned men’s schemes. Several years after the edict had gone forth, a certain man from Germany found a High-Dutch version of the same book secreted somewhere within an old building. He then urged his friend from England, named Captain Henry Bell, to translate the book into English. Bell agreed, but temporal pursuits prevented him from fulfilling the sacred duty. He could find no time to complete the work.

Bell himself further narrates that, after six weeks of procrastination, one night while upon his bed, an ancient man appeared to him in a vision. He was wholly dressed in white, and he addressed him in the following words: “Sirrah! Will you not take time to translate that book which was sent unto you out of Germany? I will shortly provide for you both time and place to do it.” The man then disappeared. Two weeks later, Captain Bell was arrested, without being told of any accusation. For ten years he remained in jail. There indeed he found time and place, and he translated the book. It was then multiplied again.

Have you ever had a lesser encounter, but similar to that of Captain Bell? Perhaps not an imprisonment and seeing a vision, but an experience where, through your

own selfish excuses, you neglected the work of God, and He, in His mercy, put all your temporal endeavours to a stop, in order that you should return to His work. From now on, look closely at what befalls you. “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness” is an exhortation that instead of bringing us to poverty, only leads us to a life of success and happiness, because to it is attached the promise “and all these things shall be added unto you.” Matthew 6:33

We fear to sacrifice our time for the work of God, fearing that we may lose temporal acquirements, not knowing that the same sacrifice required of us is the secret for obtaining the blessings of the Lord that make life meaningful. Many years ago, I was so touched when I read and understood the following verse: “The fear of the wicked (or what the wicked fear), it shall come upon him: but the desire of the righteous shall be granted.” Proverbs 10:24

The Jews in the time of Prophet Haggai had not yet learned the main lesson in the paragraphs above. Discouragements caused them to frame excuses for not doing the work of the Lord. They began to say, “The time is not come, the time that the Lord’s house should be built.” Haggai 1:2. They went to their homes “to dwell in . . . ceiled houses” while the house of the Lord was in shambles (verse 4). They were now working tooth and nail in their farms, expecting prosperous returns. Others went to do work for others. But they were



blinded to the fact that their conduct was counterproductive to any real success in life. “Now therefore thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways. Ye have sown much, and bring in little; ye eat, but ye have not enough; ye drink, but ye are not filled with drink; ye clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earneth wages earneth wages to put it into a bag with holes.” Haggai 1:5–6

A human may not understand, but to the all-wise and all-loving God, these calamities upon His own people were the best means to restore the deceived ones to their stewardship. We read further, “And I called for a drought upon the land, and upon the mountains, and upon the corn, and upon the new wine, and upon the oil, and upon that which the ground bringeth forth, and upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labour of the hands.” Haggai 1:11

The Jews then awoke to the sense of their misery: “and the people did fear before the Lord.” They repented of their deeds, “and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God.” Haggai 1:12, 14

“Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.” Hosea 14:9

Just as Sister White had put it in one of her writings: we are slow to learn such lessons, but very quick to forget

them. May God help His people. May we pray for increased faith in us—faith that will see beyond the sacrifices and obstacles of today, to the abundant blessings, satisfaction, and happiness that will come upon us tomorrow, not forgetting the bliss hereafter.

“Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways.” Haggai 1:7. If you have left your post of duty, dear reader, look and see your current situation. It may be that the Lord, in His love, is allowing you to face all that you are facing now in order to draw you back to Him. But men have a tendency to attribute all that befalls them to natural causes. This is a sad mistake indeed. (It should be emphasized that not all calamities we face are due to our misconducts and sins; neither are they all due to natural causes).

I would like to close the discourse with my own experience. There have been times in my life when I would find myself in a dilemma—not because I knew not what to do, but because my resolution to prioritize God’s work seemed to be overborne by the carnal urge to dedicate a lot of time to my academic pursuits at the expense of those religious duties. However, every time I put school first, I met with loss. The studies and tasks became difficult and tedious. I believe that in all these occasions, the Lord in part removed His helping hand, so that I could only partially manage my studies alone. I would then begin to realize that the cause for all that was my own unwise choice.

Then in my feebleness, I would start to cling to God’s promise found in Mark 10:30, assuring us that whosoever makes a sacrifice—be it houses, lands, father, et cetera—“shall receive an hundredfold **now in this time**. . . and in the world to come eternal life.” I would then resolve to sacrifice all the time needed to complete my religious duties, and I would ask God to reward me the time spent, a hundred times, according to His promise. Whenever I did this, He rewarded me—not giving me more time for my studies, but the same academic task which would take me three days to complete, I would just find myself having completed it in a few hours.

We may not receive a hundredfold at once, but this promise is sure. He reserves these other portions for the future (whether in this life or the next).

Brothers and sisters, may the Lord help us to dedicate our time, strength, and everything needful to His work, in all our times of peace. For no pretext should we defer His work. Wait not for a time when God’s anger—yet prompted by love—should cause Him to speak to you: “I will provide you with time to do My work.”

Amen.

Music Day 2025 Spring

Photo credit: Mami Matsumoto



On Sabbath, March 20th, the Canadian Field Music Day was held at the Hamilton Church. Organized by the local youth under the guidance of the Canadian Field Music Department, the event was a blessing filled with a variety of songs and praises presented by many participants.

Several visitors were in attendance, and we pray that their hearts were touched through the music and that this event may serve as their first step toward discovering the truth.

Video recordings of the event are available on the official IMS Canada YouTube channel.

Bloor Church Painting

Photo credit: Ylenia Gallo (L) & Christina McTavish (R)



On Sunday, May 4, a group of young people from the Bloor and Woodbridge churches came together to paint the interior wall of the Bloor church sanctuary. May God bless these dedicated youth for their willingness to serve and labour for His house of prayer. May His name continue to be worshipped and honoured in this sacred place.

Canvassing Event at Hamilton

Report / Photo credit: Helen Martinen



On a beautiful spring day, on Sunday, May 18, a number of us went on a missionary outreach to Bayfront Park in Hamilton, Ontario. Many people were at the park that day, enjoying the warmth and sunshine. Most of our group walked throughout the park, handing out literature. A table was set up at the entrance of the park with flyers, and *Steps to Christ* and *Great Controversy* books. People walking by could hear the beautiful violin music played by Alexandria. We were all blessed by our experience. We pray that those who accepted our literature will be willing to seek for the truth found in their pages.

Newsletter

MAY / JUNE 2025 | 4truth.ca

Youth Camping in BC

Photo credit: Jason Climaco



From May 16–18, youth from across the region gathered in Maple Ridge, BC for a memorable youth camp surrounded by God’s beautiful creation.

It was a blessed time of fellowship, spiritual growth, and renewal as we explored the theme “Onward, Christian Soldiers”, focusing on the armour of God and how to apply it in our daily lives.

We praise God for the encouraging messages, meaningful discussions, and strong bonds formed among young believers.

A more detailed report of the event will be shared in *The Young Messenger*, Vol. 3, No. 3. Stay tuned!

Busking in Calgary

Photo credit: Mami Matsumoto



On May 31st, a group of young people in Calgary visited a local park to share Christian music as part of the Canadian Field Music Department’s busking project, Sing the Light.

Video recordings of the event will soon be available on the IMS Canada Official YouTube Channel. A more detailed report of the event will be shared in *The Young Messenger*, Vol. 3, No. 3.

Nursing Home Visit in Toronto

Photo credit: Anderson Lizcano



On May 31st, a group of members from the Bloor and Woodbridge churches visited a local nursing home to share Christian music, the Word of God, and prayer with the elderly residents. We pray that everything shared that day was a source of encouragement and comfort for the residents, and that it brought honour and glory to God.



Colombia



El Salvador



Finland



Kenya



Peru



USA



“O how precious, how refreshing, is the sunlight of God's love! The sinner may look upon his sin-stained life, and say, ‘Who is he that condescended? It is Christ that died.’ ‘Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound.’ Christ, the Restorer, plants a new principle of life in the soul, and that plant grows and produces fruit. The grace of Christ purifies while it pardons, and fits men for a holy heaven. We are to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, until we reach the full stature of men and women in Christ.”

—*Spiritual Advancement The Object of Camp-Meetings*, p. 32



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