

# Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION  
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalm 119:105  
**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,  
and a light unto my path.**

December 2024

## Joy to the World

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all the earth: make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise. Sing unto the Lord with the harp; with the harp, and the voice of a psalm. With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise before the Lord, the King. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands: let the hills be joyful together Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth: with righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with equity.*



Psalm 98: 4-9

**T**HE GREAT HYMNWRITER Sir Isaac Watts is credited with having composed over 750 hymns, including beloved favorites such as “Am I a Soldier of the Cross?,” “I Sing the Mighty Power of God,” and “When I Survey the Wondrous Cross.” As a result of his popularity and inspired genius, Watts has been referred to as “the father of English hymnody.” Watts was a member of the Congregational Church in England, which emphasized the singing of psalms in public worship. Although Watts embraced this practice, he believed that the psalms “...ought to be translated in such a manner as we have reason to believe David would have composed them if he had lived in our day.” Watts set to do that very thing, composing a collection of the psalms written in a contemporary language for the English people. However, when Watts was writing this “English psalter,” he did so with an eye for the truths of the New Testament. It was important for Watts to show how the Old Testament promises were fulfilled in Christ. In fact, the title of his composition was the “Psalms of David Imitated in the Language of the New Testament.”

It is believed that Watts composed “O God, Our Help in Ages Past” based on Psalm 90, “Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun” on Psalm 72, and “Joy to the World” on Psalm 98. Is also easy to see the impact of Romans 5 in Watts’ composition of this most familiar Christmas hymn, “Joy to the World:”

**“No more let sins and sorrows grow,  
Nor thorns infest the ground;  
He comes to make his blessings flow  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as the curse is found,  
Far as, far as, the curse is found.”**

*For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.) Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 5:17-21)*

The suffering, death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ has triumphed over the forces of darkness. Indeed, God’s grace is much greater than our sin. May God richly bless you this Advent and Christmas season with the assurance of the abundant blessings in His Son, Jesus Christ, the One who rules with truth and grace. Merry Christmas!

*Yours in Christ.*

***And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us,  
(and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,)  
full of grace and truth.***

***John 1:14***

# Heavenly Things

Chrysostom

*For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.*

Hebrews 7:26-8:2

**P**AUL MIXES THE LOWLY THINGS with the lofty, ever imitating his Master, so that the lowly become the path to the lofty, and through the former we are led to the latter, and when we are amid the great things we learn that these lowly ones were a condescension. This accordingly he does here also. After declaring that *He offered up Himself*, and showing Him to be a *High Priest*, what does he say? Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: *we have such an High Priest who is set down on the right hand of the throne of the majesty.* And yet this is not the office of a Priest, but of Him whom the Priest should serve.



*A minister of the sanctuary, not simply a minister, but a minister of the sanctuary. And of the true Tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man.* Thou seest the condescension. Did he not a little before make a separation, saying: "Are they not all ministering spirits?" (Hebrews 1:14) and therefore (he says) it is not said to them, "Sit thou on my right hand," (1:13) for He that sitteth is not a minister. How is it then that it is here said, *a minister, and a minister of the Sanctuary?* for he means here the Tabernacle.

See how he raised up the minds of the believing Jews. For as they would be apt to imagine that we have no such tabernacle as they had, see here (he says) is the Priest, Great, yea, much greater than the other, and who has offered a more wonderful sacrifice. But is not all this mere talk? is it not a boast, and merely said to win over our minds? on this account he established it first from the oath, and afterwards also from *the tabernacle.* For this difference too was manifest: but the Apostle thinks of another also, *which* (he says) *the Lord pitched* [or "made firm"] and not man. Where are they who say that the heaven whirls around? where are they who

declare that it is spherical? for both of these notions are overthrown here.

Now (he says) *of the things which we have spoken this is the sum.* By the *sum* is always meant what is most important. Again he brings down his discourse; having said what is lofty, henceforward he speaks fearlessly.

In the next place that thou mayest understand that he used the word *minister* of the *manhood*, observe how he again indicates it: For (ver. 3) (he says) *every high priest is ordained to offer both gifts and sacrifices, wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.*

Do not now, because thou hearest that He sitteth, suppose that His being called High Priest is mere idle talk. For the former, viz. His sitting, belongs to the dignity of the Godhead, but this to His great lovingkindness, and His tender care for us. On this account he repeatedly urges this very thing, and dwells more upon it: for he feared lest the other truth should overthrow it. Therefore he again brings down his discourse to this: since some were enquiring why He died. He was a Priest. But there is no Priest without a sacrifice. It is necessary then that He also should have a sacrifice.

And in another way; Having said that He is on high, he affirms and proves that He is a Priest from every consideration, from Melchisedec, from the oath, from offering sacrifice. From this he also frames another and necessary syllogism. *For if* (he says) *He had been on earth, He would not be a Priest, seeing that there are priests who offer the gifts according to the Law.* If then He is a Priest (as He really is), we must seek some other place for Him. *For if He were indeed on earth, He should not be a priest.* For how could He be? He offered no sacrifice, He ministered not in the Priest's office. And with good reason, for there were the priests. Moreover he shows, that it was impossible that He should be a priest upon earth. For how could He be? There was no rising up against the appointed Priests, he means.

Here we must apply our minds attentively, and consider the Apostolic wisdom; for again he shows the difference of the Priesthood. *Who* (he says) *serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things.*

What are the heavenly things he speaks of here? The spiritual things. For although they are done on earth, yet nevertheless they are worthy of the Heavens. For when our Lord Jesus Christ lies slain as a sacrifice, when the Spirit is with us, when He who sitteth on the right hand of the Father is here, when sons are made by the Washing, when they are fellow-citizens of those in Heaven, when we have a country, and a city, and citizenship there, when we are strangers to things here, how can all these be other than "heavenly things"? But what! Are not our Hymns heavenly? Do not we also who are below utter in concert with them the same things which the divine choirs of bodiless powers sing above? Is not the altar also heavenly? How? It hath nothing carnal, all spiritual things become the offerings. The sacrifice does not disperse into ashes, or into smoke, or into steamy savor, it makes the things placed there bright and splendid. How again can the rites which we celebrate be other than heavenly? For when He says, *Whose soever sins ye retain they*

are retained, whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted (John 20:23) when they have the keys of heaven, how can all be other than heavenly?

Who (he says) serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God, when he was about to make the tabernacle, for see, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. Inasmuch as our hearing is less ready of apprehension than our sight (for the things which we hear we do not in such wise lay up in our

soul, as those which we see with our very eyes), He showed him all. Either then he means this by the example and shadow, or else he speaks of the Temple. For, he went on to say, See (His words are) that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount. Was it then only what concerned the furniture of the temple that he saw, or was it also what related to the sacrifices, and all the rest? Nay, one would not be wrong in saying even this; for The Church is heavenly, and is nothing else than Heaven. ~

## The Pure and the Lovely

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan

**Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.**

**Philippians 4:4-8**

**I**T SEEMS EVERY TIME I HEAR or read the news, my mind goes back to these verses penned by Paul almost 2,000 years ago. Our world apparently revels in the distasteful, the wicked and the impure. Likely it was no different in the time of Paul's Rome, so he wrote to the Philippians instructions that would insulate them from the despicable things that would steal their security away and cause them to worry, thus robbing them of their peace.

It is significant then that he begins by telling them to be glad. As the children of God, this is our right: we have the right to be glad. The world always wants to cause us to be troubled by focusing on its evils and so we become discouraged. God wants us to focus on the finished work of His Son Jesus and be glad. This gladness leads directly to the next verse where the KJV uses the term "moderation" to translate a Greek word that means "yielding, gentle, kind" which in turn is derived from another Greek word meaning "clemency, gentleness, graciousness." Paul says let your gentleness, your graciousness be known to all people. The joy that we have in this world will be found by showing the grace of God which we all have received in abundance to one another and to all people. Don Henley, an American songwriter once wrote; "We all need a little tenderness; how can love survive in such a graceless age?" Little did he know that Paul had already anticipated the question many years beforehand and provided the only solution: by the people of God manifesting the grace of God to all God's offspring. This is how true love is shown, when it is selfless and full of grace, so the KJV often employs the term "charity" to render the idea of love as opposed to a selfish or romantic desire. We are to do this because the Lord is near, indwelling us by His Spirit and directing us by His grace to live graciously.

Knowing the grace of God allows us then to live without worry; we pray and know with assurance that God will provide all that we need when we ask in the name of Jesus (as representatives of His Son) and by God's grace He gives us His peace which establishes us in heart and mind in Jesus the Christ. Therefore, we are to direct our thoughts to those things that keep us focused rightly: the pure and the lovely.

**How sweet the name of Jesus sounds  
In a believer's ear!  
It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds,  
And drives away his fear.**

– John Newton

Thank you for your continued support and the grace you show us always.

God's peace.



Finally, brethren,  
whatsoever things are true,  
whatsoever things are honest,  
whatsoever things are just,  
whatsoever things are pure,  
whatsoever things are lovely,  
whatsoever things are  
of good report;  
if there be any virtue,  
and if there be any praise,  
*think on these things.*



# A Light to Lighten the Gentiles

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children far and near,  
**Glory to God in the highest,  
and on earth peace, good will toward men.**

**Luke 2:14**

Once again we are blessed with the Christmas season and get to spend time pondering that ever so precious story of Jesus' birth.

**L**ONG AGO THE ANGEL GABRIEL visited the Virgin Mary in her hometown of Nazareth. He said unto her, *Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women. (Luke 1:28)* Mary was troubled at seeing this angel and wondered what this should mean. He saw her fear and said, *Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. (Luke 1:30)* Notice how he called her by her name. This would help her understand that this that was happening was very real.

He then says, *And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. (Luke 1:31-33)*

Mary was somewhat puzzled at these words as she was not married yet, but was planning to marry a man named Joseph. She asks, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (Luke 1:34-35)*

The angel went on to tell her that her elderly cousin Elisabeth who was barren, was also going to have a child, and that she was in her the sixth month. The angel said, *For with God nothing shall be impossible. (Luke 2:37)* I can only imagine Mary's many thoughts up to this point. This was a lot to take in.

*And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. (Luke 1:38)* Mary was obedient to the angel's words and was willing to do what her God had in mind for her.

Mary was said to maybe be around 16 - 17 years old. Mary makes haste to go to the hill country to see Elisabeth and stay with her and Zacharias and it was a very special time together. The old and the young were sharing in the same joy.

As time went by Mary grew with child and one day there came a message from the king, Caesar Augustus. He wanted the entire world to be taxed (or counted). All went to be taxed every one to the city of his birth. Joseph took Mary and went to Bethlehem to be taxed, because that was where he was born.

Mary at this time was very soon to have her baby. After she and Joseph reached Bethlehem they looked for a place to rest for the night but they found nothing. The town was full, as many people who now lived in other places had returned to Bethlehem the city where they were born, to be counted. One innkeeper had a stable that they could sleep in. Imagine, a "stable," a place where a farmer puts his animals. It was in

this place that Jesus was born, and Mary wrapped Him in swaddling clothes (long strips of cloth) and laid Him in a manger.

Angels announced this special birth to the shepherds in the fields, saying, *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:10-14)* After the angels had gone back into heaven, the shepherds went with haste to find this baby, and when they found Him they fell down and worshiped Him. On their return to the fields they told every one they met about the child.

What a humble birth Jesus had, but it was a very special birth because God had sent His only Son to us to save us from our sins so that one day we could be in heaven with Jesus, forever. His kingdom would never end.

Joseph and Mary were I'm sure amazed at this wonderful birth, just as the shepherds and the people were that heard the great news. The Bible gives us an idea of Mary's wonderment. It says, *But Mary kept all these things and pondered them in her heart. (Luke 2:19)*

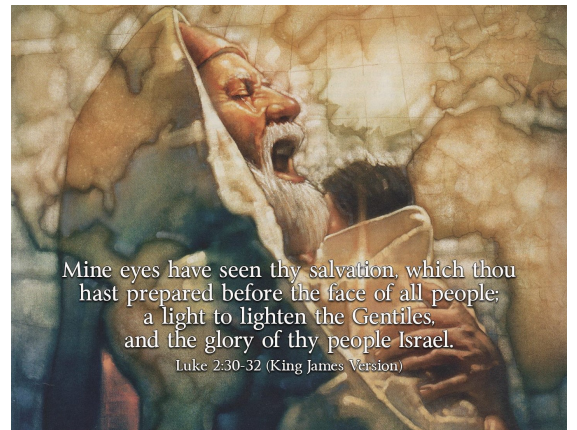
There was so much wonder with Jesus' birth that it was as though Mary was speechless. She could only quietly think about it in her heart.

Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus did not stay living in the stable; they did have a home in Nazareth after Jesus was born.

The Bible says, *And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. (Luke 2:40)*

We praise God for giving us His Son, and we can thank Him every day. Simeon said this about Jesus when Joseph and Mary

brought Him to the temple. *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:32)*



May the blessings of Christmas, of Jesus' birth, have a special place in each of your hearts. I hope and pray this Jesus will always be the shepherd who leads you today and in the new year that's just around the corner.

I wish you all a very blessed Christmas.

God's peace.



# Christ the King

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

*But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

*Jude 20-25*

**O**n November 24th, we observed Christ the King Sunday. It is a day that we set aside as a church to remember who our King truly is. He is not a king like the rulers of this world. He doesn't reign from an earthly throne, or with the stroke of a pen, or the point of a sword. He doesn't demand tribute from His subjects or call us to lay down our life in His defense. Rather, He reigns from the cross, bearing the sins of the world, and gives us life through His death. Our King is the one who laid down His life for us!

Jude calls us to build ourselves up in our most holy faith and to keep ourselves in the love of God. This is not a call to rely on our own strength, but rather to cling to the promises

of our Lord. We are reminded that we live in a world full of trials and temptations, but we are not left to face them alone. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Our King is the one who sustains us, keeps us from stumbling, and will one day present us blameless before God the Father.

Christ the King Sunday is a time to remember that we are under His reign and rule. He is the one who reigns, not as a tyrant, but as a loving Shepherd. He leads us through the valley of the shadow of death, and He gives us hope in the midst of our struggles. We live in a world that often rejects Christ's reign. But no matter what this world may say, Christ is King. He reigns now, and His kingdom will never end. As we approach the end of the year, let us give thanks for our King who reigns in mercy and grace. Let us gather in fellowship around His Word and Sacraments, walking in obedience to Him, showing mercy to others as He has shown mercy to us. And let us look forward to the day when we will see our King face to face and be welcomed into His eternal kingdom.

*To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.*

*God's peace.*

## The Five Solas

The Protestant Reformation is known for the five solas which are:

Sola Gratia = Grace Alone

Sola Fide = Faith Alone

Sola Christo = Christ Alone

Sola Scriptura = The Word Alone

Soli Deo Gloria = to the Glory of God Alone

These are the basics of the Christian faith revealed, and God's Word.

**Sola Gratia = Grace Alone** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17) All of this is a gift from God, nothing that we can earn on our own. Not even our faith is our own work.

**Sola Fide = Faith Alone** For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:8-10). Good works are the result of the faith that God has given us. They are not something we do to earn God's favor. We do them because we realize we already have it, but we want others to experience that love that we have received from Him.

**Sola Christo = Christ Alone** We are saved through Christ alone and through His work. He said that no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:16). Those people who believe in Him, have already passed from death to life (John 5:24). What more judgment could there be? He alone was perfect and sinless. No other human has been except for Adam before the fall. No other human could do what Christ did because He was God in the flesh. He became a man to pay the penalty that we needed to pay. He joined Himself to us and saved us.

**Sola Scriptura = The Word Alone** God is unchanging, so of course God cannot contradict Himself. It's fine to have church hierarchy and have pastors helping people to interpret Scripture, but that interpretation of Scripture should never contradict what's already been written down in the Bible.

**Soli Deo Gloria = to the Glory of God Alone** Of course, all of this is to the glory of God alone. He alone deserves all the glory. *To the King of the ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen. (1 Timothy 1:17)*

If you're looking for an easy way to remember the five Solas, I remember them by keeping them in the order above and saying a simple summary statement of faith: "We are saved by **grace** through **faith** in **Christ** revealed to us in **God's Word** to the **glory of God alone.**"

*God's peace.*

*Pastor Ryan Kandoll  
Plymouth, Minnesota*

# Trust in the Lord

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

*Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul. While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish. Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God: Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever: Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry. The LORD looseth the prisoners: The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous: The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieveth the fatherless and widow: but the way of the wicked he turneth upside down. The LORD shall reign for ever, even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.*

Psalm 146:1-10

**T**RUST IS VERY important to us as we live out our lives here in this world. It affects our relationships and how we converse and live with one another. We can be really comfortable with someone we trust, but if that trust is shattered it is one of the hardest things to rebuild. When we lose confidence in someone or something, inevitably we no longer trust them. When you don't have trust, then it is impossible to have any confidence in what they say or do.

We are instructed in this Psalm to not put our trust in princes or politicians; neither should we place our trust in human institutions. There are a lot of good institutions established by men, but if that is where we place our trust we

will be sorely disappointed. Humans by their very nature will shatter our trust and we have seen that in the news time and time again as people take advantage of others in order to gratify their own desires. Ultimately, there is no lasting help to be found in our politicians; we are to respect them and the offices they hold but not place our trust in them. We as citizens of the United States should exercise our right to vote, but if things don't go as we would like them to go, we ought not lose heart because our trust is in God. In God we trust.

We trust in the Lord who brings us lasting joy and happiness. We trust in the Lord who gives us peace that is lasting and eternal. The psalmist says, *Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God (Psalm 146:5)*. Our Creator is always trustworthy, His Word is the Truth and its promises are to be trusted.

The Lord has indeed fulfilled all His promises laid out in this Psalm in the life and ministry of Jesus. He embodies the Word and comes to bring justice to a world that needs it. He gives food to the hungry, looses the prisoners, opens the eyes of the blind, raises those who are bowed down, and not only loves the righteous but gives them their righteousness. One of my favorite verses in the Bible is *2 Corinthians 5:21: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him*. There is no greater gift that can be given to man than the righteousness of God and by being joined to Jesus Christ we possess this righteousness. No government or politician can give you that. This can only be given by the One who has made us, redeemed us, and reigns over all.

Another one of my favorite passages in the Bible is *Proverbs 3:5-6: Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths*. Even when our government and politicians fail us we do not faint or lose heart because we have not placed our trust in them. I would encourage you to pray for our president and political leaders in this nation, but understand in the end they are just men and women like you and me. Trust in the Lord! He is still reigning and will always reign! Praise the Lord!

God's peace.



Beautiful song of Christmas!  
Sung in the long ago,  
Bringing the joy of Heaven,  
Down to the earth below.  
Story of deepest meaning,  
Burst forth in music sweet,  
While from afar the wise men  
Gathered at Jesus' feet.

Beautiful song of Christmas,  
Message of peace, good will,  
Sung first by angel chorus,  
Sweetly it echoes still.  
Prophets of Christ had spoken;  
Hope long deferred grew dim,  
Till from the glowing heavens,  
Angels now told of Him.

Beautiful song of Christmas—  
Rings in each heart today,  
Telling of Christ, the Savior,  
Driving the gloom away.  
Age, with her silver tresses,  
Youth, with her smile and song,  
Join in the theme of ages,  
With the glad angel throng.

Refrain:

Blend your voice in the song so sweet;  
Bring your gifts to the Savior's feet.  
Let each heart with His praises ring,  
Pay your homage to Jesus, our Prince and King!

Grant Colfax Tullar

# Our Neediness

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

Do we need God because we're sinners or because we're human? Let's look back to the beginning, before sin entered the world. Did Adam and Eve need God?

**H**UMANS ARE FINITE, created beings, while God is eternal and uncreated, so even before sin entered the world, and death by sin (Romans 5:12), humans were dependent on our Father in heaven. *God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us: For in him we live, and move, and have our being; as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring. Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. (Acts 17:24-29)* He gives our life and breath, and in Him we live, move, and have our being.

Before the fall into sin, maybe Adam and Eve didn't mind their dependence on God. They were made in His image, and they were His offspring. They were in perfect communion with their Creator.

When they fell into sin, *the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil. And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. (Genesis 3:4-10)* They tried to reach out and grasp the quality of being "as God." Their communion was broken. No longer did they want to be in close contact with God. Rather than being satisfied to be a child of God and dependent on Him, they wanted to be "like

God." They knew they had broken the one commandment that God had given them, and they were afraid.

After the Fall, they started working to remedy the situation in which they found themselves. They immediately made clothing out of fig leaves and hid from God when He called them.

We are similar in that we don't like to be dependent on anyone or anything. We don't like to be needy! If it were possible, we would work our way into God's good graces. But that's not possible. Our best works are as filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6). Paul said (Philippians 3:8) that he counted everything as loss and manure in order that He might win Christ and be found in Him.

But my God shall  
supply all your need  
according to his riches  
in glory by Christ Jesus.  
Now unto God and our  
Father be glory for ever  
and ever. Amen.

Philippians 4:19-20 KJV

God was pleased to meet our need for salvation in Christ. Jesus is the true Son of God, and His gift of righteousness makes us God's true children as well. We can depend on Him, and rest in Him. Our neediness is to God's glory!

*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me... But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God. **But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.***

Philippians 4:12-13, 18-20

Glory, hallelujah! Amen.

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## Love Is Greatest

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

*And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity (love).*

**1 Corinthians 13:13**



**S**INCE PAUL IS HERE WRITING about the Christian, the conclusion he reaches seems incomprehensible. Yes, of course love is important. Jesus said that the greatest commandment enjoins us to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. And that we are to love our neighbors as ourselves. But faith is what makes you a Christian! It is not that you first loved God, but that He first loved you (1 John 4:19). And He drew you by His Word that proclaimed you to be a sinner for whom Christ died. That His death is full atonement for all of your sin, and that the penalty has been paid. And you have trusted in Him and His promise. You believe that this is true. And, as Paul says elsewhere, it is by God's grace that you have

been saved by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9). Faith is the apprehension of the Gospel promise as you believe and proclaim that it is not only true, but that it is true **for you!**

And because of this, you now have an unshakable hope that God, who began this work in you, will bring it to completion on the Day when Christ returns (Philippians 1:6). It is because of this hope that many Christians have gone through trials, tribulation, even death, certain that when their eyes close for the last time that they will open in His blessed presence.

Yet Paul says that, as true and as great as these things are, love is greater. And this is why: "Love never ends." (1 Corinthians 13:8a). When Jesus returns in power and we see Him face to face, faith will have come to its natural end, as the One in whom we now have faith delivers us finally and fully from everything that could possibly try to draw us away from Him or cause us to doubt. And hope will be subsumed as we enter into the eternal kingdom which is our inheritance as children of God. And what will then remain is love. Perfect love toward God and toward our neighbor. Truly, then, even though faith, hope, and love abide, these three... the greatest of these is love. ~



## Good Works

Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God. It is only by faith that forgiveness of sins is apprehended, and that, for nothing. And because through faith the Holy Ghost is received, hearts are renewed and endowed with new affections, so as to be able to bring forth good works. For Ambrose says: Faith is the mother of a good will and right doing. For man's powers without the Holy Ghost are full of ungodly affections, and are too weak to do works which are good in God's sight. Besides, they are in the power of the devil who impels men to divers

sins, to ungodly opinions, to open crimes. This we may see in the philosophers, who, although they endeavored to live an honest life could not succeed, but were defiled with many open crimes. Such is the feebleness of man when he is without faith and without the Holy Ghost, and governs himself only by human strength.

Hence it may be readily seen that this doctrine is not to be charged with prohibiting good works, but rather the more to be commended, because it shows how we are enabled to do good works. For without faith human nature can in no wise do the works of the First or of the Second Commandment. Without faith it does not call upon God, nor expect anything from God, nor bear the cross, but seeks, and trusts in, man's help. And thus, when there is no faith and trust in God all manner of lusts and human devices rule in the heart. Wherefore Christ said, John 15:5: Without Me ye can do nothing; and the Church sings:

"Lacking Thy divine favor,  
There is nothing found in man,  
Naught in him is harmless."

*Augsburg Confession*