

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.

October 2014

A Mighty Fortress Is Our God

the late Alvin Holmgren
December 1990 CM

THE STRAINS OF THE TRIUMPHANT HYMN, “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God,” again are heard as churches throughout the Christian world celebrate another anniversary of the Reformation. This mighty hymn of faith, composed by Martin Luther, remains the Church’s living testimony to its faith in the power of God. Christian hearts rise in praise and thanksgiving as with renewed confidence they sing of the One whose invincible power has done marvelous things, whose right hand and holy arm have obtained victory for them (Psalm 98). He it is who ransomed them from the power of the grave and who redeemed them from death, the One who said: *O death, I will be thy plagues. O grave, I will be thy destruction.* (Hosea 13:14)

This hymn is a battle cry to the Church of Christ. It is a call to trust in the power of the One who said, *Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* (Matthew 16:18) So often fear is allowed to rule in our hearts—a fear that is so paralyzing that we wonder if we dare to take another step on the way of life. Fear caused all except two of the spies sent on a survey mission, to return with the report that they were like grasshoppers in comparison with the inhabitants of the land that God had promised them. They then urged the people to return to Egypt’s bondage. Thank God for the faith of Joshua and Caleb.

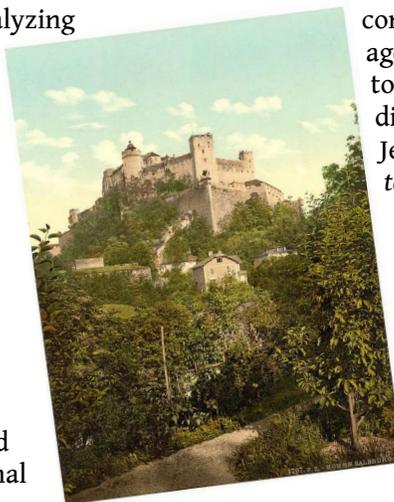
In Luther’s day also, he faced formidable odds. His own personal safety was at stake. Yet in the same spirit that moved Paul when he left Ephesus for Jerusalem (Acts 20:22-24), Luther went to the Diet of Worms saying that if there were as many devils in the city of Worms as tiles on the roofs of their houses, he would still go. What moved him?

Was it not a love of the truth which had set him free? Was it not a desire to see souls held in spiritual darkness and bondage freed through faith in the Gospel? His mission was to preach the Gospel, to hold out the cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith that “the just shall live by faith.”

During the time that Luther spent in seclusion at the Wartburg Castle, he continued to propagate the Gospel through written messages. When he learned that the work was being hindered by those whose emphasis was outward in nature, i.e., removing the adornment from the churches and destroying the images and statues, and reforming in that way, Luther left the security of his captivity. He once again mounted the pulpit in his familiar place at the Wittenberg church and gave voice to the Word which he knew alone is able to change men’s hearts.

Neither could he abide by those who tried by political means to work in the kingdom of God. He firmly opposed those who thus exerted influence on people and tried to convert and enlist them in their cause. The history of that age tells us that the exertion of such political power led to bloodshed and that one such reformer in Switzerland died in a sword battle. He had forgotten the words of Jesus ...*Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.* (Matthew 26:52)

TODAY WE NEED TO ALSO RESPECT the One who is the head of the Church. Let us trust in and wait on Him, knowing that He who has given us the keys of the kingdom—the keys of loosing and binding—has retained the keys of death and hell in His own hand. The Word states that our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, powers, the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. We are, therefore, to be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might, putting on the whole armor of God so that we may stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6). *For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds.* (2 Corinthians 10:4) ~



Fortress in Salzburg, Austria

In the Heat of the Day

Pastor Dennis and Marilyn Hilman
Kokkola, Finland

IN OUR CHRISTIAN WALK AT TIMES I think many of us wonder if we really are acting in God's time and according to His will and plan. Another thought from when I was younger: I had heard much preaching about repentance, but when I stopped to think about it, I realized that in all my years in our church I had seldom actually witnessed the repentance of a person in unbelief into living faith and had only heard about such a thing rarely, like when a preacher told how he had returned as a "prodigal" or someone repented on their deathbed. With that in mind, I have found it a bit puzzling that we in the mission field are often judged by this criterion: Were there any repentances in that country?

To shed light on both thoughts, I would like to relate first hand what Marilyn and I experienced in India during our seven week stay there this April and May. Only by the leading, guiding and strength God provided through His Holy Spirit were we able to endure the extremely intense heat and humidity, and to discover why He had called us there JUST AT THAT TIME!

First of all I would like to remind us all about Jesus' last and unmistakably clear admonitions and instructions to (US) His disciples, found in Luke 24:45-49. Those verses, which are well worth reading, contain the clearest focus of the Gospel I find in the Word in three important points:

1. The nucleus of the Gospel we are called to preach is repentance and forgiveness of sins.
2. We are to be the witnesses of this Gospel throughout the world, starting right at home.
3. This Gospel can only go forth, and faith be kindled in repentant hearts, when it is empowered by the "promise of His Father," which is the Holy Spirit.

An unstated but very important underlying theme in this text and throughout the New Testament is that when this Gospel is preached in the power of this Spirit it bears fruit in that Spirit. It is also significant that we are not justified by the act of repenting but by the gift of faith that we receive by grace as a result of hearing that Gospel.



Pastor K and I blessing a pastor who came forward in repentance and faith.
Kapileswarapuram, India. Marilyn Hilman looks on.

LET US NOW RETURN TO INDIA. We arrived in Chennai from West Africa on April 2nd. Soon we continued to Rajahmundry on the southeast coast, from where we went out to the two main village towns where we served until May 20th. We knew this was the hot time of the year but had no real idea how oppressive the heat could get. But we also felt that the Spirit had led us here at this time, so we did not hesitate or heed the warnings.

We were overjoyed when both in the main services and the many night street services that were held, the Word fell on good ground. It was not uncommon for more than one and up to twenty or thirty people convicted by their sins and burdens to come forward in tears and contrition to receive and believe the blessed assurance of the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus' precious name and the power of His blood. We experienced floods of joy that we know were echoed in heaven.



A leper who came to faith in Jesus Christ and received the healing forgiveness of all of his sins during a service where Foreign Mission Administrator John Ruotsala was preaching.

ON PROBABLY THE HOTTEST MORNING of the year, with temperatures soaring near 50 C (120 F) and humidity through the roof, we were called out. Pastor MP simply said it was very important to visit several houses in the village that morning where prayer was seriously needed. We often make house visits for such personal prayer in the mission field. Marilyn stayed home to make the best of it under the ceiling fan, our only respite from the heat.

Off we went, up and down the streets, praying in different houses as we went. For many, prayer provides their only hope in often painfully difficult and/or hopeless situations. With the sun beating down mercilessly, we took refuge in one house with a ceiling fan. Sitting on the bed was a slightly crippled middle-aged man. His faithful Christian wife and daughters had prayed for him for years but he had adamantly rejected repentance. I was led to bring that very Gospel to him in the full urging and enlightenment of the Spirit. And convicted by the Word, he was moved to repentance, rejoiced in hearing the name of Jesus and the power of His blood and was not slow to testify of his faith!

I thought that we could go home rejoicing after that, but no. There was just one more house, and one more, and... I was getting ready to give up, but we found another house with a ceiling fan—and another slightly crippled middle-aged man who had rejected the faith of the rest of his believing family for years in spite of their tears and prayers. Nothing to do again but to heed the leading of the

Holy Spirit and preach the Gospel that Jesus had sent me to preach. The man's ears were opened, his obviously broken and contrite heart brought tears to his eyes, and he confessed his sinfulness and received from us the hands-on personal assurance of the Gospel and confessed his faith in the living Lord Jesus.

Did we have to wonder any more if it was God's will that we were sent to India at the hottest time of the year? During those weeks He blessed His Gospel message with many repentances and gifts of faith, not only those two crippled men, but uncounted more during the services. These are not rare occurrences in the countries where the Foreign Mission is active. Many can testify of similar experiences. For these fruits eternal we give Him all the glory. And thank Him that in the heat He provided the strength, endurance and inspiration for each day.

May God's peace and the perseverance He provides strengthen each of us in our walk of faith! ~



Hunger and thirst for the Living Gospel among all ages. Near Injiram, India, where Pastor MP serves.

Why Me, You May Ask

Mark Sunnarborg
Rhineland, Wisconsin

WHY ME? I ASK, AND THEN I HEAR that small voice say, "Why not you?" As God works in our hearts, He produces the perfect response: "Send me." Are we willing to do what God has asked of us? Are we willing to go where God wants us to go, whatever it may cost? Isaiah writes: *Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (Isaiah 6:8)* God works this in our hearts as He prepares in His children the desire to say, "Send me; I will go."

Who will go for us? God includes you and me. It is that important. God did not say, "Who will go for Me?" but "Who will go for us?" We are included and must make the decision to go in obedience to His will. If God has placed a desire within you to serve, then listen to His calling.

As we seek to do the will of God, let us consider that God has given His Son to die for the sins of the whole world. He has provided life and salvation for all. This Gospel is to be preached to a dying world, that man would hear and respond in repentance and faith.

The response you hear from others may not be one you are ready to hear. "You better watch what you wish for." If God has placed upon you the desire to serve, then He will provide the will and means. You need not fear. God has a plan for all His children, and in His time He will see it through. Trust and obey Him, for He will not place within you that which will lead you to despair. You will not find true peace of mind until you submit to the will of God; then He will grant you peace of mind, for this will be your greatest joy. This do: Lord Jesus, that I may say "Amen!" Trust in the Lord with all your heart, soul, body and mind, and lean not unto your own understanding, for God has not made a mistake. His grace is sufficient to supply all your needs. Fear not, but walk in faith, trusting God in all things.



Isaiah, by James Tissot
Public domain

YOU MAY THINK THIS IS A PLUG for foreign or local mission work. It sure could be! Jesus said, "Go into the entire world and preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15)." Or is this the call upon every person called of God? Many will not remain in this calling; as a result they are found wanting. Many have left living faith and are walking contrary to the Word of God, not preaching the Gospel that speaks peace to the hearts of men. This message calls the lost to be reconciled to God. It frees the one bound in trespasses and sins, offering hope to the hopeless. The battle for souls is still on. Today is the day of grace; tomorrow may be too late. Why me, you may continue to ask. Christ died for the sins of the whole world and the call is to all mankind to repentance and faith, that man would believe beyond himself for salvation and

put on the robe of righteousness which is by faith. Believe in the redemptive work that God has completed in His Son upon the cross, paying the price for the sins of the whole world, reconciling sinners to God.

Whom God calls, He qualifies. Let's say, "Yes, I will go, whatever it may cost." *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:20-21)* This is a heart matter and needs to be the work of the Holy Spirit within each one of us.

PRECIOUS LORD JESUS, may Your blood continue to cleanse and make us pure and holy in Your sight, that we would not be afraid to come into the presence of God to worship Him in prayer, praise and thanksgiving. Keep faith within us, and please don't take the Holy Spirit from us. This prayer is from the heart of these who seek to be known of God. ~

Heaven – Life Forever

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to each of you. My heart's prayer is that this day would find you learning more about God and Jesus. We all wonder about heaven from time to time. I want to touch on a few things about heaven, as written in *Revelation*, chapters 21 and 22.

ALL OF YOU MAY HAVE HEARD something about heaven, and not just that heaven is up beyond the blue sky that we see. Heaven is a real place and God is there with Jesus, waiting to send Jesus His Son to come and receive all those who love Him and His appearing, to take us to live with Him in heaven.

Sometimes it is hard for us to imagine not living on this earth. We just seem to get so used to living here the way that we do. It is hard for us to imagine living in heaven, and even to know what it will be like in heaven. We may ask if there will be trees, flowers, birds, and many other things.

Reading in *Revelation 21*, verses 3-7, God wants us to know that **He** is our **God** and He will bless His children. *...Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things (this earthly life) are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. (Life in heaven will be PERFECT.) And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. And he said unto me, It is done. I am the Alpha (the first letter in the Greek alphabet, like our letter "A") and Omega (the last letter, like our letter "Z"), the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.*

God prepared Jesus as a sacrifice to save us from our sin. Jesus paid for every sin of ours by dying on the cross. He now has a home so perfect waiting for His children and we will get to LIVE again—forever. Death in this life for a believer is only a step that we must take to be able to begin a more beautiful life with Jesus.



- The holy city has **twelve** gates, and each gate has an angel. The names of the **twelve** tribes of Israel are written on the gates (v. 12), and they will never be shut by day (v. 25). Each gate is a single huge pearl (v. 21).
- It is foursquare, having equal length, width and height (v. 16).
- The wall of the building is jasper, and the city is pure gold, like unto clear glass (v. 18).
- The **twelve** foundations of the wall are decorated with all kinds of precious stones: 1. jasper, 2. sapphire, 3. chalcedony, 4. emerald, 5. sardonyx, 6. sardius, 7. chrysolite, 8. beryl, 9. topaz, 10. chrysoprasus, 11. jacinth, 12. amethyst (v. 19-20). The names of the twelve apostles are written in the foundations (v. 14).
- The street is pure gold, like transparent glass, clear enough to see through (v. 21).
- There is no temple as the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb (Jesus) are the temple of it. (v. 22)
- The city has no need for the sun or the moon for light, for the glory of God lights it, and the Lamb is the light of it (v. 23).
- Nothing bad or ugly or hurtful can enter this city—EVER! (v. 27)
- A river, clear as crystal, flows from the throne of God and the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river the tree of life bears twelve kinds of fruit, and gives its fruit every month. Its leaves are for the healing of the nations (22:1-2).
- The saved will see God's face, and God's name will in their foreheads, and they will serve Him (v. 3-4).

And there shall be no night there: and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. And he said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true...

Revelation 22:5-6

In our heaven home we will never be sad, or angry, or jealous, or want what others have, or be in need of anything. Jesus will fill us with His glory, and we will be HAPPY all the time. It will be so precious. And the best part is that we will be in the presence of God and Jesus for always with no end.

In *Revelation 22:13-14*, God speaks again: ***I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.***

I pray that we will ask God to help us to live here as He would have us to live, and to serve Him here so that He would be glorified. He has made all things beautiful.

Our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Heaven

Mike Kulla

Yacolt, Washington

Let's pray in Jesus name. Thank You, God, for the angels who can see Your face in heaven and are protecting us. We ask to be filled with the Spirit and for continued faith in Your Son Jesus. Show Your love and comfort to those who are hurting in any way. Thank You for our homes and families, for food to eat and all the natural blessings You provide us. We ask Your blessing on our Sunday Schools and congregations. Help us to learn more of You and Your love for us, and of the gift of salvation through Your Son Jesus. Amen.

DO YOU WANT TO GO TO HEAVEN? The Bible says: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved... (Acts 16:31)* I want to share some thoughts and questions that I've had about heaven, and thoughts that my sons have shared. Maybe some of you have had similar thoughts and that's ok; God knows how we are made and understands our thoughts. Heaven has most clearly been described in the Bible as a city, the Celestial City, to which Pilgrim in the *The Pilgrim's Progress* was traveling.

Maybe we're just country boys, because my son said, "I don't want to live in a city! What would we do there? That sounds boring!" I myself have wondered, "Will I be able to do the things in heaven that I enjoy now on earth?" For example, will there be salmon and steelhead to catch there? Maybe we are trying to understand heaven with our natural minds, and that doesn't really work. When we have questions like this the Bible is a good place to look for answers.

What does the Bible say about heaven? It definitely describes the Celestial City or New Jerusalem as beautiful, like a bride for her husband, made of pure gold and every kind of jewel and precious stone. This city isn't like a natural city we could picture in our minds like Portland or New York City. Of course there's no sin in heaven. But it's also different in how it looks. It is huge; the dimensions of

the Celestial City in Revelation are of a cube of about 1,500 miles. That's about 2/3 the size of the United States, from the west coast to the Mississippi River, and from the Canadian border to the Mexican border. But not only is it that big a square, it's a box, so it's that tall, too! Heaven is also described in the Bible as a kingdom, as a country and as a new heaven and a new earth. So there is more to heaven than just a city; the city is in the center of this new heavenly country we long for.

We will have things to do in heaven. We will have fellowship, worship and work in heaven. We won't have tears of sorrow, death, or anything bad. There will be no sin, and it will never be night. We will reign with Christ, and we will serve God in heaven, so we will have responsibilities. We definitely know we won't be just sitting around bored in heaven.

Heaven is so good the Bible says that it's Paradise and it's indescribable. The Apostle John saw heaven through an open door and told us some about heaven. Apostle Paul said he knew a man who was caught up to Paradise and he heard things that man is not even permitted to tell. Paul

also said no eye has seen, no ear has heard and no mind has thought of what God has prepared for those who love Him. Heaven is so good that it can't be described.

Recently while reading John 14:2, I felt my questions about heaven were answered so clearly in one little word: YOU. Jesus said, "I am going to prepare a place for YOU!" When we consider how well God knows us, it's better than we know ourselves. He knew us before the foundations of the

world were laid, He knew us before He formed us in the womb. He knows how many hairs are on our head, He knows us by name. So if Jesus knows us, and He's preparing a place for us in heaven, it will be perfect for each one of us, who we are individually. When I read that Jesus is preparing me a place in heaven, I know this place will be perfectly designed for who I am, and it will also be a perfect place for each one of you. ~



The New Jerusalem, Kimon Berlin, based on Public Domain tapestry



THOU, LORD, ART SO READY and willing to hear that before Thy people cry unto Thee, Thou hast already discerned the desires of their hearts. The prophet Isaiah touched upon this same truth when he said: *It shall come to pass, that before they call, I will answer; and while they are yet speaking, I will hear. (Isaiah 65:24)*. These words not only command us to hope when we pray but encourage us to pray when we have no such desire. These words may not stir the confident, satisfied soul, but they will sustain the soul that is burdened and needy.

Martin Luther

Reformation Beginnings: The Seed that Grew a Tree

Excerpts from Volume 1, History of the Reformation

J. H. Merle D'Aubigne

THERE IS IN CHRISTIANITY WHAT no other religious system possesses. It does not, like them, present certain general ideas mingled with tradition and fable, destined to fall sooner or later under the assault of reason: it contains a pure and undefiled truth, founded on facts capable of bearing the examination of every upright and enlightened mind. Christianity does not propose merely to excite in man certain vague religious feelings, whose charm once lost can never be recovered: its object is to satisfy, and it does really satisfy, all the religious wants of human nature, whatever may be the degree of development which it has attained.

It is not the work of man, whose labors pass away and are forgotten; it is the work of God, who upholds what He has created; and it has the promise of its Divine Head as the pledge of its duration.

It is impossible for human nature ever to rise superior to Christianity. And if for a time man thought he could do without it, it soon appeared to him with fresh youth and a new life, as the only remedy for souls. The degenerate nations then returned with new ardor toward those ancient, simple, and powerful truths, which in the hour of their infatuation they had despised.

In fact, Christianity manifested in the sixteenth century the same regenerative power that it had exercised at first. After fifteen centuries the same truths produced the same effects. In the day of the Reformation, as in the time of Peter and Paul, the Gospel overthrew mighty obstacles with irresistible force. Its sovereign power displayed its efficacy from north to south among nations the most dissimilar in manners, character, and intellectual development. Then as in the times of Stephen and James, it kindled the fire of enthusiasm and devotedness in the lifeless nations, and elevated them to the height of martyrdom.

How was this revival of the Church accomplished? We observe here two laws by which God governs the Church in all times. First He prepares slowly and from afar that which He designs to accomplish. He has ages in which to work. Then, when the time is come, he effects the greatest results by the smallest means. It is thus He acts in nature and in history. When He wishes to produce a majestic tree, He deposits a small seed in the bosom of the earth; when He wishes to renovate His Church, He employs the lowliest instruments to accomplish what emperors and learned and distinguished men in the Church could not effect. We shall soon go in search of, and we shall discover, that small seed which a Divine hand placed in the earth in the days of the Reformation...

The Word, the Seed and Luther the Tool



LUTHER WAS SENSIBLE OF HIS ENTIRE DEPENDENCE upon God — a simple and powerful conviction, which is at once the cause of deep humility and of great actions! He fervently invoked the divine blessing upon his labors. Every morning he began the day with prayer; he then went to church, and afterwards applied to his studies, losing not a moment in the whole course of the day. “To pray well,” he was in the habit of saying, “is the better half of study.” The young student passed in the university library all the time he could snatch from his academical pursuits. Books were as yet rare, and it was a great privilege for him to profit by the treasures brought together in this vast collection. One day — he had then been two years at Erfurth, and was twenty years old — he opens many books in the library one after another, to learn their writers’ names. One volume that he comes to attracts his attention. He has never until this hour seen its like. He reads the title — it is a Bible! a rare book, unknown in those

times. His interest is greatly excited: he is filled with astonishment at finding other matters than those fragments of the gospels and epistles that the Church has selected to be read to the people during public worship every Sunday throughout the year. Until this day he had imagined that they composed the whole Word of God. And now he sees so many pages, so many chapters, so many books of which he had had no idea! His heart beats, as he holds the divinely inspired volume in his hand. With eagerness and with indescribable emotion he turns over these leaves from God. The first page on which he fixes his attention narrates the story of Hannah and of the young Samuel. He reads — and his soul can hardly contain the joy it feels... He returns home with a full heart. “Oh! that God would give me such a book for myself,” thought he.

Luther was as yet ignorant both of Greek and Hebrew. It is scarcely probable that he had studied these languages during the first two or three years of his residence at the university. The Bible that had filled him with such transports was in Latin. He soon returned to the library to pore over his treasure. He read it again and again, and then, in his astonishment and joy, he returned to read it once more. The first glimmerings of a new truth were then beginning to dawn upon his mind.

Thus had God led him to the discovery of His Word — of that book of which he was one day to give his fellow countrymen that admirable translation in which Germany has for three centuries perused the oracles of God. Perhaps for the first time his precious volume has now been taken down from the place it occupied in the library of Erfurth. This book, deposited upon the unknown shelves of a gloomy hall, is about to become the book of life to a whole nation. In that Bible the Reformation lay hid. ~

Jude!

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

THE LETTER OF JUDE IS one of the shortest in the New Testament, and it contains profound warnings—and beautiful words of comfort—to believers. It was not written to an individual or congregation, but to Christians everywhere, to be circulated and shared.



Jude is a servant of Jesus Christ and the brother of James, and he addresses those who are called, sanctified of God and kept for Jesus Christ. Jude delivers a greeting similar to other New Testament writers, that mercy, peace and love would be multiplied to them. He doesn't ask for a little mercy, peace and love, but that these would be given in abundance.

He had intended to write about their common salvation, but it was necessary instead to exhort them to contend for the faith which was delivered to the saints. The true faith was under attack by ungodly men. Jude raises a warning about those who would turn the grace of God into "lasciviousness," a gross form of wickedness which often has sensual connotations. It means "lustfulness, wantonness, lewdness." These people were also denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. How could they deceive Christians? They crept in without anyone noticing, and they were ordained long before for this condemnation.

God doesn't lightly laugh at sin. Jude calls to their remembrance how God had delivered the children of Israel from bondage, but He later destroyed those who did not believe. Angels who took more authority than God had granted are kept in chains until the judgment day. Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, which indulged in all manner of sexual immorality, were set forth as an example and suffered the vengeance of eternal fire. Jude warns of dreamers who defile the flesh, reject authority and speak evil of dignities. They blaspheme things they do not understand and corrupt themselves by their brutish, beastly behavior. Woe to them! They are like clouds without water, carried along by the wind; like fruitless trees plucked up by the roots; like raging waves of the sea, casting up foam to their shame; like wandering stars—by which you cannot navigate—who are reserved for the "blackness of darkness" forever.

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In much the same way, some people today attempt to draw believers away from the truth of God's Word, from the simple proclamation of the Gospel, from the Reformation cry of justification by faith alone. These people desire a moving spiritual experience, insist on a specific formula for salvation, call for people to make a decision for Christ, and promote teachings which are not backed by the authority of Scripture. These are people who are carried about by every wind of doctrine, who follow charismatic false prophets, who base the depth of their faith on their own feelings. Jude says these are murmurers, complainers, who follow their own lusts, who speak boastfully, who falsely show admiration to gain advantage.

Jude tells them that the Lord will come with ten thousands of His saints to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are **ungodly** among them of all their **ungodly** deeds which they have **ungodly** committed, and of all their hard speeches which **ungodly** sinners have spoken against him. (Jude 15) Jude reminds them of the words of the apostles, how they had warned that there would be mockers in the last time who would walk after their own **ungodly** lusts, who would cause separations, who are sensual and have not the Spirit. Whew! that is a lot of ungodliness!

Remember Jude's reason for writing: *...It was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith...* (Jude 3) We also should earnestly contend for the faith! We are part of the Christian Church whom Jude is addressing. In this day of ungodliness and worldly lust, let us contend for the faith.

These warnings of dire consequences and danger are followed by some of the most beautiful and encouraging words in the Scripture:

But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.

Jude 20-25

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Guarding Our Hearts

Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. (Proverbs 4:23)

The writer directs us to learn and understand the Word of the Lord, for in it is wisdom to direct our paths. Please read the fourth chapter of Proverbs as you sit down to read this, for it will give you a fuller insight into what the Lord is teaching us.

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend to know understanding... Let thine heart retain my words: keep my commandments, and live. (Proverbs 4: 1, 4) It is written: *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)* When this is in the forefront of our lives, having the highest value, and is the first love of our lives, then the Word will guard our hearts and direct all that we do, in accordance with the will of the Lord.

The way of the wicked is as darkness: they know not at what they stumble. (Proverbs 4:19) So also if we neglect the Word and the worship of the Lord, we will stumble into the ways of the world which are always ready to direct our paths in the way of unrighteousness. Therefore, Jesus said: *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)* Apostle John recorded in *1 John 1:6-7: If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

Guarding our hearts requires daily diligence in giving attention to His Word and not letting it depart from our eyes. When we think we can direct our lives, leaning on our own understanding or strength, we will surely falter and fail, for we are but men, feeble in ourselves and apt to fail. Therefore, we must pray that the Lord will give us a diligence for His Word, and a desire to obey that Word which, given in love for us, is intended for our good.

Let us pray for one another, as well as for ourselves, that the Lord God will strengthen in us a desire for His truth.

Pastor Rodney Johnson
Laurium, Michigan

As the Flower of the Field, He Flourisheth

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. (Psalm 103:15-16)

We witness the change of time as fall arrives and soon winter will be here. The grass and foliage budded in the spring and turned to gold in the summer heat. Soon the leaves will turn color and finally winter will set in. This fittingly matches man's existence and the cycle of life. We admire the flowers and new beauty of the spring but know that they are not permanent. Scripture uses this natural example of the grass and flowers to remind us that we are here only for a season, then we, too, will vanish. What remains is the witness of our lives, along with the memories of time past. No matter where we are in this "calendar of seasons," we need to know that God has numbered our days.

Nothing more quickly changes our focus and puts our own allotment of time into proper perspective than the loss of several loved ones in a short span of time. As a result, my thoughts have been focused on how to pass the time we have:

- Cherish the moments we still have with one another.
- Experience and treat one another well to avoid regrets.
- Carry one another in love and forgiveness.
- Consider what witness we will leave.

Those who are left have to close the chapter. All that remains is the cherished storehouse of memories. Now we must place our faith in Jesus Christ and trust in His grace. We witness that the flesh is left here, but we are promised by God that the spirit will rise to meet Him.



Pastor Harvey Niska
Mesa, Arizona