

# 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 2013

## Growth in Grace

F. W. Krummacher, Condensed

**Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.**

**Philippians 3:12-14**

**T**HE TRUE CHRISTIAN WILL THINK THIS of himself: *Not as though I had already attained...* He will follow after conformity to Christ; he will never forget that this is the object for which he has been apprehended. Notice that where there is real spiritual life, there is progress, from one state of knowledge and improvement to another.

Paul repeats with greater emphasis: *Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.* He is not speaking of his justification before God, through faith in the righteousness of Christ, for he plainly teaches that the righteousness of Christ, laid hold of by faith, fully justifies us. The apostle is desirous to see the life of his faith in Christ more manifested in his heart and life. To appear, therefore, complacent and self-satisfied with our attainments betrays the ignorance of Christ, and want of faith.

How many appear to suppose they have "already attained!" Take, for instance, *spiritual knowledge*. Many are well acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of the Gospel, are able to defend them, and have their minds stored with no small number of Scripture, psalms and hymns; we are glad to see them thus furnished. But a year afterward we find them just the same. Two years elapse, but still no progress can be perceived—they remind us of wood carved in the form of a tree, rather than a living production of nature, for there are no fresh shoots or new foliage—no expansion of the inward horizon, not a single addition to the treasury of Christian knowledge. "But," you say, "what more do we need to know?" Ah, there it is! You have completed the circle of your knowledge; as you suppose, you are already perfect and have already

attained. This is an indication of spiritual sickness, for if your souls were healthy, you would say, "Not that I have already attained." You would see the imperfection of your knowledge; you would believe that thousands of precious things still lay hidden in the Scriptures; you would investigate the holy writings with increasing interest. We should hear you exclaim, when we see you from time to time, "O, what precious things I have discovered in my Bible! What new and precious light has been given to me! What new and delightful views have I obtained of the glory and excellency of my Redeemer!" The more you grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord, the more valuable will the Scriptures become, and you will be convinced that you might continue to search in this mine all your life, without exhausting half of its treasures, and you will give more diligence to search further into the inexhaustible riches of Christ.

***Every Christian should think of Christ for himself, as the Savior who loved me, and gave Himself for me!***

The righteousness of faith ought to be *continually* our aim, not merely at the commencement of our Christian course. There are hindrances to our attainment of this vigorous state of personal Christianity; we are prone to forget the freeness of the grace of justification before God, through the merits of the Redeemer, as to fall back in some degree upon the covenant of works. We imagine some degree of holiness must be attained before we can rejoice in the free forgiveness of all our sins and our reinstatement in the Divine favor; whereas, it is entirely through our Lord Jesus Christ that God justifies the ungodly. Since our whole peace, comfort and strength depend on our belief of what we are and have in Christ Jesus, we need to constantly direct our endeavors after a full apprehension of the inestimable worth of Christ to our souls. What a blessing to feel that every desire after

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from page 1:

Him is owing to His own previous love toward us, and to His gracious interposition on our behalf. Every Christian should think of Him for himself, as the Savior who loved me, and gave Himself for me!

What is this which Paul so desires? That with every experience that in the Lord Jesus he has all righteousness and strength, he may become more and more like Him by keeping His Word and conforming to His precepts and example. He forgets himself with respect to all he is by nature and birth, and all he had acquired by his own efforts. He is willing to be nothing in his own eyes—nothing but a poor needy sinner. He is not afraid to behold his own natural condition, for he knows that grace excels and repairs it a thousand times; he is much more afraid of the insinuating fancies of his own virtues and good works, because he is, once for all, resolved never to admit any other consolation into his heart than the divine one, that he is justified and complete in Christ.

Many have been tempted to spiritual pride, or else to spiritual depression, by the thoughts of their past experience in the life of grace. O how different does Paul appear in this respect! Still brighter attainments of the confi-

dence and joy of faith are the objects he keeps perpetually in view. He cannot be satisfied with beholding only a few glimmering rays of the divine glory; or with anything short of being ... *changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.* (2 Corinthians 3:18) He saw the fairest days of his spiritual life lying before him. Compared with what was yet to come, all the past was only a foretaste.

Is not here a pattern that may well awaken our desire to grow in grace? What remains, but that we be found living in the same spirit that we may realize the same blessing, the same enjoyments? Put away from yourselves whatever hinders the free, joyful development of spiritual life within you. But as this can only be done by the principles we have endeavored to bring forward—as the love of Christ is the main stem, and faith in Christ is the root of all—keep these principles dearer to you than life itself. May God transplant us from the sterile soil of false legality and self-righteousness to the fruitful, well-watered soil of His own Gospel and under the breathing of His life-giving Spirit cause us to flourish, that we may be perfect in love, and "grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ!" ~

## Peace of God

Pastor Orval Wirkkala  
Kingston, Minnesota

**And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the LORD'S passover, who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when he smote the Egyptians, and delivered our houses. And the people bowed the head and worshipped.**

**Exodus 12:26-27**

**Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.**

**John 20:19**

**G**OD'S PEACE! IN OUR YOUTH we learn certain behaviors by being taught as well as by observing how people relate to us and with one another. Our parents instructed us in, as well as modeled, the type of behavior that they wished to instill in us and in our lives at an early age.

Sometimes we continue to do things without ever coming to understand why we do it. The Lord recognized this tendency in the life of His people, so He instructed them to be ready to provide the answer to the young ones when they asked why they do the rituals that they do in their worship of the Lord. The observance of the Passover pointed to the physical deliverance of their nation by the Lord from the slavery that they had been under in Egypt.

At times I am asked a similar question by people who are not familiar with a custom that has been handed down over the years in the Apostolic Lutheran Church—the handshake with the greeting of "God's peace." In response to this question, I usually point to the greeting that Jesus gave to His disciples after He had risen from the dead, appearing before them who were huddled behind closed doors in fear that perhaps they would be put to death next. They were afraid, but our Lord greeted them with these words: "Peace be unto you."

I go on to explain that because Jesus suffered our death, was buried and arose on the third day on Easter morning, by faith God was now at peace with humankind (Hebrews 11:6). Jesus desired the disciples to be the first recipients of this graceful greeting. Jesus was informing them that they had no reason to fear their God, for His wrath against sin was appeased. He was at peace with them. It was full of grace because Jesus desired that they would come to know and experience the fullness of the loving kindness and favor of God through Himself. Jesus came to gather people for His Father and we are called to imitate Him, through extending the peace of God to all we have opportunity to do so.

**God's peace to you!** May those words which are grounded in the grace of God through Jesus the Christ, and which come from the heart of our Father God, speak peace into your heart and soul today. ~

# Never Alone

Submitted by Alvar Helmes  
Battle Ground, Washington

**N**O ONE WANTS TO BE LEFT ALONE. Sure, we sometimes like to get away and spend some time by ourselves, but no one likes to be abandoned. The fear of loneliness is one of the most powerful in human experience. Babies cry when their mothers leave the room. A teenager's worst nightmare is having to eat lunch alone. Neglected children will often misbehave, because even punishment for them is better than feeling abandoned. And, although locked away already, many prisoners still fear being thrown in isolation. While we experience it in different ways, we all know what it is like to feel loneliness, and it is one of the most painful parts of our existence.

This feeling of abandonment is at the root of many complaints against God about the evil of the world. Why do you put up with injustice and oppression? Have you just left us alone? The prophet Habakkuk called out many years ago: "How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not save? Why do you make me look at injustice? Why do you tolerate wrong? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and conflict abounds (Habakkuk 1:2-3)."

This year some good friends of mine had their first child. However, what should have been a time of great joy was immediately overshadowed by the news that he was born with a serious genetic illness. Requiring a great deal of medical care, he was unable to go home and was sent to the hospital in Toronto near where I live. I spent time



***The manger and eventually the cross are the supreme reminders of God's involvement and intimacy.***

visiting over a period of several months as his loving parents watched him, prayed for him, hoped for his healing. While his dad worked long days and traveled back and forth several hours from their hometown to Toronto every week, his mom hardly ever left the hospital room, often sleeping on the end of the baby's small hospital bed. For eight long months, they watched their little one suffer. As he experienced one painful procedure after another, unable to understand the 'what' or the 'why' of his pain, his parents loved him, made tough decisions, and prayed for his life. Sadly, before his nine month birthday, his struggle ended as he died in the arms of his parents.

In the face of tragedies like this one, we want to cry out against God for not fixing things, or at least to call out and demand answers—why? But this experience reminded

me again of one of the beautiful truths of Christian faith. Because, although he knew pain and suffering, that sweet baby, unlike any other person I've ever met, never knew what it was like to be left alone. And, the Christmas season reminds us that although we do not understand the 'what' or the 'why' of all of our pain, we are not left alone either. Our God is like a father watching over his children, like a mother longing for their healing and bearing their pain as if it were her own. This God does not abandon us to our fate, but has come among us, to be one of us, to experience the very depths of our condition.

It is costly for God to be with us in this way, just as it was costly for my friends to be so close to the pain of their child. But when you love deeply, you want to be with the beloved, whatever the cost. And since we live in pain, brokenness and sin, God's coming among us meant descending into the depths of that pain, brokenness and sin. Now, like that little one, we can be assured that we are never alone, that even when we do not understand the suffering in our lives, we do not bear it by ourselves. And even though my friends were unable to heal their child, this God promises ultimate healing and resurrection to all who will receive it. Like the angels announced, Jesus' birth is good news of great joy for all people.

The manger and eventually the cross are the supreme reminders of God's involvement and intimacy. When we turn to cry out in abandonment to God, we find ourselves face to face with a tortured, bloody man on a cross, in whose death we are accomplices. Before we can even utter the words, we hear Him cry them first: "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" While we rarely ever know the answer to this question—"why?"—the very fact

that Jesus asked it is meaningful. It was not about information. Jesus knew more about the reasons for His suffering than most of us ever do. Information does not take away the pain anyway. However, if you believe that God has truly come to us in the person of Jesus Christ, then Jesus' anguished cry tells us something far important about God. Jesus' cry tells us that even in feelings of ultimate abandonment, we are not alone. The gospel message—that God has come among us—is absolutely transformative. There is no longer any place where God is not because this God has gone with us all the way. Even in the deepest moment of abandonment, we meet the one who is called 'God With Us.'

*"Never Alone," by Rachel Tulloch, A Slice of Infinity, No. 2705, originally printed 19 April 2012 (www.rzim.org). Used by permission of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries.*

*The cross stands as the final symbol that no evil exists that God cannot turn into a blessing. He is the living Alchemist who can take the dregs from the slag-heaps of life—disappointment, frustration, sorrow, disease, death, economic loss, heartache—and transform the dregs into gold.*  
Catherine Marshall



# A Son for Christmas

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello once again, and how are each of you? I certainly hope you are well. My family and I are doing well. We thank God for that. As I sat resting in a comfortable chair this morning, I closed my eyes and was thinking about writing this page of the birth of Jesus as we read it in St. Luke 2. Without opening my Bible I began reciting it to myself. It just seemed to come so easy, as I have heard it so many times, and it is so beautiful each time. Let's go to St. Luke, chapters 1 and 2 and read it again.

**T**HE ANGEL GABRIEL VISITED MARY, a young virgin who was going to be married to a man named Joseph. Gabriel said, *Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.*

Mary was troubled at hearing this greeting, not knowing what he meant. Gabriel then said, *Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. 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.*

Then Mary said to the angel, *How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*

And the angel answered, saying, *The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest (God) shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.*

The angel then shared with Mary that her cousin Elisabeth who was old and had no child had conceived and was in her 6<sup>th</sup> month.

I'm sure Mary was trying to make sense of this news she had just been given. The angel could see her questioning face. Before he left her, the angel gave her these words of comfort, *For with God nothing shall be impossible.*

And Mary said, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*

Mary had much to think about and needed some time so she went to stay with her cousin Elisabeth for a few months. God was with her as she returned home and the Child within her began to grow.

And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree (an order or law) from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed. They had to pay taxes and be counted so the governor would know how many people were in the land. This was not the first time the people were given this order. Each man needed to travel to the town where they were born and pay their tax and be counted.

And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

The travel to Bethlehem took about 3 days. When Joseph and Mary arrived her time of delivery had come.

Joseph had to find a place for them and as the town was full of people, the only space left was a stable. There Mary brought forth her firstborn Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

*And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore (very) afraid. And the angel said unto them, 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.*

Then the sky was filled with angels praising God and saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*



Adoration of the Shepherds by Gerard van Honthorst (1592-1656)

When the angels were gone away into heaven, the shepherds hurried from the fields to find this that the angels had told them of. When they found the Babe, it was just as they had been told. On their way back to the fields they told everyone they met about this Child. All that heard the news wondered at it.

Mary just kept all these things in her heart with deep respect and thought.

The shepherds returned to the field after spreading the good news, praising and glorifying God for all they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them.

What a special night that was for those lowly shepherds! You can be sure they told of it over and over.

Because of the birth of this Babe Jesus, God's only Son, we will one day live with Him forever if we believe in Him. This is the best gift of Christmas. Thank you, God! Wishing each of you a blessed Christmas filled with Jesus who lives in your heart and will abide there even in the new year. ~

# The Light of Life

Pastor Elmer Yliniemi  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined... For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 9:2, 6

**P**ROPHET ISAIAH WAS CALLED BY God at a time in history when the nation had experienced great prosperity and affluence but things were not going well for them. There was indifference, violence, corruption, fraud, abuses of power and immorality. They were worshipping idols and had forsaken the true God. The people walked in darkness.

It was time for God to reveal Himself to His creatures. He gives us hope for we have a gracious and loving Father who wants to draw us to Himself! This hope is found in the Christmas Child, the Savior of the world.

Apostle Matthew reminds us of Isaiah's words when he says, *The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up. From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 4:16-17)* The words of Isaiah written over 700 years before the birth of Christ had now come true.

God never fails to fulfill His promises. God's timetable is not like ours but His Word and promises are sure for He is everlasting truth. *But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. (Galatians 4:4-5)*

The Father in heaven seeks us. *No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. (John 6:44)* The Father by His grace reveals the light to penetrate our souls, and leads us to repentance. *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)*

The heavenly Father revealed the birth of the Savior to the shepherds in Bethlehem and it was the Father in heaven who led the wise men to the Christ Child by the bright star. When the light was revealed to them they believed and obeyed and they started on their journey to the Christ Child. When we are indifferent and do not see our need for a Savior, we are in darkness and blind in our trespasses and sins. This Light must come to us also.

When this Light is revealed to us, we see the holiness of God and our sinfulness as Isaiah did when God called him. *Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts. Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. (Isaiah 6:5-7)* We come to know that we cannot redeem

ourselves from our sins. *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)*

When we are reconciled to God, this Light comes to live within us. He leads us into all truth. Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)* We become children that desire to do the will of God and shun evil.

The shepherds and the wise men rejoiced and glorified God when they found the Christ Child. When we possess the greatest Christmas gift ever given, the Lord Jesus Christ, we too can rejoice and praise God. We must be willing to share the good news and *be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear. (1 Peter 3:15)*

Isaiah gives five titles to this Child:

- His name shall be called **Wonderful**. He is all in all. He keeps His church in His care. Not even the gates of hell can prevail against Him (Matthew 16:18).
- He is called **Counselor**. Truth comes from Him. His Word is truth. Do we lack wisdom? Ask Him!
- He is called the **Mighty God**. Jesus Christ is God, who was victorious over Satan, death and the world. He is God with us! Jesus said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth (Matthew 28:18)."
- He is called the **Everlasting Father**. He protects us and preserves us. He will not fail us, nor forsake us. He is the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and end, the first and last. He intercedes for us before the Father.
- He is the **Prince of Peace**. He came to reconcile the world to God, to turn people from darkness to His Light, from the power of Satan unto God. He gives us peace through the forgiveness of sins.

These five names teach us that Jesus Christ is all in all and we can trust Him no matter what we face. He came as a Baby in the manger so we would not be afraid to draw near to Him. He leads us to the Father, for He is one with the Father (John 10:30)!

**T**HE WORLD IN IGNORANCE MAY try to remove all mention of Christ from Christmas, but the world will never succeed in destroying His power and the wonderful message of the forgiveness of sins in the name and blood of Jesus. The birth, death and resurrection of Jesus truly changed the world. He is truly the King of Kings! The day will come when *at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:10-11)*

Perhaps many are confused and fearful of what is happening in the world around us, along with our personal trials. However, we can rejoice and praise God as we celebrate this Christmas season, secure in the knowledge that God is still on His throne and will see us through whatever the new year may bring. ~



# Growing in Grace

Pastor Don Salo  
New York Mills, Minnesota

**But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.**

**2 Peter 3:18**

**W**HEN WE ARE BORN ANEW into the kingdom of God, we become new born babes. When faith enters the heart, we begin to walk as God's children. We understand enough to believe and know that we are saved. Our Christian walk has just begun. We desire the milk of the Word in the beginning, but as we mature in faith, we are able to receive the stronger meat of God's Word.

The Bible gives us some examples of spiritual immaturity: *And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. (1 Corinthians 3:1-2) That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. (Ephesians 4:14) For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. (Hebrews 5:12-13)*

Spiritual growth comes from the studying of God's Word. *As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. (1 Peter 2:2-3)*

As we study and mature in Christ we grow in many ways. First, and most important, is that we grow in Christ. *But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ. (Ephesians 4:15)* It is important that we grow in Christ for He is everything to us. He is the One who has redeemed us with His atoning death on the cross at Calvary. He is the One who has risen from the dead and has conquered death and the grave. He is the One who has promised to be with us unto the end of the world. He is the One who said He will come again and

receive us unto Himself in glory. When we know this Christ as our Savior, we have everything.

We also grow in love, as Paul writes. *And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you. (1 Thessalonians 3:12)* Jesus gave us a new commandment: *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (John 13:34)*

Jesus also gave us an example of how much He loved us. *Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:13)* Eventually this will lead us unto perfection. *Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. (Hebrews 6:1)*

There are signs that will indicate spiritual growth: *The righteous also shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean hands shall be stronger and stronger. (Job 17:9)* They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. *(Psalm 84:7)* But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. *(Proverbs 4:18)* Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. *(1 Timothy 4:15)*

There are signs that show spiritual maturity: *When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (1 Corinthians 13:11)* As we grow, we strive after Christ more and more. *Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. (Ephesians 4:13)*

As we grow we are able to take the meat of His Word. *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. (Hebrews 5:14)*

To continue to grow in grace and the knowledge of Jesus Christ, we must study His Word daily. We are encouraged to pray without ceasing. John tells us that we are to have fellowship one with another, and with God the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. May we continue in unity to grow and uplift the name of our Lord. ~

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# In Memory of Jouko Valitalo

**I**T WILL BE ONE YEAR ON November 1<sup>st</sup> when my brother Jouko was called home to eternity to be with the Lord. Jouko never lost sight of the prize that is promised for all who are faithful to the end. I still vividly remember the day when Jouko received the reassurance at the age of 15 that his sin load was lifted and he could believe all his sins forgiven in the name and precious blood of Jesus according to the Scriptures. At those services several of our family received the grace of repentance and the power to believe. It was special to hear Jouko exclaim the feelings of grace that the Lord had given him, which he was able to experience for several weeks as he felt the warmth of God overwhelm him.

Jouko's ministry started as soon as he had received the grace to believe. It was some weeks later that God called me also and Jouko was the one that proclaimed the Gospel unto me. At this time I was 12 years old. We were very close as brothers throughout our lives and I have many fond memories of him.

We had recently moved to Toronto, Ontario, Canada from Finland and as we held home services Jouko did the early translating as he was quicker to learn English. Jouko continued to serve faithfully as preacher in the Toronto congregation unto the end. Although Jouko was hesitant in speech he was bold in the Spirit and strong in the Word. He also actively served in the *Suomi Koti* holding services

and was instrumental in the Finnish community to get church services to the Finnfest that is held annually. He was called on by the other Finnish congregations to preach as well. Jouko's personal confession of faith sparked the interest of a professor to teach a course on the life of Lars Leevi Laestadius at the University of Toronto. This professor recognized that Laestadius was an influential person of Finnish history who had the greatest impact on people's spiritual lives.

As an adult Jouko's social life circled greatly around his family, church and spiritual matters. His wife Helena, his children: Monica, Stephen, Robert and Marianne and their families, his 10 brothers and sisters: Linnea, Liisa, Antti, Tapani, Leena, Matti, Laila, Helina, Hilka, and Lilly and their families were always very close to his heart.

Jouko had a gentle heart for the less fortunate and was always willing to give of his time and substance. He left a solid testimony of his faith and we rejoice in his homecoming, but his passing leaves a big longing for him in the hearts of his family and friends.

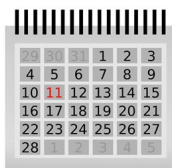
The last night as he prepared for his final sleep he left his Finnish *Biblia* (Bible) open with his glasses in the middle page of Isaiah 45. Good night, dear brother.

*In Love and God's peace,  
Matti Valitalo  
Lake Worth, Florida*

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*Corrie Karlsen, ALC Calendar Committee*

**T**HEY THAT ARE HIS OWN have been commanded to comfort penitent souls with the assurance that their sins are all forgiven in the name of Jesus and in His precious atoning blood. To those who believe this, Christmas has arrived, for they received the greatest Gift of all: the King of Kings for their very own to keep, and through Him salvation full and free and a "lively hope"



that one day they shall triumphantly enter with Him into the new Jerusalem to join the heavenly throng to sing the eternal Christmas hymn: Hosanna to the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords! Hosanna in the highest! Hallelujah, Amen!

*The late Andrew Mickelsen  
December 1961 CM*

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## The Dayspring

*Pastor Ron Holmgren  
Hockinson, Washington*

And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying... And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins, Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.

Luke 1:67, 76-79

**T**HIS NAME OF OUR LORD is descriptive. Without much stretching we can grasp some of the meaning. We can see the dark night with all its questions, fears and mystery passing away as the sun rises to its zenith and all of darkness flees. The sun is not slowed down. Darkness must yield. As the Apostle of love explains, darkness could not apprehend, attain, nor overtake it. Shadows of the night are replaced with full revelation. All living things reach for the warmth of the rays and their colors are radiant as they are seen reflecting the sun.

When Paul wrote of the whole of creation groaning and suffering in pain together, it was waiting for the deliverance from corruption as we all do. And now is come salvation, now is the revelation of all things which were hidden when darkness prevailed. Rejoice my friend, and sing of the Light that has come to us who sat in darkness. Jesus is born in Bethlehem and He has brought salvation with Him. He will lead us out of the darkness into His marvelous light. The father of John the Baptist preached the words, "the Dayspring from on high hath visited us."

He knew that his son would precede the great deliverer Jesus Christ. John would prepare the way of the Lord and point Him out to those who looked for deliverance. This is the beauty of Christmas. Light has come and we can walk in the light as He is in the light.

When I was a boy, our family had many traditions. We made preparations for the season of Christmas with decorations, gifts and special food. The Norwegian heritage included so many things like sweets, sausage, fish and meat balls. I well remember those days with fondness. Grandparents and other relatives gathered together and a festive atmosphere filled the house. Lights and candy, snow hoped for even if it seldom came in our area. And with all this the church sang and talked of the incarnation of Jesus.

Many times we worry that the meaning of Christmas is lost in all the festivities. It may be so, but we still can celebrate and share with one another the joy of His coming in our traditional ways. I believe just the fact that the world puts up all the lights and decorations is a testimony to the great effect Jesus has and continues to have on the whole world.

We continue to have traditions at home with our family. I pray our children remember these days as special and full of love, sharing and joyfully remembering the coming of the Lord Jesus in the manger.

God bless you this Christmas and through the coming year with the revelation of His love. Jesus came for you and for me to give us light and salvation through His ultimate gift on the cross of Calvary. ~



**W**E NEED TODAY TO DRAW closer to Him who rebuked the wind and the waves, and said: "Peace! Be still!" He alone can calm our troubled spirit and cool our feverish brow. We need the touch of His calm, cool hand upon our fretful and feverish brow—yes, we need to know and feel the touch of that hand which calmed the storms and settled the waves; the hand which was laid upon the sick, and upon the sightless eyes to restore them once more to sight. The hand which was raised to heaven as He blessed the loaves beside the sea; the hand which was placed upon the little children as He said, "Suffer them to come unto Me, and forbid them not."

The hands which were wounded for us, pierced through with the nails of our sins to the central cross of Calvary.

Can you believe, dear reader, that Christ lays His hands upon you when those whom He has sent do so in faith? When a disciple of Christ lays his or her hand upon you, can you believe it to be the hand of the Great Master of Galilee? Can you believe the word which His servant speaks is the Word of God, and the blessing which he administers is the blessing of the Father Himself, and Christ His beloved Son?

*the late A. B. Anderson; June 1953 CM*