

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.

January 2014



Jesus Came for Sinners

Pastor Travis Seppala
Greer, South Carolina

But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Matthew 9:12-13

WITH THE APPROACH OF EACH new year a familiar scene takes place in the lives of many people. A self assessment is made, and upon the conclusion of said assessment, people resolve to make behavioral changes in an effort to improve the quality of their lives. They resolve to start exercising and eating healthier. They resolve to quit drinking so much coffee, to quit smoking and any other bad habits they may have developed. They then doggedly try to keep these resolutions only to find themselves, in many cases, making the same resolutions as the next new year approaches.

Although the very nature of the practice may seem comical, it reveals a truth that is not at all humorous: many people are not happy with who they are. Instead, they want to rid themselves of all kinds of traits. They are too fat, short, ugly or plain. They find themselves selfish, full of pride, uncaring and greedy. The poor think they are worthless and the lonely think nobody cares for them. Many people realize they are full of flaws, and in many cases these flaws define people and cause them to think they are unlovable.

WHILE HE WAS HERE JESUS embraced this caste of people so lovingly, the sinners, bruised and broken by the fall and desperately wanting to be free from the flaws they carried. Christ did something remarkable in that He simply overlooked those flaws and showed unconditional love. When Matthew the tax collector met Jesus he was sitting at his booth collecting money. As despised as tax collectors were, Christ showed no hatred and instead gave the simple call, "Follow Me." Upon hearing this call, Matthew got up and followed Jesus. Jesus didn't see Matthew as full of flaws. Rather, He saw

someone He loved dearly. No matter what shortcomings may have existed in Matthew's life, Jesus did not hesitate to show mercy and grace. This wonderful grace attracted so many people to Christ, those people who for so long had seen themselves as unworthy and without hope, sinners from all walks of life, judged as useless by the religious leaders of the day. Jesus the Son of God ate and drank with them. He loved them and spent time with them. He made no righteous demands, but brought forgiveness and freedom with His call to follow Him.

When the Pharisees questioned His behavior, Jesus offered no excuses but explained that He was here for these very types of people. He clarified that God didn't want sacrifices and perfectly performed religious rites. Instead, Christ revealed that God was here to take care of the sinners of this world. He made it known that God was not interested in resolutions to become better people. God wanted people as they were, flaws and all, regardless of whether they assumed they were worthy or not. In so doing Christ destroyed whatever offerings people brought to God in hopes of winning His favor and made it known once and for all that sin did not characterize the human race, rather, Christ characterized the human race.

IMPERFECTIONS ARE ALWAYS GOING TO be evident. The miracle of the Good News of Jesus Christ is that these blemishes no longer determine a person's value. People may be overweight, unemployed, lonely, addicted, or depressed, and yet, God still loves them. None of these traits change God's love for them one iota. God shows His love to this day in that He sent His Son to die for us, and this act of love is where a person's value is found. It is not found in the flaws one has or one's ability to fix those flaws. Instead what makes people valuable and lovable is found in God's love for them. The only qualification Jesus makes is that we must be sinners. He came for sinners, so those who find themselves to be sinners can be at peace and relax because Christ came to the sick and sinful, not the healthy and righteous. ~

The Acceptable Year of the Lord

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

ANOTHER YEAR HAS COME AND GONE and we begin a new year. In the church year, we enter the time of Epiphany, where we recall the appearing and revelation of our Lord. We see in the biblical passages for this time the manifestation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ through the things He said and did. One thing that stands out is when He entered the synagogue in His hometown of Nazareth and read from the scroll of Isaiah. *And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read. And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears. (Luke 4:16-21)*

Jesus, the Son of God, enters the synagogue and reads the words of Isaiah concerning Himself. The consolation of Israel has come and the people in the synagogue have no understanding when He says, *This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.* Their Messiah is seated in their presence; their God is present with them. It is the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of the Lord's favor. The restoration they have been waiting for, and perhaps heard of all their lives, is now seated in their midst. They marvel at the gracious words coming out of His mouth, yet they doubt and question, saying, "Is not this Joseph's son?" They needed the revelation of God to understand exactly who this Man was, to understand His gracious words, because only by revelation does one come to understand a God who is gracious. The purpose of this text for us is that we would understand that God now accepts us because of the finished work of His Son.

The Scripture is packed with the gracious words of our God revealing His restoring work for His people. Jesus is now here as the fulfillment of all the Scriptures. He was filled with the Holy Spirit and was carrying out the gracious works of God. He came with the good news that this is the year of God's favor; God is now accepting people because of His Son. The work of Jesus bears testimony to this in His care of the people. Remember what He tells John the Baptist when he asked if Jesus was really the Messiah: *When the men were come unto him, they said, John Baptist hath sent us unto thee, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another? And in that same hour he cured many of their infirmities and plagues, and of evil spirits; and unto many that were blind he gave sight. Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached. And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me. (Luke 7:20-23)*

THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD has not ended. Today is still the day of the Lord's favor. We often refer to it as the "day of grace." Paul writes of this in 2 Corinthians 6:2: *For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.* The good news for us and the world is that today is the day of salvation. The work has been done and the payment has been made. We are accepted as sons of God.

The people gathered in the synagogue that day could never understand the words of Jesus because they viewed Him in the wrong way. He was not just Joseph's son; He was and is the Son of God. He came to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus came to receive us unto Himself so that we as well would be sons of God.

He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:11-13) ~



WHAT A GLORIOUS OPPORTUNITY WE HAVE in this great land of America to sow the seeds of truth into the hearts of men! Let us pray that the Lord of Harvest will give moisture from above so that the words of everlasting life may take root and grow and bear fruit unto righteousness and everlasting life... We pray that these times will indeed be a glorious golden opportunity which thousands will not waste but heed the loving call of the Great Master of Galilee who came here to save sinners.

We hope that the Word will be more precious than gold which perishes to thousands of shut-ins, the unfortunate, the sick and bedridden. The words of God are indeed more precious than gold nuggets or gems of great price, more precious than land and cattle, power and prestige, stocks and bonds and the renown of this world, all of which shall soon pass away.

the late Arnold B. Anderson

If a Man Love Me, He Will Keep My Words

Kaare Suhr; November 1996 CM
Submitted by Dave Impola; Seattle, Washington

GOD HAS CALLED US THROUGH His Word, and He has revealed His grace to us through His Word. We have become sinners through the enlightenment of God's Word and, by the testimony of this same Word, we have also been able to believe that our sins are forgiven. We have come to know God's wrath toward sin but also His love toward the sinner who humbles himself under His mighty hand.

We have heard the Gospel, and we know that the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes. Faith is also a gift of God. The Lord Jesus is the author and finisher of our faith; He alone is our righteousness. It is by His grace that we have been saved through faith.

God loved us so highly that He called us, lost and condemned sinners, to be His children. This great love enables us to understand that we are indebted to love God and all of those who are born of God. Love to God is also evidenced in a love of His Word. Therefore, Jesus said, *If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.* (John 14:23)

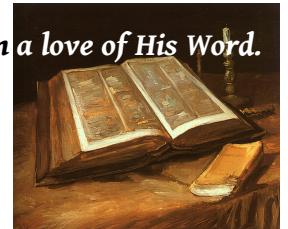
But the Word of God does not speak to us only of God's love; it speaks to us of His righteousness and of His wrath toward sin. The apostle Paul gives this testimony concerning the written Word: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* (2 Timothy 3:16)

When the spoken word is according to the written Word, it contains both comfort and admonition. Thus it was with the teachings of Jesus. His Word was comfort and salvation to the repentant sinner; it was admonition and chastisement to those who did not receive it. Therefore, it is necessary for all of us to humble ourselves under the Word of God so we may lay aside all of those things that the Word shows us to be contrary to the will of God.

None of us is perfect; we are all guilty before God. But we see also that even though Jesus was a faultless preacher who preached the perfect and living Word there were still those who would not humble themselves unto repentance in obedience to this Word. They said, *This is an hard saying; who can hear it?* (John 6:60)

If we become guilty under the hearing of the Word of God and cannot find any fault with the Word, the fault must lie in us. It will be harmful to us if we allow ourselves to be offended at the one who has spoken the Word, as did the Jews, rather than acknowledge and confess our own sins. The most important thing is not who speaks the Word but what is spoken. When the Word of God is spoken according to the Scriptures and the doctrine of Jesus, it will be a blessing and a joy to those who keep it.

Love to God is also evidenced in a love of His Word.



But the devil, who is God's enemy, will endeavor to corrupt the Word. If he has great wrath toward the children of God who love His Word, how much greater is his wrath toward those who are the preachers of the Word! He endeavors in every way to cause them to forsake their labors in the Lord's vineyard. Therefore, I encourage all of the children of God who love God's Word to pray to the Lord of the harvest that He will send forth laborers into His harvest. The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few. Pray also for those who continue to preach the Word. Ask God to be with them and strengthen them so that their work might be to the glory of God and to the salvation of souls; yes, that they might labor in one Spirit so that there will be one flock and one Shepherd. ~

WHEREVER AND WHENEVER YOU ARE ABLE to hear God's Word you ought not to despise it, but receive it with heartfelt desire. Now, God has caused His Word to go forth through all the world, so that it fills every nook and corner, and wherever you go you find God's Word. If I preach the forgiveness of sins, I preach the true Gospel. For the sum of the Gospel is: Whosoever believeth in Christ shall receive the forgiveness of his sins. Thus a Christian preacher cannot open his mouth unless he pronounces an absolution. Christ also does the same in the Gospel lesson when He says, "Pax vobiscum," Peace be unto you. That is, I proclaim unto you, as of God, that you have peace and forgiveness of sins; this is even the Gospel itself, and absolution.

Martin Luther

WE ARE NOT ALL CALLED TO BE the King's ambassadors, but *all* who have heard the messages of salvation for themselves are called to be the Lord's messengers, and day by day, as He gives us opportunity, we are to deliver the Lord's message unto the people. That message, as committed to Haggai, was, "I am with you," saith the Lord. Is there not work enough for any lifetime in unfolding and distributing that one message to His own people? Then, for those who are still far off, we have that equally full message from our Lord to give out, which He has condensed for us into the one word, "Come!"

Frances Ridley Havergal

O Come, Let Us Adore Him

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

God's peace to each of you today. We will continue with the Christmas story; it is so beautiful one never tires of telling it. I hope that you children and all who read it will never tire of it either. Let's hear about the visit of the wise men in *Matthew 2:1-23*.

FAR AWAY EASTWARD FROM WHERE Jesus was born, some wise men who possibly studied the stars were waiting for the Messiah, the One who would come to rule Israel. At the time of Jesus' birth, these men were given a sign, the star, that showed them of the coming of the One who had been so long awaited. Remember the shepherds were given a sign, too. The angel who came announcing the birth told the shepherds that the sign they should look for would be a Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes.

After the wise men saw the new star, they began their search for this King that had been born. I believe God not only gave them the star as a sign, but He also revealed by His Spirit what the star really meant.

I can well imagine the excitement of the wise men; they were actually going to see the Christ Child! The wise men had to travel about 500 miles and would be going by camel. I have heard some say that they would most likely have traveled as much as they could in the company of other travelers since it could have been dangerous to go so far with just a small number. Often there were thieves hiding along the roads in different areas. It makes sense that they would travel with others for their own safety.

IT TOOK THE WISE MEN a long time to reach Jerusalem. Upon arriving there, they went first to King Herod's palace and asked: *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:2-3) Now Herod surely did not want anyone else to be king and he planned somehow to get rid of this new King. First he gathered all the chief priests and scribes together and asked them where this Baby was to be born. They told him that the prophet had said it would be in Bethlehem.

Herod then asked the wise men to meet with him alone. He wanted to know when they had first seen the star. He was trying to figure out how old this Baby might

be at the time Herod learned about His birth. Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem saying: *Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.*



When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. (Matthew 2:8-10)

MY HEART REJOICES WHEN I THINK that the wise men came to the very door of the place where the Baby Jesus was. They went into the house and when they saw Jesus with Mary His mother, they fell down and worshipped Him. They gave Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. What a special moment that must have been!

God warned these men in a dream not to go back to Herod but to go home a different way. He also warned Joseph in a dream to take the young Child and His mother and flee into Egypt because Herod intended to destroy Him. Joseph immediately fled with his family while it was still night. Herod was very angry at the wise men for not returning to tell him where the Baby was, and he sent out men to kill all the babies who were two years old and younger in Bethlehem and all the coasts of that area. This was a very sad thing. Herod did not realize that God was taking care of His Son and protecting Him from all harm.

We can be so thankful to God for sending His Son to us, and we can rejoice once again in the celebration of His birth this Christmas season. ~

Circle the correct word in each group. See Matthew 2:9-12 if you need help.

When they had heard the king, they **DODGED** / **DEPARTED** / **DAWDLED**; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the **NORTH** / **SOUTH** / **EAST** / **WEST**, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young **MOTHER** / **CHILD** / **FATHER** was. When they saw the star, they **REJOICED** / **RECEIVED** / **REMINDED** with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his **GRANDMOTHER** / **AUNT** / **MOTHER**, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their **SUITCASES** / **TREASURES** / **PACKAGES**, they presented unto him gifts; **BRONZE** / **SILVER** / **GOLD**, and frankincense, and **OLIVE OIL** / **MYRRH** / **ALOE**.

And being warned of God in a **LETTER** / **E-MAIL** / **DREAM** that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own **CONTINENT** / **COUNTRY** / **COUNTY** another way.



Heavenly Bread

DR. KUMAR, ALONG WITH SUPPORT from families in America, has begun a publishing effort for children in India. Dr. Kumar selects Bible stories from the *Christian Monthly* and *Christian Monthly for Children* and translates them into the Telugu language. He also uses Bible stories from selected pastors in India with whom he works. The new bimonthly *Heavenly Bread* is in its infancy; they have only published two editions. Following are excerpts of a letter from Dr. Kumar:

Greetings to you in Jesus' name. By the grace of God and by your prayers and heart for serving the Lord among small children we were able to print 2,600 copies of *Heavenly Bread*. We should have printed more than 4,000 copies but the conditions of the government are not good to grant the paper with discount.

Many thanks to you and to all your family for supporting to publish the bimonthly *Heavenly Bread* for the children. These copies already reached our pastors to share among the Sunday School children. Many thanks from the pastors who received the *Heavenly Bread* copies for the Sunday School children. They thank you and the Sunday School children also thank you as they are receiving copies. This *Heavenly Bread* was great encouragement for the Sunday School children to come to church and to know the Lord from childhood. This leads them to depend on Christ for faith, obedience, for walk and for wisdom when they are growing.

Yours in the Lord of Lord's ministry of the children,
Dr. Syam Kumar

Dr. Kumar says that he could easily distribute more than 100,000 copies of each edition to the children in his churches if he had the financial resources. The population of India is approaching 1.3 billion. If you can support this ministry, please earmark your donation for "Heavenly Bread" and send to the Foreign Mission, 1601 NW 4th Avenue, Battle Ground, WA 98604. ~



Front cover of *Heavenly Bread*, October 2013

Life's Harvest

the late John E. Anderson

Submitted by Alvar Helmes; Battle Ground, Washington

I journeyed one day
Along life's way
Toward the gathering gloom,
When a voice seemed to speak,
What dost thou seek
On this path that seals your doom?

Your eyes do face
Toward the sinking grace
Of life's once resplendent sun,
But 'twill soon be dark
With no light to mark
The dangers you seek to shun.

The day is old
And the night grows cold
Your life will soon be spent,
And stark pale death
With its icy breath
Your body and soul will rend.

I quickly turned
And with awe I learned
'Twas a Friend I'd left behind;
A Friend who'd riven
The gates of Heaven
To search for the lost and blind.

'Twas then I knelt
As His love I felt
And opened my heart to Him;
In love He smiled
And spoke, "My child,
My blood has covered your sin."

"Arise once more
And face yon shore
Where the light of love doth shine;
And strive to guide
Against sin's tide
The sheep I claim as Mine." ~

From Death to Life



Conversion is often compared to a resurrection. Wicked men are said to be dead, but when they are converted they are represented as being by God's mighty and effectual power raised from the dead. Now there is no medium between being dead and alive. He that is dead has no degree of life; he that has the least degree of life in him is alive. When a man is raised from the dead, life is not only in a greater degree, but it is all new.

Jonathan Edwards

Our Spiritual Service

Martin Luther

Sermon for the first Sunday after Epiphany

Romans 12:1: I beseech you therefore, brethren...

Paul does not say, "I command you." He is preaching to those already godly Christians through faith in the new man, to hearers who are not to be constrained by commandments, but to be admonished, for the object is to secure voluntary renunciation of their old, sinful, Adam-like nature. He who will not cheerfully respond to friendly admonition is no Christian. And he who attempts by the restraints of Law to compel the unwilling to renunciation, is no Christian preacher or ruler; he is but a worldly jailer.

...by the mercies of God...

A teacher of the Law enforces his restraints through threats and punishments. A preacher of grace persuades and incites by calling attention to the goodness and mercy of God. The latter does not desire works prompted by an unwilling spirit, or service that is not the expression of a cheerful heart. He desires that a joyous, willing spirit shall incite to the service of God. He who cannot, by the gracious and lovely message of God's mercy so lavishly bestowed upon us in Christ, be persuaded in a spirit of love and delight to contribute to the honor of God and the benefit of his neighbor, is worthless to Christianity, and all effort is lost on him. How can one whom the fire of heavenly love and grace cannot melt be rendered cheerfully obedient by laws and threats? Not human mercy is offered us, but divine mercy, and Paul would have us perceive it and be moved thereby.

...that ye present your bodies...

Many and various were the sacrifices of the Old Testament, but all were typical of this one sacrifice of the body, offered by Christ and His Christians. There is not, nor can be, any other sacrifice in the New Testament. What more would one, or could one, offer than himself, all he is and all he has? When the body is yielded a sacrifice, all belonging to the body is yielded also. Therefore, the Old Testament sacrifices, with the priests and all the splendor, have terminated. How does the offering of a penny compare with that of the body? Indeed, such fragmentary patchwork scarcely deserves recognition as a sacrifice when the bodies of Christ and of His followers are offered.

Consequently, Isaiah may truly say that in the New Testament such beggarly works are loathsome compared to real and great sacrifices: *He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood; he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol...* (Isaiah 66:3) Similarly, also: *To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.* (Isaiah 1:11) Thus, in plain words, Isaiah rejects all other sacrifices in view of this true one.

...a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God...

Paul here makes use of the three words "living," "holy," and "acceptable," doubtless to teach that the sacrifices of the Old Testament are repealed and the entire priesthood abolished. The Old Testament sacrifices consisted of bullocks, sheep and goats. To these life was not spared. For the sacrifice they were slain, burned, consumed by the priests. But the New Testament sacrifice is a wonderful offering. Though slain, it still lives. Indeed, in proportion as it is slain and sacrificed, does it live in vigor. *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.* (Romans 8:13) *For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.* (Colossians 3:3) *And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* (Galatians 5:24)

The New Testament sacrifice is a wonderful offering. Though slain, it still lives.

The word "living," then, is to be spiritually understood as having reference to the life before God and not to the temporal life. He who keeps his body under and mortifies its lusts does not live to the world; he does not lead the life of the world. The world lives in its lusts, and according to the flesh; it is powerless to live otherwise. True, the Christian is bodily in the world, yet he does not live after the flesh. As Paul says, *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh.* (2 Corinthians 10:3) And again, *There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* (Romans 8:1) Such a life is, before God, eternal, and a true, living sacrifice. Such mortification of the body and of its lusts, whether effected by voluntary discipline or by persecution, is simply an exercise in and for the life eternal.

None of the Old Testament sacrifices were holy except in an external and temporal sense—until they were consumed. For the life of the animal was but temporal and external previous to the sacrifice. But the "living sacrifice" Paul mentions is righteous before God, and also externally holy. "Holy" implies simply being designed for the service and the honor of God, and employed of God. Hence we must here understand the word "holy" as conveying the thought that we let God alone work in us and we be simply His holy instruments. As said in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20, *What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* Galatians 6:17: *...I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.*

Now, he who performs a work merely for his own pleasure and to his own honor, profanes his sacrifice. So also do they who by their works seek to merit reward from

God, whether temporal or eternal. The point of error is that they are not yet a slain sacrifice. The sacrifice cannot be holy unless it first lives; that is, unless it is slain before God, and slain in its own consciousness, and thus does not seek its own honor and glory.

The Old Testament sacrifices were not in themselves acceptable to God. Nor did they render man acceptable. But in the estimation of the world—before men—they were pleasing, even regarded highly worthy. Men thought thereby to render themselves well-pleasing in God's sight. But the spiritual sacrifice is, in man's estimation, the most repugnant and unacceptable of all things. It condemns, mortifies and opposes whatever, in man's judgment, is good and well-pleasing, for nature cannot do otherwise than to live according to the flesh, particularly to follow its own works and inventions. It cannot admit that all its efforts and designs are vain and worthy of mortification and of death. The spiritual sacrifice is acceptable to God, Paul teaches, however unacceptable it may be to the world. They who render this living, holy sacrifice are happy and assured of their acceptance with God; they know God requires the death of the lusts and inventions of the flesh, and He alone desires to live and work in us.

Consequently, Paul's use of the word "body" includes more than outward, sensual vices and crimes, as gluttony, fornication, murder; it includes everything not of the new spiritual birth but belonging to the old Adam nature, even its best and noblest faculties, outer and inner; the deep depravity of self-will, for instance, and arrogance, human wisdom and reason, reliance on our own good works, on

our own spiritual life and on the gifts wherewith God has endowed our nature.

To illustrate: Take the most spiritual and the wisest individuals on earth, and while it is true that a fraction of them are outwardly and physically chaste, their hearts, it will be found, are filled with haughtiness, presumption and self-will, while they delight in their own wisdom and peculiar conduct. No saint is wholly free from the deep depravity of the inner nature. Hence he must constantly offer himself up, mortifying his old deceitful self. Paul calls it sacrificing the body, because the individual, on becoming a Christian, lives more than half spiritually, and the evil propensities remaining to be mortified Paul attributes to the body as to the inferior, the less important, part of man; the part not as yet wholly under the Spirit's influence.

...which is your reasonable service.

A clear distinction is here made between the services rendered God by Christians and those which the Jews rendered. The thought is: the Jews' service to God consisted in sacrifices of irrational beasts, but the service of Christians, in spiritual sacrifices—the sacrifice of their bodies, their very selves. The Jews offered gold and silver; they built an inanimate temple of wood and stone. Christians are a different people. Their sacrifices are not silver and gold. Their temple is not wood and stone; it is themselves. In brief, this our reasonable service is rightly called a spiritual service of the heart, performed in the faith and the knowledge of God. ~



Come Unto Me

HOW WONDERFUL IT IS TO know that the invitation of our Savior is still heard above the clamor and the din of this world's

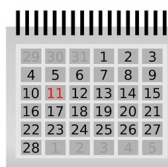
activities. His voice is so calming and distinctly clear: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.* (Matthew 11:28) The "rest" of which Jesus speaks is not a rest for our tired bodies but rather a rest from one's own futile efforts to earn his salvation by his own works, which can never appease the wrath of God over sin. Jesus has already paid the dreadful price for our sin for the redemption of mankind on the cross of Calvary and He tenderly invites all to come to Him.

Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan

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Judge Not

Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota



Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?

James 4:11-12

In what ways do we judge one another?

1. Telling an outright lie about another that harms their reputation in the eyes of others.

He that hideth hatred with lying lips, and he that uttereth a slander, is a fool. (Proverbs 10:18)

2. Making a judgment in our own mind of a matter before hearing the whole matter.

He that is first in his own cause seemeth just; but his neighbour cometh and searcheth him. (Proverbs 18:17)

3. Passing along an evil report about someone which we know is true, but there is no good purpose to pass it on.

He that covereth a transgression seeketh love; but he that repeateth a matter separateth very friends. (Proverbs 17:9)

4. Assigning evil motives to a person's actions when we are merely surmising.

He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings... (1 Timothy 6:4)

5. Drawing negative conclusions and sharing them with others when we do not have all the facts.

He that answereth a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame unto him. (Proverbs 18:13)

When we speak evil of one another, we assume the place of the Giver of the law, rather than being under the law of the Spirit of life, that which leads and empowers us to honor and obey the counsel of the Word of God in all matters of life. *For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment. (James 2:13)*

We should ask ourselves these questions in order to avoid entering into wrongful judgment:

1. Is what I heard true?
2. Have I heard the whole matter?
3. Is it necessary to repeat it?
4. Am I assuming something to be true without facts?
5. Am I repeating a matter based on my assumptions without facts?

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Sin is not some inevitable subterranean stream that binds us all together. Rather it is a consequence resulting from individual acts of wrongdoing. Sadly, we never sin without the sin having some consequence for others. In this we are responsible for compounding the evil in our world. And just as an act of goodness can have implications beyond our immediate sphere, so an act of evil can have results far beyond its apparent impact. We need only think of how damaging, unsubstantiated gossip can spread like dandelion plumes in the wind. Clearly, we need God's grace to help us stop at sin's point of genesis.

Thought: Sin has a way of compounding its effect.

May we be sensitive to the Spirit of the Lord as we consider the importance of loving one another in word and deed. God bless our meditations in His Word. ~

For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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.

2 Corinthians 5:14-21

