

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.

November 2023

Thank You, Lord

Pastor Charles A. Bergstedt
November 2013 CM

Be careful (anxious) for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Philippians 4:6

THANK YOU! How hard is it for us to say this simple little phrase in life? We struggle with it because we do not want to admit that we desire help—and frankly need it—at times. These are words we need to learn, for in them we encourage and acknowledge another who has by the grace of God helped us.

We do not deserve things in life and we should not expect things from others. Unfortunately, we have become a society who thinks we are owed something in some form or another. We do not acknowledge the fact that God works through people (even us) and helps us to see another in need. Are we paying heed to the Spirit when He calls us out to help another or do we laugh and say they had it coming?

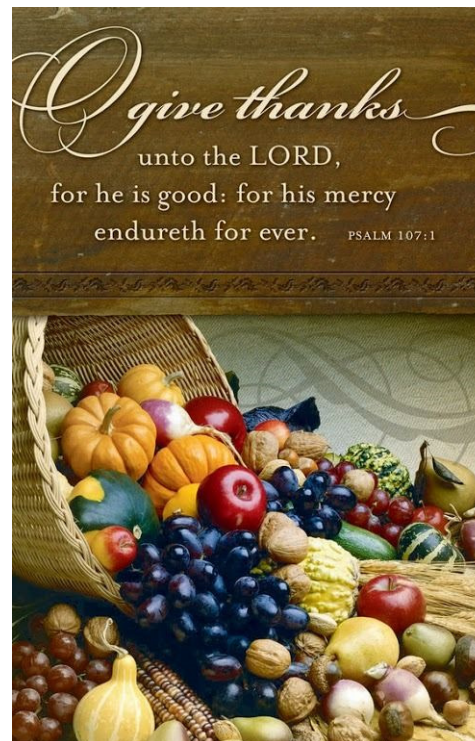
We are at times not in tune with God. When this is the case we become self-involved and miss the cries and yearnings of another. Have you ever been so clueless in a situation that you miss someone who is asking for help because your mind is selfishly focusing on your own problems? I know I have and I am frustrated as a pastor when I miss things! The reality I find is that I want to fix or cure a situation and God wants me to shut up and just listen.

Lord, teach us to pray even before a situation comes up, so that we are in tune with You and therefore in tune with our neighbor who might be in need. As we see in the wisdom of Solomon, "Man's goings are of the LORD; how can a man then understand his own way?" (Proverbs 20:24)

We say we love God but our actions do not reflect the love of Jesus Christ in our hearts! We worry and question and say, "How can it be so, Lord?" When in fact it is so because He is God and we need to allow our cares to be the cares of God. "Teach me to seek out Your face, O Lord, and the ways of righteousness!" If we desire the things of God, we will stand back and serve Him by serving His people! We will learn to listen to others and allow them to share and serve in manners that God has taught them. We will refrain from boasting about what we have done and point rather to what God has done. Are we so self-righteous that we have

forgotten to thank God and others? Do we expect without asking and demand without grace? We are a foolish people when we have become so self-conscious that we neglect God and our neighbor.

We need the Word of God because we need reproof! We tell ourselves, "I do not want to hear that part of the Scripture because it hurts my feelings!" It is time that we get over ourselves and place God in His rightful position! We have taken the Word of God and thrown it out the window because we do not want to deal with our sinfulness and neglect. We would rather hear the words of someone who pats our back and tells us it will be all right than listen to the fact that it isn't all right. We need to hear that we are sinful and wrong at times.



*Thank You, Lord,
that You are
always right and
know when to
bring us back
down to earth.
Teach us to pray
and seek You out
in all matters with
thanksgiving
because You have
indeed granted us
all that we need.
If you read this
article, thank
you for listening
to one who
needs to
remember the
wonderful gifts
granted to us
every day by
God. We have
reason for hope
and joy today*

because we worship a risen Savior, Jesus Christ! May the Lord richly bless you and yours in this time of Thanksgiving. ~

The Truth Will Make You Free!

Elmer Yliniemi
November 2013 CM

"I promise to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help me God." These words are spoken by witnesses in a court of law with one hand placed on the Bible. Unfortunately many still lie even after this oath. Some high-ranking individuals in politics and business who are caught and found guilty are punished by the law.

THE EARLY CHURCH ALREADY FACED the same evil, soon after Pentecost. *But a certain man named Ananias, with Sapphira his wife, sold a possession, And kept back part of the price, his wife also being privy to it, and brought a certain part, and laid it at the apostles' feet. But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land? (Acts 5:1-3)* Ananias and Sapphira were found guilty of lying. They thought they were lying to Apostle Peter and the believers in Jerusalem but Peter says *...thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God. (Acts 5:4)*

Truth is one of the attributes of God! Jesus says, *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)* Jesus also says of Himself, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)* When we lie, we offend God and someday each of us will give an account of ourselves before God (Romans 14:12).

We don't know much about this couple whose names were Ananias and Sapphira. In Acts 5:3, we are told that Satan had filled their hearts to lie to the Holy Ghost. Even as believers, Satan tries to make us stumble, for there is no truth in Him. Satan is the father of lies! Jesus says in *John 8:44: 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.* These words were spoken to the Jews which believed on Him (John 8:31). Peter gives this warning to the Christians of his day, and to us today: *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (1 Peter 5:8)* Paul tells us Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14).

What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira? Were they greedy? Were they stingy? Their sin was lying to God and God's people by trying to make themselves appear more generous than they really were. We all know that certain actions are considered good and bring the praise of men

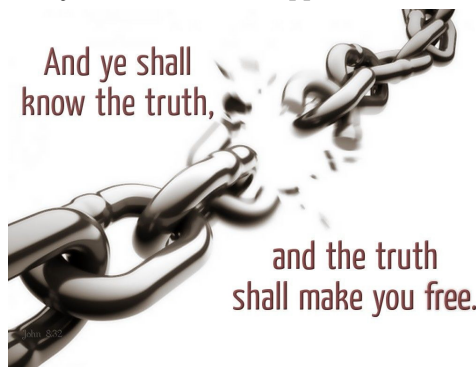
which our flesh seeks. Why was their punishment so harsh? Who of us today would be alive if we were punished by death for every untruth uttered because we wanted to appear better than we really are? Lying and hypocrisy can destroy the church by preventing the Holy Spirit from working. It also destroys our testimony about Christ. An example had to be set for the early church that it must be founded on the truth. This lie was not from fear of consequences or even an overwhelming temptation. There was no command that they had to sell their land and give everything. It was a deliberate act of hypocrisy in which they agreed to do something that would appear like something it was not.

The church is made up of sinners. We daily sin in thought and deed because we are sinners in need of a Savior. Jeremiah already tells us, *The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)* When we recognize our sin, we can rejoice that the Gospel about God's great mercy toward us through the blood of Christ can cleanse and renew us.

But the warning is given to us to be children of truth. John writes, *I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth. (1 John 2:21)* Paul writes to the Roman Christians, *What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? (Romans 6:1-2)* For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17) For Apostle John, grace and truth go hand in hand.

God's boundless grace does not wipe out the attribute of truth. We live in a highly competitive world and are tempted to not tell the whole truth so we can gain the upper hand in our situation. The gains we make from lying are not worth much, compared to the blessings received from telling the truth. When we tell the truth we are never trapped in a lie. We don't need a good memory if we tell the truth. If you have a habit of stretching the truth, being untruthful in little things or have deceived someone, confess it to that person and to God and put it away in the precious name and blood of Jesus Christ. It may be humbling, but it is the first step to restoring integrity in your life.

And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:32)



Our blessings are many—more than we can number. A Psalm quite adequately describes the abundance of these blessings by saying, *Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation . . . He that is our God is the God of salvation. (Psalm 68:19-20)* They who do not acknowledge God in their lives find nothing for which to thank Him. They accept His blessings as a matter of course; not as gifts, but as the fruits of their own labors.

Where, then, does the true song of praise really begin? It has been said that it begins when a sinner thanks God for His grace. The songs of praise in the Bible have salvation as their theme. The old saints joyfully poured out their thanks for the help they received in their difficulties, but basically, they were giving thanks for their salvation. The Lamb of God, who came to take away the sin of the world, was the source of their song.

Alvin Holmgren

If the Son Shall Make You Free

Ron Holmgren

Battle Ground, Washington

If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)

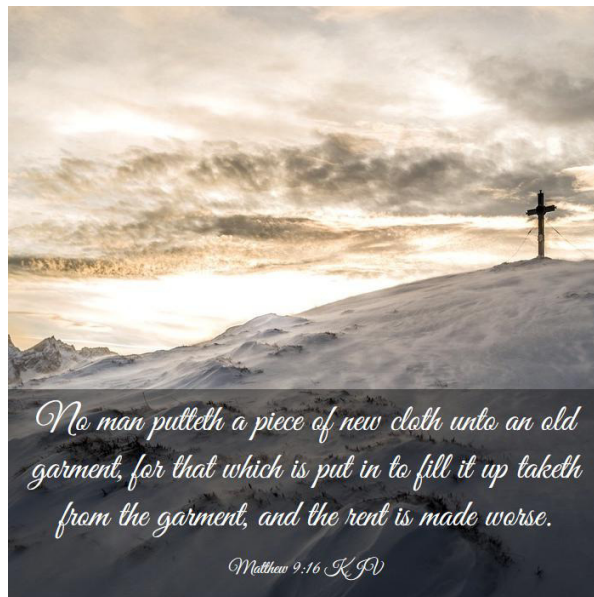
They had spoken boldly that they were of Abraham's seed and never in bondage to any man. They could not see the true condition of their hearts. Blinded by the worst of enemies—pride—the boast came from the depths of their darkened souls.

This condition of man was and is, to this day, still alive. It may take on a different appearance including hiding itself in the church that calls itself Christian. Paul was familiar with it and confronted it in his letter to the Galatians. In that letter he named it clearly and without any fear of man. It was the desire to be under the law (Galatians 4:21). Can you imagine the cry of his detractors when this letter was read in the church?

Accusations must have been heard. What then, shall we sin? Is the law unjust? Do we then do whatever we want without concern for evil? This will give liberty for the flesh. And on and on the voices could be heard.

But what is the real issue at hand? Jesus and His servant Paul are digging deep into the heart. They shine the light in every crack and crevasse of the soul, and this reveals a haunting truth. Man is not free! He is bound in sin no matter how diligently he tries to extricate himself with do's and don'ts, lists and convictions, traditions and commandments of men.

But some say, "I have Christ!" If Christ has become a patch on your old garment (Matthew 9:16) that covers what you think are your faults, and you now must perform to the best of your abilities according to the law, you too are still bound and not free. This is a very serious problem. It not only affects those who teach it, but causes the child of God to doubt and question his or her righteousness. Their eyes turn away from Jesus and begin to look at themselves for



confirmation of their acceptance by God. So subtle and deceiving is this great error that no one that I have met in the years of my Christian life has escaped the temptation to heed this evil counsel. It can begin with very innocent concerns about the walk of a Christian. We are our brother's keeper and should help one another to avoid the snares of the devil. How fast this changes into accusation against others.

Paul called this bondage. He used the allegory of Sara and Hagar, the two mothers of Abraham's sons. In this story, if we read it with our natural reasoning, we can find ourselves siding with Hagar. She did nothing wrong so why should she be cast out? The law is not to blame, so why cast it out? But if the son of Hagar is allowed to remain within the camp then he will persecute the son of Sara. So, too, will the law

persecute the child of promise. Read the story in the Old Testament and then what Paul writes in Galatians 4:21-31: *Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all. For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many*

more children than she which hath an husband. Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise. But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now. Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free.

Cast out the bondwoman and her son, and live in the promised Son of God, Christ Jesus, who has truly set us free!

The Church Is Founded on the Word of God

"The words that you gave to me I have given to them (John 17:8)." (Luther's translation)

This constrains us and makes us sure, namely, that a real Christian knows that the church never ordains or institutes anything apart from the Word of God. Any church that does so is no church except in name only, as Christ says in John 10, verses 27 and 5: "My sheep hear my voice... They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." It is not God's Word just because the church speaks it; instead the church comes into being because God's Word is spoken. The church does not constitute the Word but is constituted by the Word. The Word of God is a sure sign by which we may know where the church is.

How can we know where the church is if we do not hear her preaching and the testimony of the Spirit?

Heavenly Father, open my ears that I may hear your Word. Amen.

Martin Luther

Balaam and His Donkey That Talked

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to one and all. I am praying this finds you well. We are well here in our corner of the world. Summer has ended and the fall season is upon us. The children have returned to school, and the rain which we have not had for months is just beginning. The days are much cooler, but when the sun comes out it is very pleasant outside.

I wanted to share a very interesting account found in Numbers 22. It's a long chapter and I will put the verse number next to the verses I share so you can easily find them.

IN CHAPTER 21, the Bible tells of the Israelites killing all of the Amorites along with their king and taking over all their land. Now in chapter 22, their journey from their slavery in Egypt has brought them to the plains of Moab and once again they have put up their tents near the Jordan river and very near Jericho.

Balak, the king of the Moabites, saw them setting up camp. He knew all that happened to the Amorites at the hand of the Israelites and he was very afraid of them. He saw that there was so many of them.

He was thinking that these people would probably fight against them too and wipe them out. He said: *Now shall this company lick up all that are round about us, as the ox licketh up the grass of the field. (Numbers 22:4)*

A prophet named Balaam lived with his people near the river. Balak sent messengers to Balaam with this message:

Behold, there is a people come out from Egypt: behold, they cover the face of the earth, and they abide over against me (near by): Come now therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people; for they are too mighty for me: peradventure (perhaps) I shall prevail, that we may smite them and that I may drive them out of the land: for I wot (have knowledge) that he whom thou blesses is blessed, and he whom thou curses is cursed. (V. 5-6)

The elders of Moab went to Balaam taking rewards to give him if he would curse the Israelites by some divine words or actions.

Balaam received them but asked them to spend the night as he needed to seek God and ask for instructions. He told the elders he'd tell them what he learned, the next day.

God came to Balaam and asked him who the men were that stayed with him. Balaam told God who they were. (You know that God already knew, but He still needs to hear from His people.) Balaam explained about the masses of people from Egypt seeming to take over the land, and that Balak was hoping he can help drive them out. It appears Balaam's prophetic gift is going to his head, and God wants to protect him from this foolish notion.

And God said unto Balaam, Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed. (V. 12)

Balaam rose in the morning and told the Moabite elders to go back to their land and he was not going with them as God refused to let him.

The elders went on their way and took this word to Balak who was not done trying to convince Balaam of coming to see him and Balak sent more important elders (princes) with even better gifts to try and persuade the prophet.

Balaam was ready and told those elders that **not for a house of silver or gold would I go against my Lord!** (There's a reason why I made that last part in bold print. God will test Balaam!) He again asks them to stay the night and he would seek God's council.

And God came unto Balaam at night, and said unto him, If the men come to call thee, rise up, and go with them; but yet the word which I shall say unto thee, that shalt thou do. (V 20.)

In the morning Balaam saddled his donkey and went with the Moabite elders.

God was watching and He was angry that Balaam went. God sent His angel to stand in the way on the path. The donkey saw the angel with a sword drawn and she went off the path into a field. This angered Balaam and he hit her and forced her back onto the path. They went a little way and were going to take a narrow path with stone walls on either side through some vineyards. The donkey saw the angel standing once more in the way with no room to go around and the frightened animal attempted to go to the one side but ended up crushing Balaam's foot against the stone. Ouch! This made Balaam so mad, he hit her again. He was not seeing the angel and was wondering, "What is wrong with this donkey of mine?"



A third time as Balaam and donkey were trekking along they arrive at yet another very narrow place where there is no going right or left; there was the angel of the Lord blocking the path. Once again the donkey sees the angel but her rider does not and she falls down to the ground. Balaam is so mad now he hits her again with a staff. Balaam has never had such a terrible time with this donkey he has had for a long time. What could be going on?

Well, God is planning to work through this donkey. Can you believe what happens next? **The donkey talks!**

And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass (donkey), and she said unto Balaam, What have I done unto thee, that thou hast smitten me these three times?

And Balaam said unto the donkey, Because thou hast mocked me: I would there were a sword in mine hand, for now I would kill thee.

And the donkey said unto Balaam, Am I not thine ass (donkey), upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day? was I ever wont to do so unto thee? (Was it ever a habit for me to treat you this way?)

And he said, Nay. (V. 28-30)

So you've just been reading a conversation between a man and his donkey. I find that rather interesting. I wonder if Balaam ever stopped to think about who he was talking to?!

And then... In verse 31 God opens Balaam's eyes and Balaam finally sees the angel of the Lord with the sword in his hand and bowed his head and lay flat on the ground. He is humbled.

The angel asks Balaam why he hit his donkey three times. He also told him that he had to try to stop Balaam from doing something he shouldn't. The angel told Balaam, "If the donkey who saw me standing in the way had not turned from me, I would have slain you, Balaam, and kept her alive."

Balaam is undone and says to the angel: *I have sinned; for I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me: now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again.* He says he will go back home. Remember this from earlier how Balaam was standing up for God and said, **Not for a house of silver or gold would I go against my Lord!**" This is why God was angry with him. He said one thing and did another.

But... The angel doesn't tell him to go home but to go with the princes to Balak. And Balaam is to only speak words that the Lord gives to him. He will not use his own ideas or words. So Balaam goes to Balak, who is so glad to see him finally come.

Balak took Balaam up to a high place where he could see the multitude of tents of the Israelites. Balak thinks he has won Balaam over and is waiting to hear Balaam curse the people.

Balaam knows different and in his heart he knows what God has instructed him to do, to only speak the words God gives.

Balaam asks for seven altars to be built and for seven oxen and seven rams to be prepared for a burnt offering. Balak did all this, and you can imagine he thinks this is Balaam's way of preparing for the curse. The animals are laid on each altar and offered up.

But... Balaam once again tells Balak he must go a little way off alone and seek God and hear what he is to say. He

tells Balak and his men to stand by the burnt offering and wait for him.

Balaam returns and instead of cursing the people, he says, *How shall I curse, whom God hath not cursed? Or how shall I defy, whom the Lord hath not defied?* (Numbers 23:8) Do read more from this chapter following verse 8 and see what else he said about God's people.

Balak was aghast and asked Balaam, *What hast thou done unto me? I took thee to curse my enemies, and, behold, thou hast blessed them altogether.* (V. 11)

Balaam tells Balak he spoke what God gave him to speak and he can do no other thing.

Balak was not ready to give up and he tries yet two more times in the 23rd chapter to get Balaam to curse the people.

In the 24th chapter Balaam stood by his word of not doing anything the Lord was not pleased with and told Balak a parable that described what would become of the Moabites at the hand of the Israelites. The Moabites would be destroyed. A frustrated, angry Balak finally told Balaam to leave. They both returned to their own people.

God's people were chosen to be brought to the land promised to them and when they entered certain areas they were to destroy all the people living there so as to not pollute their own people with the pagan or sinful practices that may be there. God also did not want His people to marry any of the strangers.

God used the donkey in our story to bring Balaam to the point of finally humbling him from his own prideful thoughts and opening his eyes to seeing he was not in charge.

Although God did not want Balaam to go with Balak's men in the first place, He did allow him to yet go to do the work He had for him. In speaking the words God gave Balaam, that made it clear that these people Balak was so afraid of were a chosen people. Balak would learn he would not be able to raise a hand against them.

In our lives we will have those who oppose us and will try to harm us. But when you are a child of God, you have His protection and He will have the victory. We also have those who will try to persuade us or subtly try to get us on a bad path that leads us away from our Good Shepherd, but I encourage you to seek God in the Word and in prayer and hold fast to the path that leads to life.

God loves His children so much and it is His desire to gather us all to Himself one day. Praise the Lord that you are blessed to serve such a great God. We are so, so fortunate.

I pray all of you old and young who are now back in school and studies will have a safe, good year. Keep Jesus close in your hearts and minds.

God's peace.

THE MERCY OF GOD IS infinite, and the man who has felt the grinding pain of inward guilt knows that this is more than academic. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." Abounding sin is the terror of the world, but abounding grace is the hope of mankind. However sin may abound it still has its limits, for it is the product of finite minds and hearts; but God's "much more" introduces us to infinitude. Against our deep creature-sickness stands God's infinite ability to cure. The Christian witness through the centuries has been that "God so loved the world . . ."; it remains for us to see that love in the light of God's infinitude. His love is measureless. It is more: it is boundless. It has no bounds because it is not a thing but a facet of the essential nature of God. His love is something He is, and because He is infinite that love can enfold the whole created world in itself and have room for ten thousand times ten thousand worlds beside.

A. W. Tozer

God Is True

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

For all the saints, who from their labours rest,
Who Thee by faith before the world confessed,
Thy Name, O Jesus, be forever blessed.
Alleluia, Alleluia!

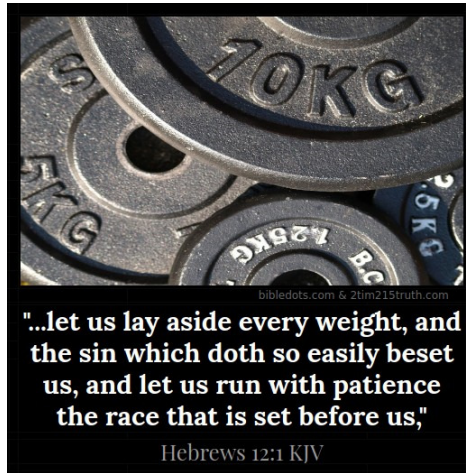
-William Walsham How

by nature the human being can neither comprehend nor believe it. Therefore we begin to seek our works and other means to try to justify ourselves; it simply cannot be that God justifies us freely by His grace. So by our own reason we make God's clear proclamation to appear untrue and make God to be His opposite.

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.

Hebrews 12:1-2

THE SCRIPTURE MAKES IT CLEAR that we are a consecrated band of followers of our Lord Jesus Christ who washed in His precious blood emerge spotless and blameless in His sight, a sanctified host of the faithful. In the month of November we begin with All Hallows recounting this simple fact. We are justified by our God by His grace received in the gift of faith. Simple, that is true, yet complex beyond any measure when plumbed to its depths. It is, as a matter of fact, so incredibly difficult for humans to grasp that it seems almost to be a lie. Martin Luther expresses this idea in his commentary on Psalm 117 where he speaks of God's Word in our way of thinking appearing as if it were a lie and God Himself appearing then as a liar, even as the devil. Luther simply meant that the grace of God is so immense that



Yet the Spirit of God testifies to the truth of God's Word, the truth we cling to by faith that God's Word is true even if every person is a liar. God has justified us freely by His grace! Even if every human institution speak in contrary fashion, God's Word remains true. We are redeemed, we are washed, and the blood of Jesus Christ does indeed cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

For this reason we do not look within ourselves for the truth but rather have our gaze fixed on Jesus who begins and finishes our faith. We look to no other but by the Spirit cling to Him alone, He who endured the cross and rose from the grave and sent His Spirit to testify with our spirits that we are the children of God. May we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus all our days. The blessing of our Lord be upon all of you.

God's peace.

Thank God Without Ceasing

I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.

Apostles' Creed, First Article

FOR YOUNG SCHOLARS let it suffice to indicate the most necessary points, namely, as we have said, that this article refers to the Creation: that we emphasize the words: Creator of heaven and earth. But what is the force of this, or what do you mean by these words: I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker, etc.? Answer: This is what I mean and believe, that I am a creature of God; that is, that He has given and constantly preserves to me my body, soul, and life, members great and small, all my senses, reason, and understanding, and so on, food and drink, clothing and support, wife and children, domestics, house and home, etc. Besides, He causes all creatures to serve for the uses and necessities of life sun, moon, and stars in the firmament, day and night, air, fire, water, earth, and whatever it bears and produces, birds and fishes beasts, grain, and all kinds of produce, and whatever else there is of bodily and temporal goods, good government, peace, security. Thus we learn from this article that none of us has of himself, nor can preserve, his life nor anything that is here enumerated or can be enumerated, however small and unimportant a thing it might be, for all is comprehended in the word Creator.

Moreover, we also confess that God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but daily preserves and defends us against all evil and misfortune, averts all sorts of danger and calamity; and that He does all this out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a benevolent Father, who cares for us that no evil befall us. But to speak more of this belongs in the other two parts of this article, where we say: Father Almighty.

Now, since all that we possess, and, moreover, whatever, in addition, is in heaven and upon the earth, is daily given, preserved, and kept for us by God, it is readily inferred and concluded that it is our duty to love, praise, and thank Him for it without ceasing, and, in short, to serve Him with all these things, as He demands and has enjoined in the Ten Commandments.

Martin Luther, The Large Catechism

Not Only...!

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

The fifth chapter of Romans uses two phrases often: “Not only so...” and “Much more...”

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. **And not only so**, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:1-5)* The Apostle previously explained that Abraham was justified by faith without the works of the Law. We also are justified by faith, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

- NOT ONLY do we rejoice in hope, but we rejoice in tribulation also, knowing the fruit it will bear. The end result of tribulation comes back to hope—hope that will not make us ashamed, because God’s love fills our hearts by the Holy Spirit Whom God has sent to us.

*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. **Much more then**, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, **much more**, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. **And not only so**, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Romans 5:8-11)* Paul says a person might possibly give his life to save another who was righteous, and perhaps some would even die to save a good man, but Christ died for ungodly sinners. God shows His incredible love for humankind in that while we were still sinners and enemies of God, He sent His Son to die for us.

- NOT ONLY are we justified by the blood of Christ, but more than that we shall be saved from wrath through Him!
- NOT ONLY, while we were still enemies, were we reconciled to God by the DEATH of His Son, but more than that, now that we are reconciled, we shall be saved by His LIFE.
- NOT ONLY shall we be saved by His life, but more than that, we rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ (by Whom we received the atonement, remember?!)

*For if through the offence of one many be dead, **much more** the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. (Romans 5:15)* The Apostle says that sin entered the world by one, and death came upon all of us through this one.

- NOT ONLY did many die by one man’s trespass, but more than that, the grace of God and the free gift by the One Man Jesus Christ has abounded for many.

*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. (Romans 5:17)* The judgment following one sin brought condemnation, but the free gift of Christ, following the sins of many, brought justification.

- NOT ONLY did death reign by one man, Adam, but more than that, those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life by the One Man, 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 5:18-21)

- NOT ONLY did judgment come upon all men to condemnation, but more than that, the free gift came upon all men to justification of life.
- NOT ONLY by the disobedience of one were many made sinners, but more than that, by the obedience of One many will be made righteous.
- NOT ONLY did sin abound, but more than that, grace did much more abound!
- NOT ONLY did sin reign to death, but more than that, grace reigns to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Thanks be to God.

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Giving Thanks

Pastor Ray Stenersen
Kennewick, Washington

THIS ELEVENTH MONTH OF OUR calendar always provides us a fascinating opportunity in the Church to give thanks for God's blessings to us — past, present, and future.

We begin by looking back, remembering the faithfulness of God to His world and His church as we give thanks on All Saints' Sunday for those who have walked before us in the faith — those whom God used to lay the foundation of faith for us and who are now with the Lord in heaven.

Then we give thanks for all the ways that God provides for us as we come together for our Thanksgiving celebration.

And we look ahead, even as we look back! Sunday, November 27, marks the beginning of the Advent season, the time of the year where the Church renews its fervent prayer, "Come, Lord Jesus!" We ask the Holy Spirit to prepare us to receive our returning King when He comes again, even as we prepare to remember and celebrate His coming as the baby of Bethlehem. We thank God for the salvation He has provided us in Jesus, and we thank Him for the hope that is ours — resurrection victory, new heavens and a new earth, and the promise that we will see our God face-to-face and enter into His joy forever.

Looking back, assessing the present, and looking ahead, we find all sorts of reasons to give thanks. God has provided for us. He has blessed and walked with our families. He has been faithful and true to His promises.

And the final destination for the people of God is utterly glorious, and it is certain. Even if our immediate future may be filled with unknowns, the presence of our King and the power of His Spirit have been promised to us.

Living by faith in the wisdom and power of God, we seek to participate in His mission in a way that blesses others and forms disciples, to His glory.

As part of that process of looking forward and participating faithfully in God's mission, we will be praying for the Holy Spirit's leading as we enjoy another Christ-filled Holiday Season.

God's peace!



Thank You, Jesus!

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:5-6

JUST LISTEN TO THE BEAUTIFUL GOSPEL that points to redemption. It tells us why He was wounded and bruised. It was for our sin and transgressions. But the beauty of it all is that He did it willingly. Scripture says, *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. (Hebrews 12:2) He was chastised so that we might have peace, and we are healed by His stripes. This shows us how perfectly Christ fulfilled all for us, and how God is satisfied with that perfection.

All we like sheep have gone astray. Yes, we have all gone astray, we have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We have turned every one to his own way. So true. We ourselves have all went the way of the flesh to please our own lusts. We are all unworthy of even a drop of His grace. But what does He do? Listen: *...but the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all.* O redeeming love, how great beyond measure. Eternal and powerful. It is able to save to the uttermost.

This chapter speaks so beautifully and powerfully of Christ's redeeming work at Calvary. Blessed Gospel! Blessed Redeemer! Blessed cross! Blessed sacrifice! Precious blood! Precious grace! Christ and Him crucified, our focus, our source of life, peace, hope, and joy. Our resurrection power, our open door of Heaven, our all in all! Amazing, wonderful! And for sinners like you and me! Thank You, Jesus!

Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan
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