

# 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 2016

## The Foolishness of Preaching

Pastor Gerry Southerton  
Vancouver, Washington

**A**S THE NEW YEAR COMES AGAIN, we look at things with an eye for the new. We often do self-examinations at this time of year and think about changing things. We want to change our bodies, our habits and many other things. We also start to look at things thinking that new is better. I was thinking about cookware. We have all these new non-stick coatings on pots and pans, and now the new fad is a time-proven one, cast iron.



The reason that I am rambling about this “new” is, many times, we in the Church want something different. The Church at times has tried to entertain rather than fulfill the calling of the Church, which is to preach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments. I am not going to deal with the Sacraments in this article, but rather deal with the preaching of the Word. If we were designing how to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, most of us would not think of doing a long monologue week after week; rather, we would think of something more flashy or attention-getting than a man up in front of a church talking. It sometimes seems kind of foolish. Let us look at the foolishness of preaching according to the Scripture.

*Where is the wise? where is the scribe? where is the disputer of this world? hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom: But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are*

*called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.*

**1 Corinthians 1:20-31**

We like to think of ourselves as pretty smart. Here we see that God does not think we are so smart. Our wisdom is foolishness to God. We want something exciting rather than the boring preacher, but this is the method that God gave us as the Church to spread the message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. It is counter-intuitive to preach people into faith, but we also know the Scripture teaches us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. In preaching, God works something that goes beyond what we think is happening. There is power in the proclaimed Word of God to work faith in people. Our text states: *For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom.* Things have not changed in all the years. We are still looking for signs and wisdom different from how God has chosen to work. You would think that we would learn not only from our mistakes, but also those of the Israelites, who when God was ever-present visually as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, still grumbled and complained against God after He had saved them from Egypt. We have been saved by the foolishness of preaching. Let us not despise the proclamation of the Word, which is the power of God.

*God bless you this New Year.*

# Joy: The Letter to the Philippians

Pastor Orval Wirkkala  
Kingston, Minnesota

**W**E HAVE BEEN BLESSED WITH a New Year. With it we have the promises of our God that He who has carried us to this day will also carry us through this year, and for the rest of our lives. For many of us the last year brought new circumstances which have caused adjustments to our lives. Often our changed circumstances cause our joy in the Lord to diminish as we struggle with acceptance of a changed situation. Nevertheless, with the help of the Lord and others, we attempt to work through to a place of accepting the current circumstances as the way things are for the time being.

So what do we do when our joy is diminished by our present difficult circumstances? Do we wait until our circumstances change to be joyful again? Do we resign ourselves to being joyless Christians because of less than favorable circumstances? Is it possible to live in joy in the midst of life's often changing circumstances?

We will seek answers in Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians, which has been called the letter of joy. The Apostle Paul, being held in prison, encouraged his readers.



**Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.**

**Philippians 4:4**

Joy is our reality through the knowledge that God has reconciled us to Himself through the cross, by His gracious gift we trust in that reality, and even if circumstances change in our lives, our relationship with Him now and forever cannot be shaken.

Joy is the settled assurance that God is in control of all the details of our lives, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be all right, and the determined choice to praise God in every situation. Christian joy is shared, it is confident and it is increasing.

Jesus spoke of the connection between Himself, His Word, His Love, and His Joy: *If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. (John 15:7-11)*

Apostle John speaks of the joy that comes from our union with the Father and His Son: *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled,*

*of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. (1 John 1:1-4)*

Consider what was written by the Apostle Paul to the church of Philippi, a church that he had been involved in from its beginning. In today's world, we call it a church plant. Acts 16 gives an account of Paul's missionary journey to that area as a result of the call of the Holy Spirit. As they gathered at the riverside on the Sabbath for prayer, they spoke to some women, and the Lord opened the heart of a business woman named Lydia.

Later as they journeyed, Paul cast an evil spirit out of a young girl, which caused Paul and Silas to be imprisoned. While in prison, as Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to God in the hearing of the prisoners, an earthquake occurred, which initiated events through which the jailer asked the all-important question: "What must I do to be saved?" He was told, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved, and your house."

The congregation at Philippi and Paul had a very close relationship. He had returned at least once (Acts 20:1-6) and then was imprisoned in Rome, at least 700 miles away. Congregation member Epaphroditus visited Paul in prison to bring him encouragement and humanitarian needs. In the course of their fellowship, Paul heard of the state of the congregation and sent a letter with his beloved friend to be read to the congregation at Philippi.

Some of the most common memory verses are in this letter, but may this letter become more to us than a book of isolated memory verses. May we hear the voice of the Spirit speak through the heart and life of our dear brother in Christ Apostle Paul. May the message of this letter be burned into our minds, hearts and souls as we hear of and experience the love of Jesus. May we be joined closer in the love of God in Christ Jesus, a love that casts out fear, a love that unites us in joy and empowers us to serve for the sake of our neighbors!

**T**ODAY WE CONSIDER the first eleven verses of chapter one, which introduces the entire letter. You may like to read those verses in your Bible. Four separate thoughts are put forth:

- Author and recipients of letter named
- Greetings of grace and peace from heaven
- Appreciation and encouragement given
- Prayer of growth for the Philippians

Paul speaks of his memory of them even though he does not know many of them, mentioning how he prays for them with joy because of their shared work in the spreading of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The congregation had been very mission minded and was spreading the Gospel. The great effect of our initial conversion is an

immediate care and concern for the souls of our neighbors. Concern for the souls of others is the fruit of the Spirit that begins to dwell in the hearts of believers.

He gives encouragement that Christ who called them by the Gospel would never leave or forsake them, but He would be faithful to the end of their journey of faith, until the day He returns. He speaks somewhat openly of the intimacy they share, not because of any outward characteristics but because they are joined together through the grace of God which they have all received. Though they are separated in a physical sense, they are still in communion with one another. They have not stopped working together, for the bonds of the grace of God are not earthly bonds, but heavenly and spiritual bonds.

With all sincerity Paul pours out his heart, the heart of Christ, for them, saying that his affection is not some earthly love, but it is the love of Christ. It is the same Greek word that Jesus used to express His longing for His disciples just before His crucifixion. It is the seat of our most tender affections which have been enlightened and made alive by the Holy Spirit, so that we love one another as Christ has loved us.

Paul continues by praying for them, asking for an increase of their knowledge and discernment in love, for he knows the future unity of their congregation depends on whether they are living in and growing in the love of Christ. There is no way that this point can be overstated...

He then prays for them in the following manner:

***And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ; Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.***

**Philippians 1:9-11**

He acknowledges their love and prays that it would flourish with knowledge and discernment. He wrote to the Corinthians and defined the characteristics of love which flow from God who is Love. The love of God increases only as it is kept in balance with the truth of God as revealed through the Scriptures, the Word. Through this balance, growth occurs so that that which is excellent in the sight of God would be tested and approved.

As love grows with knowledge and discernment, one is able to test and approve those things that are excellent. As a result one is found to be pure and blameless through Christ, being filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, so that we may be sincere and without offence until the day of Christ. This is to the glory and praise of God.

May the Lord bless our meditation in His Word to His glory, to our increase in the knowledge and experience of His love and bind us together in a closer manner, thereby increasing our joy in Him and in one another. ~

## Liberty in Christ

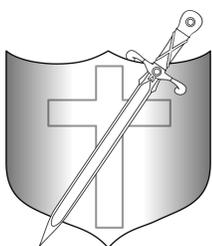
Dave Impola

Everett, Washington

**Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.** Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies. (Psalm 103:1-4) Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free... (Galatians 5:1a) If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36) We have been liberated from the penalty of our sin debt which was held against us. How wonderful to breathe the free air of God's grace, knowing that we are in His care and keeping.

Jesus says, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.* (John 14:6) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber... And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. (John 10:1, 5) The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)

The Bible tells us: *Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.* (James 4:7) May we not be intimidated by the devil. Tell him, "Go away, leave me alone! Get behind me, Satan. In spite of the fact that you like to go fishing in the sea of grace, dredging up my past sins, I am redeemed through the blood of Jesus." *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* (Ephesians 1:7) *Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.* (Colossians 1:13-14) Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil... Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. (Ephesians 6:10-11, 16) There is no need for armor on our back side because with God there is no such thing as retreat.



*"A mighty Fortress is our God, A trusty Shield and Weapon. He helps us in our every need... We tremble not, we fear no ill... The devil cannot overpower us. For this world's prince may still, Scowl fiercely as he will, We need not be alarmed, For he is now disarmed; One little word o'erthrows him." (Martin Luther)*  
*"Onward, Christian soldiers, Marching as to war, With the cross of Jesus Going on before! Christ, the royal Master, Leads against the foe; Forward into battle, See His banners go! Like a mighty army Moves the church of God; Brothers, we are treading Where the saints have trod. We are not divided, All one body we, One in hope and doctrine, One in charity." (Sabine Baring-Gould)*

May God's peace rest upon us all.

# Gifts for the King

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Hello Children,

How are you? I hope you are beginning the New Year in good health. It seems strange to write 2016, and it reminds us how quickly time goes by and, most importantly, how God has seen us through another year. He is so steady and keeps all of His promises. He says He will be with His children always, even unto the end of the world.

I want to share with you the coming of the wise men, found in St. Matthew 2. As you read, think about the gifts you got for Christmas and the ones the baby Jesus was given. Do you see how they are so different?

**O**H LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM, how still we see thee lie..." but out there a little babe has been born. The angels have proclaimed to the shepherds of this holy infant's birth and the shepherds have run from the fields into Bethlehem to see this thing which has been made known to them. They then hurried back to the sheep in the fields, but not before telling everyone they met about the child.

Joseph and Mary were in awe with all this attention out in the quiet little barn, lit perhaps by a small lamp. They knew in their hearts that this was no common child. A few days may have passed and Joseph had taken his wife Mary and the babe Jesus away from the barn to live in a more proper home in Bethlehem. There they began their life as family.

At this time Herod was king and on a particular day, some wise men arrived from the east. They came to Herod's palace, asking, *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.* (Matthew 2:2)

The servant who answered the door took the message to the king. *When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.* (vv. 3-4)

Herod was told that this child was to be born in Bethlehem of Judea, as the prophet had said that out of Bethlehem would come a Governor that would rule Israel. Herod did not like to hear of this "king" as he did not want anyone to take him off of the throne. He seems to come up with an evil plan quite quickly.

He calls the wise men to be brought before him privately. He asks them when they first saw this star they spoke of. The wise men tell him (and it could have been up to 2 years before!)

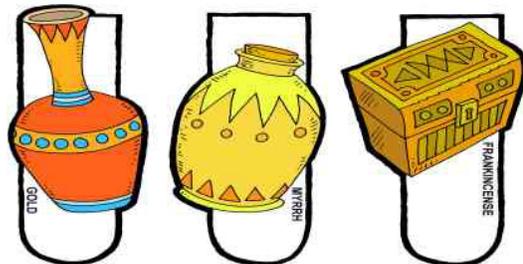
Did you children know that these wise men had seen the star for the first time when they were studying the stars in their own country (this is believed to be Persia) nearly 1000 miles to the east. They had traveled many months, possibly by camel with different caravans of travelers heading in that westerly direction. It would have been a very dangerous journey and it was wise to travel with other people.

The wise men traveled on, days turning into weeks, weeks turning into months, and yet they went on. I find this so amazing, and see such determination, courage and faith to press on.

Herod sends the wise men on their way, telling them that when they have found this child, they should come back to tell him where the babe is so Herod could go worship him, too. *When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, (Look! See!) the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.* (v. 9)

*When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.* (v. 10) The star leads the men right to the home where Jesus is and STOPS. These men were so joyful to realize their search is over, and they have arrived!! Oh, I can only imagine how happy they were!

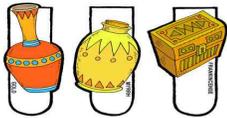
They went to the door and knocked, and soon it opened to them. *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; GOLD, and FRANKINCENSE, and MYRRH.* (v. 11) The wise men had told Herod they had come to worship this child, and that is the first thing they did when they saw Him.



*And being warned of GOD in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.* (v. 12) Herod was full of anger when the wise men did not come back to him. He planned to try to kill this child who the wise men had called a king. He was not going to let this so-called "king" remove him from his throne. Herod ordered all the children 2 years old and under to be killed. He sent soldiers to carry out his plan, but it did not work as God had already sent His Son to a safe place.

**A**FTER THE WISE MEN HAD LEFT, an angel warned Joseph in a dream to take the young child and His mother and flee to Egypt. Joseph gathered his little family in the night and departed for Egypt. This was no easy journey either, as it was around 200 miles and would have taken several days. The Bible does not say how long they stayed in Egypt, but after some time Joseph was visited again by an angel in a dream, telling him to take his family to the land of Israel as Herod was dead.

Joseph did as the angel said and went into the land of Israel, but when he arrived he learned that Archelaus, Herod's son, was the ruler there and feared to stay there.



God had compassion on Joseph and came to him in yet another dream and told him to go into Galilee. *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be*

*fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene. (v. 23)*

This story has such a beautiful ending. God took care of the wise men on their LONG journey, and then Joseph, Mary, and Jesus on their journeys as they fled from Herod and Archelaus, and lastly brought them to the town of Nazareth where He had planned that they should go.

God has promised to also take care of you and all those who love Him. Children, you can be sure that God knows everything about your life. I want to encourage you to pray that God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit will have first place in your heart.

Jesus says, *My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. 30 I and my Father are one. (John 10:27-30)*

I wish all of you a very blessed New Year!

## Our Hope in the New Year

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan



Herod James Tissot  
Wikimedia Commons

**A**T THE END OF EVERY CALENDAR YEAR, there is a feast day that often goes unnoticed. It occurs on December 28<sup>th</sup> in the Western Church and December 29<sup>th</sup> in the Eastern Church, and is known as Holy Innocents. The day is set aside as a tribute to the people who are counted as the first martyrs for the sake of Christ, the infant males of Bethlehem, two years of age and younger, who were slaughtered by King Herod. In a wicked attempt to secure his throne, he thought he could kill the newly born true king of Israel, Jesus. His attempt of course failed, but these innocent little ones lost their lives callously at his whim (Matthew 2:1-18).

The estimate of the number of lives lost varies, but often is exaggerated to be in the thousands. Such large numbers seem unlikely given the population at that time, and there is no mention of such a slaughter in the history of Josephus, a famous chronicler of that time. Surely if the slaughter were that large, Josephus and other histories would have recalled it. Recent studies have yielded a much more appropriate number; statistics show the population of Bethlehem and its environs around the time of Jesus' birth to be about 1,000 people, leading to the probable number of about 20 infant males two years of age or younger. Twenty little innocents slaughtered at the hand of a heartless killer.

You may recognize the reason for engaging in this topic. Twenty little innocents, the same number of little ones brutally murdered at Sandy Hook Elementary in Newtown, Connecticut, on December 14, 2012, and six adults were killed as well. It's not really the number that's so significant; it's the brutal nature of the act that is so stunning. This tragedy serves to show that the capacity for human atrocity remains today as it did in Palestine at the time of Jesus, and all the efforts of human kind cannot change it.

For this reason God sent His only begotten Son to be born in a manger, to die on a cross and to rise from the dead. Only God could and did remedy our fallenness by a single act of immeasurable grace and kindness. God sent Him because He so loved the world that in spite of its horrors He wanted to save it. That is still His desire and the reason that human existence continues as we know it. We are sent to announce the Gospel to people so that they would turn away from wickedness and come to know the fullness of life in the finished work of Jesus. The world will not change on its own; only God can do so. He has chosen to fulfill this one soul at a time, one soul who repents and believes the Gospel, escaping the bondage of fallenness and yielding to the gentle yoke of the loving Father.

For this reason we still have hope. Every year, in spite of the many abominable things that occur in the previous year, we face the new one with confidence in our God and full assurance that in spite of circumstance He is keeping watch over us. We go into the world declaring the message of forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ and following in His footsteps we overcome evil with good. The light still shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it (John 1:5).

*Happy New Year to you.*



### 2016 Apostolic Lutheran Church of America Calendars

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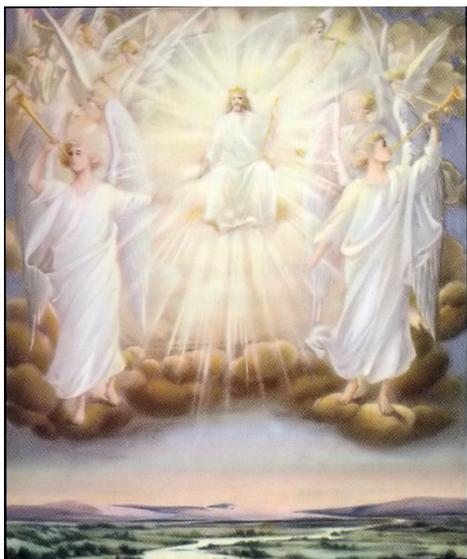
Corrie Karlsen, ALC Calendar Committee

# Heavenly Places

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Spruce Grove, Minnesota

*Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.*

*Ephesians 1:1-14*



**W**HEN WE THINK OF HEAVENLY PLACES, perhaps our minds go to streets of gold, angels, God's throne, or the place that our loved ones who have died are enjoying. We most often think of an ethereal realm where God lives, and we then do our best to get there by behaving while we live here on planet Earth. Paul speaks of something that has happened that is a reality for us today.

It is true that one day we will enter into the heavenly realm and see our Father face to face: *Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. (Revelation 7:15)* It is also true that in the here and now we are seated in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus: *And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6)*

We may find ourselves wondering how this could ever be the case as we look at our current situation in this life. The heavenly places that Paul talks about is not some kind of weird hyper-spirituality where we float on clouds and everything goes wonderfully for us in this life; rather he speaks of our new identity as followers of Christ. He explains what has taken place for us in Christ, that our lives are completely and utterly changed and we have been brought unto newness of life. The language of Paul speaks to a reality that belongs to the believer in Christ. We have been crucified with Christ and we have been resurrected with Him as well. Paul is essentially saying that we now live in the power of that resurrection. We understand this about ourselves as we live in our current world, and this then drives our lives.

We do not dwell in the deadness of the old any longer, but rather we live in the new and are blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ. This is what is truly real in this world; everything else is fading and will soon be over, but our inheritance in Christ is eternal and only shines brighter and brighter until the day when it will be fully known when He returns to bring us to be with Him forever. The Holy Spirit is the down payment which guarantees our inheritance. It is by faith that we walk today and every day trusting the words of Christ, that in fact because He died and rose again we now dwell in Him and have gained His inheritance, namely eternal life. We are in Christ and this is now what identifies us. It is being in Christ that brings unto us the reality of dwelling in heavenly places.

As we enter into a new year, this is the reality that we need to cling to... We begin another year living under the same promises, and the same reality remains. We are seated in the heavenly realm in Christ and this then is where we walk and ultimately where we stand.

This is the Good News that we bring to a dying world so that the light of the Gospel would shine into their hearts and they would then move from the realm of darkness into the realm of light. We proclaim Christ so that many would be awakened from their slumber of death and be moved into the light. We bring a message that transforms lives and brings people into the heavenly places in Christ already here and ultimately forever. Wow, what a message we bring as we proclaim Christ and His redemptive work!

*God's peace.*

# Do Not Fear

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**F**EAR IS A DEBILITATING, PARALYZING EMOTION. Our palms sweat and our knees knock; our stomachs churn and our hearts pound. Fear crushes our lungs so we can't take a deep breath.

We fear many things: spiders and snakes, public speaking, being alone, strangers, darkness, heights and depths, flying, drowning, traveling, tight spaces and open spaces, storms, germs, illness, disease. And ultimately, death. Death is the big one, the king of all fears. The death of loved ones—parents, children, friends—and our own deaths. And of everything we fear, death is the one that will, beyond a shadow of a doubt, come to pass. Some people have been given a terminal diagnosis because of disease or illness, but in truth we are ALL terminal! None of us will escape our final destiny, whether through illness, injury or age, until the return of Christ in glory.

Fear is sent by the Enemy to afflict us, to torment us, to cause doubt, to paralyze. Satan wants to keep us in a constant state of terror. He knows we will get discouraged and pull away from Christian fellowship; we will lose heart and possibly even lose faith. We may begin to believe that God could never save us. Satan knows we will not witness the light of Christ to the world if we are fearful over the condition of our own souls. Fear cripples our ability to testify of God and His love, and that is Satan's goal: to keep us from spreading the glorious light of the Gospel to a lost and dying world.

**G**OD KNOWS WE ARE FEARFUL and He addresses it in sacred Scripture. The most common command in God's Word is not "Be holy!" or "Do not sin!" or "Forgive your neighbor!" although these are all commands of God. The command repeated again and again by God through the prophets, the psalmist, the angels, by Jesus, by the apostles is this: "Do not fear!" Why is it repeated so often? Maybe because God knows us, knows that we are fearful creatures and He wants to assure us of His faithfulness; because He knows that we are quaking in our boots and He wants to give us His strength; because He knows that we are filled with turmoil and He wants to give us His peace; because He knows that we fear death and He wants to assure us that He has conquered death for us.

He does this because He is our Father, because He loves us. John, the Apostle of Love, writes, "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear." God assures us over and over in His Word that He loves us more than anything, so much that He sent His Son to die in our place, so much that He wants us to know that we have nothing to fear. He wants to convince us that we are loved.

Do you believe it?

If you don't believe it, then read God's Word and see for yourself the promises that He has made. See for yourself that He will be there through every fear you could imagine, even the ones that come true, even through death! He makes vows that He will never break.

If you believe it, then LIVE it! Live your life fearlessly in the face of overwhelming obstacles, because the One who conquered death for you is on your side. The One who says, "Do not be afraid!" is the One who stands beside you; in fact, He's the One who holds you in the palm of His hand. The One who made you and loves you and knows you better than you know yourself says, "I will never leave you or forsake you."



***Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness. Behold, all they that were incensed against thee shall be ashamed and confounded: they shall be as nothing; and they that strive with thee shall perish. Thou shalt seek them, and shalt not find them, even them that contended with thee: they that war against thee shall be as nothing, and as a thing of nought. For I the LORD thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel. (Isaiah 41:10-14)***

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## Behold the Glory of Christ

Octavius Winslow

*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory...*

John 17:24

**A**S SUFFERING PRECEDES GLORY, so glory assuredly follows suffering. Thus was it with our Lord. *Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* (Luke 24:26) Our Lord is in glory! The head that once bowed in death, pale and bleeding, is now raised in life, encircled with a glory brighter than ten thousand suns. The humanity that was despised from the lowliness of its birth, that was mocked, and scourged, spit upon, and slain, is now, from its indissoluble union with the Deity, exalted far above principalities and powers, glorified with the glory He had with the Father before the world was. Having purged our sins, He is set down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

To that glory which belongs to Him as the Mediator of the church, each suffering confessor of Christ shall be exalted—the body with the Head, and each part of that body with the whole. A joint-heirship of suffering, it is now a joint-heirship of glory: We shall be glorified together with Christ (Romans 8:17). Still the oneness is manifest, and never so clearly seen as now. Glory bathes it in its light, and eternity impresses it with its seal. It is an undimmed and changeless glory. And Christ acknowledges their right to this oneness in glory. As they were not ashamed of Him among men, He is not now ashamed of them among angels. As they linked themselves to His cross, He leads them to His throne. As they confessed Him before the world, He now confesses them before His Father: "Glorified together." Wondrous words! Elevated to His side—leaning upon His bosom—gazing on His beauty—listening to His voice—entering into His joy—at home, and forever with the Lord. Now is answered in its fullness, the prayer mingled with tears, breathed from the scene of His suffering below—*Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory...* Welcome the suffering, succeeded by such glory! Welcome the cross, followed by such a crown!

Oh, let us live in its near anticipation. To the poor of Christ's flock, how animating the prospect! *Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?* (James 2:5) What though straitened resources, pinching poverty, or even absolute want, be your present allotment; lift up your heads with joy, for you have a joint-heirship with Christ in a kingdom which your heavenly Father will give. Confide in its security: it is made sure to you by Divine oath: *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.* (Hebrews 6:17) Thus inalienably is it secured. Death, which robs the earthly heir of his inheritance, puts you in possession of yours. Your estate comes not to you robed in mourning, for your Father never dies. No succession awaits you, for your inheritance is yours forever. *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.* (1 Peter 1:3-5)

With consolations so rich, and with a hope so glorious, let us close the year through which we have traveled, with a feeling of thanksgiving and with a song of praise. We will thank God for all the way He has led us, chequered though it may have been; and we will trust Him for life's future, dark and uncertain though it may appear. We have found Christ enough for all the past—loving, faithful, wise, He is enough for the present; and we are quite sure all that He has been He will again be—"Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and forever." Before another year begins, or closes, we may be with Jesus forever! "Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly!" Your love will fill our hearts, Your beauty will engage our thoughts, and Your praise will employ our tongues, through eternity. ~

How firm a foundation, ye saints of the Lord,  
Is laid for your faith in His excellent Word!  
What more can He say than to you He hath said,  
To you, who for refuge to Jesus have fled?  
Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dismayed,  
For I am thy God and will still give thee aid;  
I'll strengthen and help thee, and cause thee to stand  
Upheld by My righteous, omnipotent hand.

When through fiery trials thy pathways shall lie,  
My grace, all sufficient, shall be thy supply;  
The flame shall not hurt thee; I only design  
Thy dross to consume, and thy gold to refine.  
The soul that on Jesus has leaned for repose,  
I will not, I will not desert to its foes;  
That soul, though all hell should endeavor to shake,  
I'll never, no never, no never forsake.

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