

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.

May 2022

Far Above Rubies

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

Who can find a virtuous woman? for her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it: with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good: her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. She is not afraid of the snow for her household: for all her household are clothed with scarlet. She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant.

Strength and honour are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all. Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.

Proverbs 31:10-31

I AM RICH.
If the writer of the Proverbs is to be believed (and he certainly is to be believed), I am rich beyond measure. First and foremost, I have been blessed to find a woman of great virtue to be my wife. I discovered another virtuous woman in my wife's mother. That makes two. I also had two wonderful grandmothers who added great blessing to my life, which brings the number to four. I have also had three more virtuous women as sisters and a beautiful aunt who has faithfully served me as a godmother. Eight. Add to that,

numerous other aunts, cousins, teachers and friends. The increasing number becomes too great to count. And then of course, there is my own mother whose value to me only increases with years. Are all of these women perfect? No. But they are women of great virtue that have been a blessing to me and to many others. Indeed, I have been most blessed, and I am rich.

The writer of Proverbs 31 is named King Lemuel, whose name means "dedicated to God." Historically, it is not clear who this might be. However, it is possible that "Lemuel" was a pseudonym for either King Hezekiah or King Josiah. If so, then the responsibility of his mother was not only to raise a son, but also to help raise a king to serve God's people. Therefore, it is most fitting that the writer of Proverbs 31 details the blessing of finding a woman whose "**price is far above rubies.**" Her calling would not only be to serve her son, but also her God.

The great discovery is not only in finding the virtuous woman, but also realizing how she became virtuous. "**Her children arise up, and call her blessed**" indicates that virtue does not come by human will or effort, but by the hand of God. When I reflect upon how the heart of my father trusted in my mother (v.11), I ponder the work of my God. When I see my wife lovingly taking care of our children and looking "**well to the ways of her household**" (verse 27), I am witness to the divine work of our heavenly Father, who loves His Creation so much, that He gave His own beloved Son to redeem it and make it new.

May God grant us grace to never take the holy calling of the virtuous woman for granted, but instead, be evermore thankful to Him and for them. They are just a few of the abundant blessings that God has given us through Christ our Lord. God bless you!

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ... In Whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace... (Ephesians 1:3, 7) ~



Happy and Blessed Mother's Day, Moms!

The Work of God

Carl Kulla
May 1949 CM

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.

Ephesians 2:8-9

OUR SALVATION IS ALONE IN the redemption of Christ. He is the author of eternal life. His is the atonement, and the work and fulfillment of salvation belong only to him. *For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. (Galatians 3:26)* The gift of God is full and free, without money and without price, *Not of works, lest any man should boast.* To this salvation which is wrought in Christ, none can add unto it, and nothing can be taken away from it. For the salvation of God has been settled, established, and sealed in heaven with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.

The work of salvation is so completely God's in Christ, that from the first awakening call, unto the receiving of grace, and a crown of life, God is the author, the sustainer, and the finisher of the work of grace within man. Christ speaks of this in *John 6:44: No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.* God has called and chosen, elected and predestinated unto salvation those who are saved. *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 ... 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. (Ephesians 1:4-5, 11-12)* And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed. *(Acts 13:48)* For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren.

(Romans 8:29) Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. *(2 Timothy 1:9)* God calls through His Word in the "foolishness of preaching," and chooses through Christ in the forgiveness of sins. Of itself the will and mind of man is bound, being the servant of sin, *Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)* The will of God comes with a new mind and life in Christ, which new life is God's work. *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. (Philippians 2:13)* As Jesus also makes known in the parable of the vine and the branches, saying, *...without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:5)*

If the work therefore be of God, then it cannot be of man. We cannot draw men to Christ and salvation by the human agents of fanfare and new things. For God calls and draws. It is His work. As God calls by His grace, so likewise, whether we be young or old, we are kept in faith alone by the grace of God; and not by man's dreams and labors. This is the promise of Christ, *While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; (John 17:12)* who also prays, *I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. (John 17:15)* Paul testifies to this same end, *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)*

To deny that the grace of God is sufficient unto all our needs *(My grace is sufficient for thee: 2 Corinthians 12:9)* is to make the will of man free, to destroy the doctrine of salvation by faith alone, and to bring ourselves into the bondage of work's righteousness and self-righteousness. May God preserve us from the wrath to come, and grant to one and all blessings in heavenly places in Christ. ~

For we know that the law is spiritual: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me.

Romans 7:14-20

NOTHING MAKES CHRISTIANS SO CONSCIOUS of their daily deficiencies as the earnest striving for perfection. And when they acknowledge and confess their daily shortcomings before God, they flee for refuge to divine grace, knowing that the grace of God takes no account of the Law and human works, of our daily success or failure in sanctification and good works. Only by keeping Law and Gospel separate could the Apostle, on the one hand, be fully assured of grace and salvation (Rom. 8:37-39), and, on the other hand, require unsparing self-denial (1 Cor. 9:27). The whole life of the Christian thus becomes a daily repentance. The more sincerely Christians daily endeavor to rid themselves of all they have and to serve God alone in all their works, the better they learn to know the abysmal sinful depravity which clings to them, and the more earnestly they will daily implore the free grace of God in Christ. And since they are no more under the Law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14), they daily begin anew their struggle to attain perfect sanctification, deploring their many failures ("O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?"), but, at the same time, being assured of their ultimate victory ("I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord," Rom. 7:24-25). Striving after perfect sanctification, the Christian thus leads a life of daily repentance.

Francis Pieper

Two Kinds of Righteousness

Martin Luther

IT IS A THING VERY STRANGE and unknown to the world, to teach Christians to learn to be ignorant of the law, and so to live before God, as if there were no law. But it stands: except you are ignorant of the law, and are assuredly persuaded in your heart that there is now no law nor wrath of God, but altogether grace and mercy for Christ's sake, you cannot be saved; for "by the law comes the knowledge of sin" (Romans 3:20).

On the other hand, works and the keeping of the law must be so straightly required in the world, as if there were no promise or grace; and that because of the stubborn, proud and hard-hearted, before whose eyes nothing must be set but the law, that they may be terrified and humbled. For the law is given to terrify and kill such, and to exercise the old man; and both the word of grace and of wrath must be rightly divided, according to the Apostle (Timothy 2:25 f.).

Here is then required a wise and faithful disposer of the Word of God, which can so moderate the law, that it may be kept within his bounds. He that teaches that men are justified before God by the observation of the law passes the bounds of the law, and confounds these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive, and is but an ill logician, for he does not rightly divide. On the other hand, he who sets forth the law and works to the old man, and the promise of forgiveness of sins and God's mercy to the new man, divides the Word well. For the flesh or the old man must be coupled with the law and works: the spirit or new man must be joined with the promise of God and his mercy. Wherefore when I see a man that is bruised enough already, oppressed with the law, terrified with sin, and thirsting for comfort, it is time that I should remove out of his sight the law and active righteousness, and that should set before him by the Gospel the Christian and passive righteousness, which excluding Moses with his law, offers the promise made in Christ, who came for the afflicted and for sinners. Here is man raised up again and conceives good hope, neither is he any longer under the law, but under grace (Romans 6:14).

How is this man not under the law? According to the new man, to whom the law does not appertain. For the law has his bounds to Christ, as Paul says afterwards: "The end of the law is Christ" (Galatians 3:24; Romans 10:4); who has come, Moses ceases with his law, circumcision, the sacrifices, the Sabbaths, yes and all the prophets.

This is our theology: we teach how to put a difference between these two kinds of righteousness, active and passive, to the end that manners and faith, works and grace, policy and religion should not be confounded, or taken the one for the other. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their bounds: Christian righteousness pertains to the new man, and the righteousness of the law pertains to the old man, which is born of flesh and blood.

Upon this old man, as upon an ass, there must be laid a burden that may press him down, and he must not enjoy the freedom of the Spirit, or grace, except he first put on him the new man by faith in Christ (which nevertheless is not fully done in this life); then may he enjoy the kingdom and unspeakable gift of grace.

This I say to the end that no man should think we reject or forbid good works, as the Papists most falsely slander us, neither understanding what they themselves say, nor what we teach. They know nothing but the righteousness of the law, and yet they will judge that doctrine which is far above the law, of which it is impossible that the carnal man should be able to judge. Therefore they must of necessity be offended, for they can see no higher than the law. Whatsoever then is above the law is to them a great offense.

But we imagine, as it were, two worlds: the one heavenly and the other earthly. In these we place these two kinds of righteousness, being separate the one far from the other.

The righteousness of the law is earthly and has to do with earthly things, and by it we do good works. But as the earth doesn't bring forth fruit except it first be watered and made fruitful from above (for the earth cannot judge, renew and rule the heaven, but on the other hand the heaven judges, renews, rules, and makes fruitful the earth, that it may do what the Lord hath commanded): even so by the righteousness of the law, in doing many things we do nothing, and in fulfilling of the law we fulfill it not, unless first, without any merit or work of ours, we are made righteous by the Christian righteousness, which nothing appertains to the righteousness of the law, or to the earthly and active righteousness.

But this righteousness is heavenly and passive: which we have not of ourselves, but receive it from heaven: in which we do not work, but apprehend it by faith; and thereby we mount up above all laws and works.

Therefore, just as we have borne (as St. Paul says) the image of the earthly Adam, so let us bear the image of the heavenly (1 Corinthians 15:49), which is the new man in a new world, where there is no law, no sin, no sting of conscience, no death, but perfect joy, righteousness, grace, peace, life, salvation and glory.

What, do we then do nothing? Do we work nothing for the obtaining of this righteousness? I answer: Nothing at all. The nature of this [Christian] righteousness is to do nothing, to hear nothing, to know nothing whatsoever of the law or of works, but to know and to believe this only: Christ has gone to the Father and is not now seen, He sits in heaven at the right hand of his Father, not as a judge, but made for us by God wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption. Briefly, He is our high-priest interceding for us, and reigning over us, and in us by grace. ~

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Galatians 3:26-29

Unfinished Business

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to all of you. Hoping again that all is well with you. It is the coming of spring where I live and it is my favorite season. I so enjoy the new life returning to the landscape and hearing the beautiful, cheerful songs of the birds that are doing their yearly migration and coming to raise their young.

I just marvel at God's perfect handiwork. If I need something to make me feel better, I just need to look outside and know that God is there, never changing, faithful.

After Jesus arose from the grave, He spent yet another 40 days on the earth. He had unfinished business to tend to. It wasn't that He'd missed teaching some important things about His Father, but more that He wanted to establish to a greater degree, and reassure those who followed Him, that He was who He was and that He was His Father's Son, come in the flesh. Also, He wanted to strengthen their faith so they would continue to believe and know that Jesus' promise to be with His children right to the end was a promise that would not be broken.

Jesus' closest followers were devastated to have Him die, but can you imagine their joy when He appeared to them after He arose? I know they then understood clearly Jesus' telling them prior to His death that "in three days he would rise again."

Who did Jesus appear to after He arose?

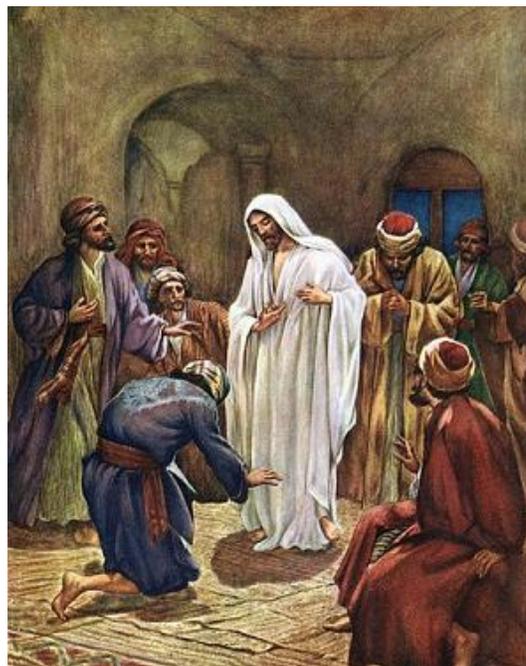
#1 (Mark 16) Mary Magdalene, Mary (the mother of James), and Salome (one of the women who always followed Him). These women had gotten up very early and went to the tomb with spices to put on Jesus' body. When they came close, they saw the stone rolled away and an angel sitting to the right of the door. He told them, *Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold (look at) the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him.* (verses 6-7)

#2 (Luke 24) That same day, Jesus walked with two men on the road to Emmaus. The men were discussing the crucifixion and were so sad. Jesus asked why they were sad and the men, not recognizing him (because Jesus did not allow their eyes to see who He was) and supposing He was a stranger, began to tell Him all about Jesus dying, and about the women finding His tomb empty. Jesus just listened, and then He said, *O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?* (verses 25-26) Then beginning from Moses and all the prophets Jesus told them all the Scriptures that spoke of Him.

During this discussion, they came to the village where they were going to stop. Jesus actually pretended to keep walking, but as it was later in the day they urged Jesus to stay the night with them, and so He stayed with them. As they sat eating, Jesus took bread, broke it and handed it to them. At that moment the men totally recognized Jesus, but Jesus just vanished out of their sight. The men then talked with each other and recognized that something felt different in their hearts when they talked with Jesus on the road. They were happy and amazed and immediately ran to find the 11

disciples (Thomas was not with them) in Jerusalem. How excited they were to tell the disciples that Jesus is truly risen. **#3** appearing was to Simon, but the Scripture doesn't tell us the details about this account.

As they were excitedly telling all, and the eleven were not believing all, **#4** appearance happens. Jesus just shows up in the room, and seeing their scared, astonished faces, says, *Peace be unto you.* (verse 36)



Oh, they had heard those words many times before! But they think they are seeing a spirit, and just continue staring, not speaking. Jesus asks them why they are so troubled and have such thoughts. (Remember that Jesus even knows our thoughts.) Then He does an amazing thing that reveals who He is. He shows them His hands and His feet and encourages them to touch Him.

Jesus now sees that they are overjoyed but still looking doubtful, so He asks for some food. He is given some broiled fish and a honeycomb, and He eats in front of them. The disciples know that it is their Jesus who is standing in the room with them.

Jesus opens their understanding of all the Scriptures and tells them again that Christ had to suffer and rise from the dead, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. He tells them they are His witnesses to all these things.

Just as He told His disciples about being witnesses, He really is telling us too who have learned of Him and all His truths.

There are yet more times that Jesus appeared to people before He went to heaven, but we will save those for the next time. I will leave you with this for now, and if you want to go read up on the 40 days after the Resurrection, it's easy to find a timeline online.

God's peace.

Fishers of Men

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll
New York Mills, Minnesota

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Luke 5:1-11

ONE OF THE MAJOR THEMES of Epiphany is Evangelism, that God reveals Himself to the world in our age through the Church. This text is very comforting for Christians. God is the one Who will bring you the catch. Jesus tells the disciples He will make them “fishers of people” if they follow Him. Throughout the gospels He teaches them how to fish for people. Jesus met people where they were and met their physical needs as well as their spiritual needs.

At the end of the Gospel of John the disciples are once again fishing unsuccessfully. Jesus tells them to cast their net on the other side, and they fill their nets instantly. This is not

only about showing them who He is but also reminding them what He has called them to do. God has shown us how to evangelize through the life of Jesus.

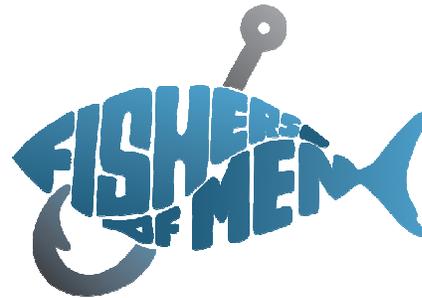
However, we can easily lose focus, put the emphasis on numbers. If we ever get discouraged about the size of the Church the answer is not to find something new to draw people in. The answer is to return to the basics that Jesus laid out through His life, to focus on His Word and trust that God will provide, for God has promised that He will give the increase and give us the harvest. *Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:14-16)

Jesus does not say that we must try to be the light of the world, He says that we are. He even goes on to say that our light cannot be hidden. As Christians, we are joined with Jesus Christ.

Jesus not only has taught us how to fish for people, but He also directs us where to fish and He fills our nets. It is important to realize that God is the One Who saves people. It is not up to the Christian; the Christian is merely a vessel that sows seeds. The cool thing is that when we do this, we are

servicing Jesus, too. Jesus has said that whatever we do for our neighbor we do for Him. When we serve our neighbor, we are directly serving Jesus Christ. That's what it is to be a fisher of men.

God's peace.



Thy Strong Word

For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:24-25)

Thy strong Word did cleave the darkness;
At Thy speaking it was done;
For created light we thank Thee,
While Thine ordered seasons run:
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!

Lo, on those who dwelt in darkness,
Dark as night and deep as death,
Broke the light of Thy salvation,
Breathed Thine own live-giving breath:
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!

Thy strong Word bespeaks us righteous;
Bright with Thine own holiness,
Glorious now, we press toward glory,
And our lives our hopes confess:
Alleluia, alleluia! Praise to Thee who light dost send!
Alleluia, alleluia! Alleluia without end!

God the Father, Light-Creator,
To Thee laud and honor be;
To Thee, Light of Light begotten,
Praise be sung eternally;
Holy Spirit, Light-Revealer, Glory, glory be to Thee;
Mortals, angels, now and ever Praise the Holy Trinity.

Martin Hans Franzmann

The Function of God's Law

Pastor Jason Salmi
Vancouver, Washington

SOMETIMES IT'S HELPFUL TO STOP and think about things that we already know. Take, for instance, the Ten Commandments (God's Law). For those of us who have had the benefit of traditional Sunday School, and especially the teaching of the Small Catechism, this is one of the things that we were taught as children. The first three Commandments being those things that we owe to God, and the other seven being our obligations to other people.

Properly taught, these Commandments should be explained as having three functions; that of a curb, a mirror and a guide. We learn from the Bible (and our own experience) that all people have an innate sense of right and wrong, which corresponds (in varying degrees) with the Commandments. As such, God's Law, which is written into the human heart, curbs the effects of sin from becoming as bad they otherwise could be.

The Law's primary, theological function is to reflect back to us in the same way that a mirror does the truth that we cannot live up to its standard of righteousness, and, since we cannot, that we all stand condemned before God. By this, we are driven to despair of saving ourselves, and are prepared to hear the sweet, freeing message of the Gospel: Jesus has done for us, that which we could never do, and through faith in Him, we are saved.

But it is to the function of the Law in the life of the believer that I wanted to turn our attention. If you read through the New Testament, and especially the Epistles, it soon becomes very clear that those who are saved by faith are to be continually reminded of God's Law, and exhorted to obey it. For instance, Paul begins many of his letters to the

churches, praising God for their faith... before chastising them for the ways that they are falling into sin. And he turns them back to their obligations towards God and other people.

Jesus, when He was asked, "Which is the great commandment in the Law," did not respond that the Law was to be abolished with His fulfilling of it. Rather He said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

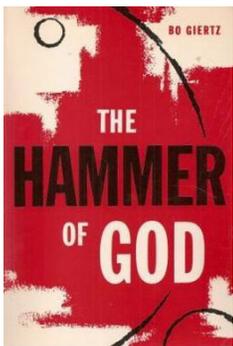
We, as believers, must be continually reminded that there are many things which work to draw our love, our time and our attention away from God. And this is something that does not end as long as we live, but is rather something that we must continuously resist, by the grace of God.

And we must always hear that we are to love our neighbor as ourselves. Maybe put more clearly as, "in place of ourselves." Which means that we must learn to look at all other people and see them as being created in the image of God. To look at all other people and to realize that God loves them, and that Jesus died for them. And then to learn to treat them as someone who is created in the image of God, is loved by Him, and for whom Christ died.

Dear Saints, we do not obey God's Law in order to earn salvation. To do so would be to try and add something to Jesus' perfect sacrifice on the cross. Rather, we obey God's Law because He has redeemed us. Because He has made us His own. Because He calls us His beloved children. And, as children of God, we are called to live as children of God.

May God richly bless you.

Book Recommendation: *The Hammer of God*



When I was a young wife and mother, we traveled to Michigan to visit my family. We visited my father's house, the house I'd lived in for many years of my life. Everything was so familiar, just like home, and we enjoyed our time together immensely.

At one point, I went into the guest bathroom and found a book Dad had laid on the counter. Its red and white cover caught my attention as well as the title: *The Hammer of God*, by Bo Giertz. I briefly scanned through its pages, stopping to read a few sentences here and there. I appreciated little of what I read at that moment, but I kept it tucked in the back of my mind on my "To Read Someday" list.

Fast forward years and years. My father had passed away and my siblings and I were settling his estate. As we sorted through the things in his home, reminiscing over an old army helmet, and wooden shoes, and pictures from our childhood, I spied a familiar bright red and white cover. It was the book!

I was awarded *The Hammer of God* as part of my inheritance when my father passed away, and I'm ever so thankful for it! I read it every few years, and each time I see myself reflected more and more in its story.

If you're a sinner and a saint, read this book! If you're a self-righteous Pharisee, read this book! If you're despairing of your faith and unable to lift your eyes to the cross, read this book! Jesus is FOR YOU.

Here's the description from christianbook.com:

"A classic novel about faith and the power of grace. Based on the theme of spiritual regeneration, *The Hammer of God* reads like a good detective story, immersing the reader in the unfolding events that present a spiritual drama of death and life, of despair and hope, of upheaval and peace, of sin and grace. Faith comes down to a matter of relying either on our own accomplishments to be right with God or on receiving as a free gift by grace the righteousness Christ gained for us. This basic question of faith remains the same today as in generations past."

Lois Matson

Scared to Death

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

YOU'VE HEARD THE PHRASE "scared to death." You may even have been "scared to death" at a certain point in your life. We can be frightened when someone or something startles us unexpectedly, or when we see something that causes us to fear.

The crime bosses and gangsters of the 1930s were frightening and caused many to be "scared to death." These men were tyrants who held the power of death in their hands, even though it was often brought about by their minions. The FBI has given the title of Public Enemy Number One to one of these thugs after another, as they are a danger to a civilized society.



In order to see who is Public Enemy Number One today, we must ask, "Who holds the power of death?" The letter to the Hebrews gives us a clue:

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man... Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Hebrews 2:9, 14-15

The devil is Public Enemy Number One. He is the tyrant who holds the power of death in his hands, even though death is often brought about by other means like injury, accident, or disease.

But the devil has been destroyed. Better than the FBI, we have a Champion on our side who has taken up the battle against our enemy. Jesus has tasted death for every human, and by His death, Jesus has destroyed the devil, who had the power of death. Jesus has delivered us from the bondage of the fear of death.

I love the Lord, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow. Then called I upon the name of the Lord; O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

Gracious is the Lord, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful. The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me. Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.

For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted: I said in my haste, All men are liars.

What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people.

Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints. O Lord, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds. I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people, In the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the Lord.

Psalm 116

The Lutheran Study Bible has this comforting message regarding Psalm 116:

"All people are at some point 'frightened to death.' Death's grip is terrible because it is the result of our sin and separation from God. But this psalm reminds us that God cares deeply about our mortality and has released us from its permanent bonds through the suffering, death, and resurrection of His Son."

A Christian has no reason to be scared **to** death, and no reason to be scared **of** death. Our physical bodies will die, but that death is only a sleep. Just like a good night's sleep here on earth, when we wake with no knowledge of having slept, we will awaken at the resurrection, stretching and blinking, feeling like we had a good rest.

The Lord has delivered us from death, and from the devil who held the power of death. Our Public Enemy Number One holds no fear for us now. We are immortal beings. We—like our Lord—will live forevermore.

Thanks be to God!

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A Life of Daily Repentance

Francis Pieper

NOTHING MAKES CHRISTIANS SO CONSCIOUS of their daily deficiencies as the earnest striving for perfection. And when they acknowledge and confess their daily shortcomings before God, they flee for refuge to divine grace, knowing that the grace of God takes no account of the Law and human works, of our daily success or failure in sanctification and good works. Only by keeping Law and Gospel separate could the Apostle, on the one hand, be fully assured of grace and salvation (Rom. 8:37-39), and, on the other hand, require unsparing self-denial (1 Cor. 9:27).

The whole life of the Christian thus becomes a daily repentance. The more sincerely Christians daily endeavor to rid themselves of all they have and to serve God alone in all their works, the better they learn to know the abysmal sinful depravity which clings to them, and the more earnestly they will daily implore the free grace of God in Christ. And since they are no more under the Law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14), they daily begin anew their struggle to attain perfect sanctification, deploring their many failures (“O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?”), but, at the same time, being assured of their ultimate victory (“I thank God through Jesus Christ, our Lord,” Rom. 7:24-25). Striving after perfect sanctification, the Christian thus leads a life of daily repentance.

Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

Acts 3:19-21

2022 MEETING NOTICE

The 114th Annual Meeting of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America will be hosted by the Apostolic Lutheran Church of Ashburnham, MA and will be held on June 23rd at New Ipswich Apostolic Lutheran Church in New Ipswich, NH.

In accordance with the By-Laws, the Annual Reports will be read; the members of the Central Board, the Eastern Mission Board, the Western Mission Board, and the Southern Mission Board will be elected. All matters will be considered and acted upon. Congregations are requested to send their delegates to this meeting.

The schedule of meetings and services are as follows:

Tuesday, June 21

Ministers Meeting 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Apostolic Lutheran Church, 117 Goen Rd, New Ipswich, NH 03071

Wednesday, June 22

National Sunday School Meeting 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM and Eastern Mission Meeting 3:00 PM at the Apostolic Lutheran Church, 117 Goen Rd, New Ipswich, NH 03071

Thursday, June 23

Annual Business Meeting 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM at the Apostolic Lutheran Church, 117 Goen Rd, New Ipswich, NH 03071
The Foreign Mission Business Meeting will immediately follow the Annual Business Meeting.
Opening service 7:00 pm at the Apostolic Lutheran Church, 117 Goen Rd, New Ipswich, NH 03071

Devotional services will be held at 10 AM, 2 PM and 5 PM beginning on Friday, June 24th through Sunday, June 26th at Lord's Valley at 105 Locke Rd, New Ipswich, NH 03071. Ministers, members, and the general public are invited to participate in these services.

On behalf of the Central Board of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America,
David Myllymaki, Chairman
John Isaacson, Secretary