

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.

September 2018

Hear, and Your Soul Shall Live

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. Behold, I have given him for a witness to the people, a leader and commander to the people. Behold, thou shalt call a nation that thou knowest not, and nations that knew not thee shall run unto thee because of the Lord thy God, and for the Holy One of Israel; for he hath glorified thee. Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Isaiah 55:1-11

DURING THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION, Martin Luther sought to correct some of the abuses in the church by bringing it back under the authority of God's Word. Luther understood that the problems within the church were a result of a departure from the teachings of the Holy Scripture. This is no less true in the church today. As the Body of Christ seeks to minister to the various concerns of a fallen world, our temptation is to listen to reason or emotion, rather than to the voice of God.

In the midst of the turmoil, God continues to cry out: **Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live...** God's Word gives life to all who hear in faith. It does so, because all of Scripture points us to the Living Word, Jesus Christ. It is the redemption by His blood that gives life and salvation for sinful mankind.



So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it. (v.11) As both a preacher and hearer of Gospel, this second promise gives great comfort to me. It means that God's Word will bear fruit regardless of the skills or efforts of the preacher or the understanding of the hearer. God has the power to minister to us in this marvelous way through the power of His glorious Word. May God grant us grace to hearken unto the voice of the Good Shepherd, so that we may hear and live.

Yours in Christ.

Two Kinds of Righteousness

Martin Luther

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF CHRISTIAN RIGHTEOUSNESS, just as man's sin is of two kinds. The first is alien righteousness, that is the righteousness of another, instilled from without. This is the righteousness of Christ by which He justifies through faith, as it is written in *1 Corinthians 1:30: who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.* In *John 11:25-26*, Christ Himself states: "I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me.....shall never die." Later He adds in *John 14:6: I am the way, the truth, and the life.* This righteousness, then, is given to men in baptism and whenever they are truly repentant. Therefore a man can with confidence boast in Christ and say: "Mine are Christ's living, doing, and speaking, His suffering and dying, mine as much as if I had lived, done, spoken, suffered, and died as He did." Just as a bridegroom possesses all that is his bride's and she all that is his—for the two have all things in common because they are one flesh [*Gen. 2:24*—so Christ and the church are one spirit [*Eph. 5:29-32*]. Thus the blessed God and Father of mercies has, according to Peter, granted to us very great and precious gifts in Christ [*2 Pet. 1:4*]...

This inexpressible grace and blessing was long ago promised to Abraham: *And in thy seed (that is in Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. Isaiah 9:6 says: For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given.* "To us," it says, because He is entirely ours with all His benefits if we believe in Him, as we read in *Romans 8:32: He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* Therefore everything which Christ has is ours, graciously bestowed on us unworthy men out of God's sheer mercy, although we have rather deserved wrath and condemnation, and hell also. Even Christ Himself, therefore, who says He came to do the most sacred will of His Father [*John 6:38*], became obedient to Him; and whatever He did, He did it for us and desired it to be ours, saying, "I am among you as one who serves" [*Luke 22:27*]. He also states, *This is my body which is given for you. (Luke 22:19)*...

Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ's righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that He has becomes ours; rather, He Himself becomes ours. Therefore the Apostle calls it "the righteousness of God" in *Romans 1:17: For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.* Finally, in *Romans 3:28*, such a faith is called "the righteousness of God": *Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith...* This is an infinite righteousness, and one that swallows up all sins in a moment, for it is impossible that sin should exist in Christ. On the contrary, he who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the

same righteousness as He. It is therefore impossible that sin should remain in him. This righteousness is primary; it is the basis, the cause, the source of all our own actual righteousness. For this is the righteousness given in place of the original righteousness lost in Adam. It accomplishes the same as that original righteousness would have accomplished; rather, it accomplishes more...

Therefore this alien righteousness, instilled in us without our works by grace alone—while the Father, to be sure, inwardly draws us to Christ—is set opposite original sin, likewise alien, which we acquire without our works by birth alone. Christ daily drives out the old Adam more and more in accordance with the extent to which faith and knowledge of Christ grow. For alien righteousness is not instilled all at once, but it begins, makes progress, and is finally perfected at the end through death.

The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness. This is that manner of life spent profitably in good works, in the first place, in slaying the flesh and crucifying the desires with respect to the self, of which we read in *Galatians 5:24: And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.* In the second place, this righteousness consists in love to one's neighbor, and in the third place, in meekness and fear towards God. The Apostle is full of references to these, as is all the rest of Scripture. He briefly summarizes everything, however, in *Titus 2:12: ...we should live soberly (pertaining to crucifying one's own flesh), righteously (referring to one's neighbor), and godly (relating to God), in this present world.*

This righteousness is the product of the righteousness of the first type, actually its fruit and consequence, for we read in *Galatians 5:22: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance.* For because the works mentioned are works of men, it is obvious that in this passage a spiritual man is called "spirit." In *John 3:6* we read: *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.* This righteousness goes on to complete the first for it ever strives to do away with the old Adam and to destroy the body of sin. Therefore it hates itself and loves its neighbor; it does not seek its own good, but that of another, and in this its whole way of living consists. For in that it hates itself and does not seek its own, it crucifies the flesh. Because it seeks the good of another, it works love. Thus in each sphere it does God's will living soberly with self, justly with neighbor, devoutly toward God.~

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:7-14

The Spiritual Soldier

Paul Rantala, Kristillinen Kuukauslehti, Jan. 1960

Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire

Is there not an appointed time to man upon earth? are not his days also like the days of an hireling?

Job 7:1

(Finnish: "Is not man always in warfare upon earth, and his days are like the days of a slave.")

THIS INNER STRUGGLE IS WITH ALL GOD'S CHILDREN as long as they bear the body of sin. If we did not have a corrupt nature we would not have warfare. But we all bear the same inheritance. Satan attacks each of us for he is envious of our blessedness and strives to war so that God would have no joy-companions. He goes about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour. The children of this world say: if Christianity were right, surely everyone would abide in it. But even as it is true in natural warfare, so it is also true in spiritual: even the victorious nation suffers loss, for soldiers are killed and wounded. Our King is surely victorious although many soldiers fall, and many are wounded. The enemy does not cease to lie wait for souls although he has already overcome many. The Lord's Apostle exhorts us to put on the whole armor of God that we may be able to withstand in the evil day, and, having done all, to stand.

Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints... (Ephesians 6:14-18)

These are the spiritual weapons of warfare which every spiritual soldier must have. He who does not have these is not prepared for warfare and will be overcome by the enemy. Unbelief is a powerful enemy which attacks the Christians. To this are added all other enticements of sin such as love of the world, one's own glory in goodness, adultery in many forms, covetousness (which does not go by its own name but has many fine names and modes for justifying itself), idolatry (which also is hard for even Christians to recognize as an enemy, yet all that is dearer than God is an idol); taking the name of God in vain is often permissible in vain conversations; breaking the Sabbath has become permissible to many; disobedience to parents has grown in great measure; marriage to unbelievers has found a place in many areas, and following worldly fashions seems to be general everywhere.

Oh, beloved, let us strive with God's strength and power to war against these enemies. Many have fallen to these enemies. But not only these, but many other finer enemies such as false piety, vain hope, dead faith, and imaginary godliness, pride of heart, and friendship of the world. All these enemies are able to kill the soul. Many of them look so nice that they do not appear to be enemies except in the sunlight of the Gospel. Dear Father, allow the sun of grace to shine yet so brightly that we would recognize the craftiness of the enemy in this perilous time. The warfare will not be long. It will end soon. And we will have peace. Then even the most troubled soul will have rest.

We need the whole armor of soldiers of past days in order to be victorious over all the wicked wiles of Satan. Thou

great Hero of Israel, teach us to fight, and when we are wounded, lead us to the right place of healing lest we die. This warfare at times seems particularly difficult and our enemies unconquerable. Our enemies are indeed powerful: the devil, the world, our own flesh, as well as all these enticements of sin which we already named. We cannot conquer them by our own strength. We need the power of God and the whole armor of God of which the Apostle speaks. We also need often to ask our heavenly Father for strength for this spiritual warfare wherein many have grown weary. However, a great multitude has been victorious in God's strength, and has departed to sing their hymns of victory. We also will be victorious if our only goal remains the desire to gain nothing in this world but to see my own Redeemer face to face. On that day all temptations are passed and the war has ended. Until that time we must be in the battle. There is no peace until we reach Home. There is no time here during which the enemy of the soul does not lie in wait for the child of God. Only for a brief moment, when one is filled with the knowledge of God, are the tribulations forgotten, and the Christian marvels at the great goodness and love of God. But when this feeling has passed, the enemy is attacking again, saying, That wasn't the knowledge of God, that was of your own doing. Also, when one feels sinful thoughts and sinful lusts, the enemy says, If you really were a child of God you would not feel such things any longer. And when you have neither a knowledge of sin or a knowledge of grace either, the devil says, Now you are completely dead. In this way the devil never leaves the child of God in peace. Sometimes he tempts with sinful lusts, sometimes tries to cause us to seek righteousness within ourselves, again offers us our own strength as a temptation. At times the devil makes the whole work of God as nothing; at other times he offers the glory of "the best Christian."



Therefore, dear brothers and sisters everywhere, let us fight as strong soldiers of Jesus Christ, always placing the shield of faith before the darts of Satan. We must always allow our own right to fall, and trust in the perfect sacrifice of Christ, remembering that my heart is cold but the heart of the Lord Jesus is warm; my heart is unloving, but His is full of love; my heart is dry and narrow, but His is verdant and bountiful, for He always carries me, suffers me, and forgives and forgets all my failures. The spiritually dead do not have this warfare. They have no trouble with sin, nor joy in grace. But all who have a living spirit find that the enemy wants to rob them of the heavenly gift, kill the living spirit, and estrange us from our Lover.

Thou great War Hero, teach us to war and to overcome even the last enemy which is death. Beloved, let us always wash our garments clean in the blood of the Lamb, and let us sharpen our weapons, remembering that this is a foreign land. Soon the war will end and peace will abide. Soon all the elect will be gathered and the endless festival will begin. Then there will be no warfare, no storms. ~

Choose a Path of Wisdom

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello again to you all. I sure hope this finds you well. We are well here. We are enjoying warm summer weather, and sometimes it is a little too warm.

I was paging through the Proverbs and came across a chapter on wisdom and I will share part of it with you. *Proverbs 4:1-15* is a father teaching his children.

Hear, ye children, the instruction of a father, and attend (pay attention) to know understanding.

For I give you good doctrine (set of beliefs or teachings), forsake ye not my law.

For I was my father's son, tender and only beloved (dearly loved) in the sight of my mother.

He taught me also, and said unto me, Let thine heart retain (keep possession of) my words: keep my commandments, and live.

Get wisdom (the quality of having experience, knowledge and good judgment), **get understanding:**

forget it not; neither decline from (think not important) the words of my mouth.

Forsake her (wisdom) not, and she shall preserve (protect) thee: love her, and she shall keep thee.

Wisdom is the principal thing (first or highest in importance);

therefore (for this reason) get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.

Exalt (think or speak very highly of) her (wisdom), and she shall promote (support and encourage) thee:

she shall bring thee to honour (high respect), when thou dost embrace her (hold her closely to you).

She shall give to thine head an ornament of grace: a crown of glory shall she deliver to thee.

Hear, O my son (and daughter), and receive my sayings (teachings); and the years of thy life shall be many.

I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths.

When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened (hampered); and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.

Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life.

Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men.

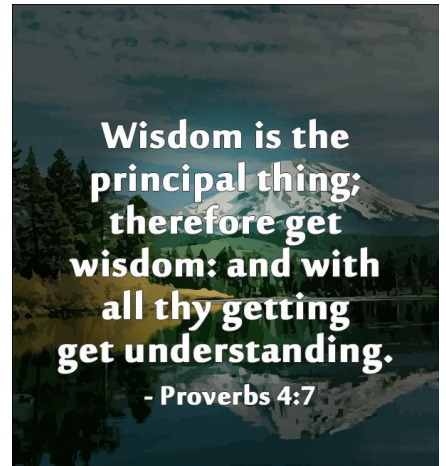
Avoid it (the evil path), pass not by it, turn from it, and pass (keep) away.

THERE IS SO MUCH GOOD INSTRUCTION HERE. Wisdom is something we should all pray for very much. Without wisdom and understanding, our walk here as Christians can be very hard. But it doesn't have to be that way. Often we want to do our own thing and think we are in control of things, and then we find out that we get into trouble. God would want us to always seek Him for answers and He is ever willing to hear us and come to our aid.

I pray that you children will pray for **wisdom and understanding** in all areas of your life. Most importantly for your life as a follower of Jesus but in your choices of work, friends, and as you get older, who you will marry. I pray that you who are still in school, that being grade school, high school, college or higher, and all who are at home or in the workplace, that all of us will be a light out there in this big world where Jesus is being shut out and scorned.

Someday Jesus will come floating through the clouds as He said and will take us all to be with Him in heaven, that beautiful place He has prepared for all who love Him and believe in His name. God bless and be with all of you today and the moments, days, weeks, months, and years as He sees fit.

Seek to know what Wisdom has waiting for you!

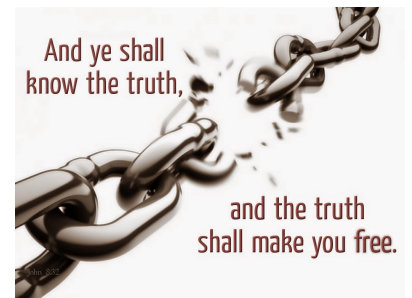


God's peace.

ONE DAY AS I WAS PASSING into the field . . . this sentence fell upon my soul. Thy righteousness is in heaven. And methought, withal, I saw with the eyes of my soul Jesus Christ at God's right hand; there, I say, was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was doing, God could not say of me, he wants [lacks] my righteousness, for that was just before [in front of] him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse, for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, "The same yesterday, today and, and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

Now did my chains fall off my legs indeed. I was loosed from my afflictions and irons; my temptations also fled away; so that from that time those dreadful scriptures of God left off to trouble me; now went I also home rejoicing for the grace and love of God.

John Bunyan, Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners



The Justification of Abraham

Paul Kretzmann

What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.

Romans 4:1-5

PAUL HAD TAUGHT THAT WE ARE JUSTIFIED by faith. To demonstrate and confirm this doctrine, as well as to anticipate a probable objection on the part of the Jews, he now refers to the case of Abraham, the father of the Jewish nation. What, then, shall we say that Abraham, our forefather, has found according to the flesh? How must his case be judged? What did he gain according to the flesh, by his obedience to the Law and to all the commands of God, especially the rite of circumcision? If he obtained the unusual blessings he enjoyed, particularly his justification, on the strength of his outward observance of the Old Testament sacrament, then the Jews would certainly be entitled to consideration for the same reason. The answer is implied: We must say that Abraham was not justified by works. This conclusion the apostle defends. For if Abraham was justified by works, he has reasons for expecting glory and praise, he might indeed assert his claim to the confidence and favor of his fellow-men; but he would have no reason for boasting before God. The argument, which is contracted, would read in full: If Abraham was justified by works, he could boast of his merits: but now he has nothing which he could adduce as being worthy of praise; therefore he was not justified by works. That Abraham had no ground for boasting in relation to God, Paul proves from Scriptures. For what does the Scripture say (Genesis 15:6)? Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness. According to this infallible authority, Abraham was declared to be righteous and just; justification was credited to his account, since he accepted it by faith. In this way the faith of Abraham, in itself anything but righteousness, in itself without merit, was counted to him for righteousness. Although he had neither inherent nor habitual righteousness, he was looked upon and treated by God as righteous. The value of Abraham's faith, therefore, did not lie or consist in any subjective quality, but in its object and content; because the faith was directed to God, and, in God, to Christ, the Redeemer, therefore the righteousness of Christ was imputed to Abraham as his own, and he was declared to be acceptable in the sight of God.

This the apostle explains more fully in verses 4 and 5. Now to him that works, that keeps the Law with the idea of obtaining an equivalent reward, adequate wages for his labor, the reward is reckoned not of grace, but of debt. But to him who does not work, does not make his works a basis of hope toward God, but believes in Him that justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned for righteousness. There are only two

possibilities that we can consider at all, to be justified and saved by works and by faith; there is an absolute contrast between righteousness of works and righteousness of faith. In the case of Abraham, therefore, who was justified by faith, the other possibility, righteousness by works, was excluded. The apostle here does not argue the matter that a complete and adequate righteousness of works is impossible for all men, as a simple matter of fact. If a workman has done his work according to specifications, he receives the promised and stipulated wages, as his due reward, which he can justly claim. So also in the spiritual field: If one that is active in works of the Law intends to satisfy the demands of God and keeps all the commandments, then God will give to him the promised reward, righteousness, as a matter of justice, provided, of course, that he has rendered a perfect obedience. The very opposite of such a man is the person that puts his faith, not as a mere assent, but as an act of trust, in Him that justifies the ungodly, that is, he that has violated the divine right, that has refused God the proper obedience, that has lacked all reverence toward Him. When a godless person of this kind stands before the judgment-seat of God, he can, by human computation, expect nothing but the sentence of everlasting condemnation. But instead of pronouncing this expected sentence, God declares the sinner to be just and righteous (Isaiah 1:18). It is not the purpose of Paul to show here just how this sentence is possible, that the sinner must feel and acknowledge his guilt, that he must rely on the mercy of God in Jesus, his Savior: St. Paul deliberately makes the contrast as great as possible in order to bring out the unequalled consolation of the doctrine of justification. Truly, He is a wonderful God, as He has revealed Himself in Christ, in the Gospel, the God that justifies the ungodly, that imputes the sinner's faith for righteousness.

It is a miracle. It is a thing that only God can achieve, and that calls into act and manifestation all the resources of the divine nature. It is achieved through an unparalleled revelation of the judgment and the mercy of God. The miracle of the Gospel is that God comes to the ungodly with a mercy which is righteous altogether, and enables them through faith, in spite of what they are, to enter into a new relation to Himself, in which goodness becomes possible for them. There can be no spiritual life at all for a sinful man unless he can get an initial assurance of an unchanging love of God deeper than sin, and he gets this at the Cross. He gets it by believing in Jesus, and it is justification by faith."

Expositor's Greek Testament, 2,616

Note: The act of justification, the imputation of righteousness, in itself has nothing to do with the moral character of those concerned. To declare that justification is the infusion of moral righteousness, as the Papists do, is to confuse justification and sanctification, Law and Gospel. ~

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. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:8-11. Keep Jesus Christ

“My God, I Know That I Must Die”

Stella Wilson
Battle Ground, Washington

As I was lying in bed this morning, the words of an old hymn came to my memory. What we learn in our youth can come back to us years later. I found the words to it in the 1945 publication of “Siionin Laulut ja Virret” (Hymns and Songs of Zion):

My God, I know that I must die;
My mortal life is passing hence;
On earth I neither hope nor try
To find a lasting residence.
Then teach me by Thy heav'nly grace
With joy and peace my death to face.

My God, I know not when I die;
What is the moment or the hour,
How soon the clay may broken lie,
How quickly pass away the flower:
Then may Thy child preparéd be
Through time to meet eternity.

My God, I know not how I die;
For death in many ways doth come,
In dark, mysterious agony,
Or gently as a sleep to some.
Just as Thou wilt, if but it be
To bring me, blesséd Lord, to Thee!

My God, I know not where I die,
Where is my grace, upon what strand;
Yet from its gloom I do rely
To be delivered by Thy hand.
Content, I take what spot is mine,
Since all the earth, my Lord, is Thine.

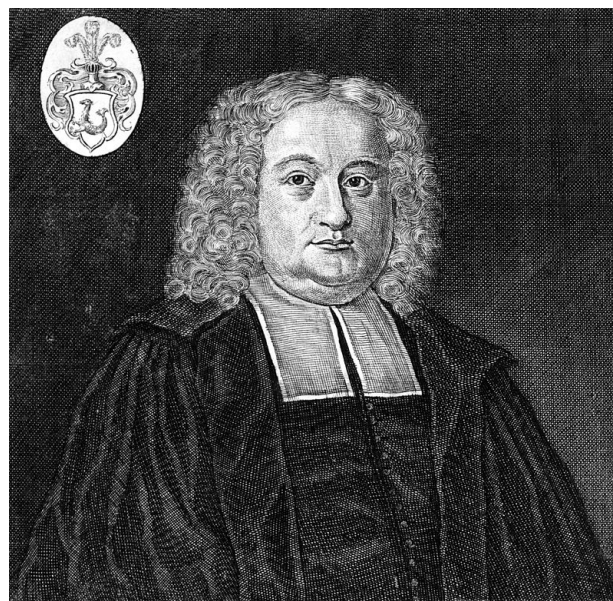
My gracious God, when I must die,
O bear my happy soul above,
With Christ, my Lord, eternally
To share Thy glory and Thy love:
Then all is right and well with me,
When, where, and how my death shall be.

I researched Benjamin Schmolck, hymnwriter, on Google and learned of his life and the reason he wrote this hymn:

One day, while Benjamin Schmolck was still a school boy, he came home and preached a sermon. His father was so pleased with it, that he vowed to find the money to equip his son with a theological education. Born on December 21, 1672, at Brauchitzchdorf, Germany, Benjamin was the son of a Lutheran minister. He became a Lutheran pastor and hymn writer himself.

At the University of Leipzig, Benjamin came under the influence of godly instructors who passed their own deep faith on to him. While at university, he began to write poems for rich clients, a practice which provided him with extra income.

After graduation, he returned home in 1694, was ordained, and took his father's place. Eight years later,



he went to Catholic Silesia, an Austrian-German region. The Catholic majority restricted the number of churches Lutherans could own. The church where Benjamin pastored was outside Schweidnitz. It served 36 villages and was not allowed to erect a steeple or tower.

There Benjamin worked for 35 years until his death. There he tangled with Catholic authorities and wrote many hymns—over 900. Many were sentimental or else strained too hard for grand effects. But a few were excellent. Bach used a text by Benjamin Schmolck in his cantata #35. All of Benjamin's hymns showed that Jesus was real in his life.

My Jesus, as you will! Oh, may your will be mine!
Into your hand of love, I would my all resign;
Through sorrow, or through joy,
Conduct me as your own,
And help me still to say, my Lord, your will be done!

At the age of 58, he was seated at home one Sunday in spring when a stroke paralyzed him. Benjamin recovered enough to carry on his work, which he did for another five years. A second stroke then felled him for good.

The last seven years of his life he lay patiently in bed, blind and unable to speak. Still, he mustered the strength to place his hands on the heads of those who came for his blessing. Blessings and silent prayer were all he could do.

Benjamin died in February 1737. He was much loved by his people because of his warm personality and genuine concern for spiritual things.

From Christianity.com: Benjamin Schmolck in Catholic Silesia

God's peace.

Alien Righteousness

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

But to him that worketh not, but **believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly**, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, **unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works**, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin... And he [Abraham] received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; **that righteousness might be imputed unto them also.**

Romans 4:5-8, 11

WHEN WE HEAR THE WORD "ALIEN" we often think of extraterrestrial beings, little green men from outer space. There have been fantastic stories written about what an encounter with an alien could be like (fantastic as in "fantasy"). One dictionary definition of "alien" is this: *differing in nature or character typically to the point of incompatibility.*

Our human nature and character are incompatible with righteousness. Since the fall of Adam (and through him, our inheritance of original sin), our ability to be right before God's holy Law is incompatible to our very nature. Our character is alien to God's righteousness!

Christ's nature and character are incompatible with sin; but God made Him to be sin for us. **For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.** (2 Corinthians 5:21) Sin was outside of Christ's nature, and our iniquity was LAID on Him by the Father (Isaiah 53:6). Christ's character is alien to sin!

Christ's righteousness is alien to us. It is foreign, outside of us, but it is gifted to us by Christ Himself.

Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto



justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)

Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.

Romans 5:12-19

Martin Luther wrote:

This is that mystery which is rich in divine grace to sinners: wherein by a wonderful exchange our sins are no longer ours but Christ's, and the righteousness of Christ not Christ's but ours. He has emptied himself of his righteousness that he might clothe us with it and fill us with it; and he has taken our evils upon himself that he might deliver us from them.

Learn Christ and him crucified. Learn to pray to him and, despairing of yourself, say, 'Thou, Lord Jesus, art my righteousness, but I am thy sin. Thou hast taken upon thyself what is mine and hast given to me what is thine. Thou hast taken upon thyself what thou wast not and hast given to me what I was not.'

When we look at the perfect Law of God and our inability to meet its demands, we are judged by it. We can't work our way out of this sentence of death; we can't be good enough to measure up. We stand condemned before the Almighty, and can only throw ourselves on the mercy of the court.

Thanks be to God that our Advocate, Jesus Christ the Righteous, stands in our place. He has taken our ungodliness. Through the gift of faith, our sin is imputed, attributed, credited to Him; and He takes our sentence of death for it. And as unbelievable it seems, His perfect, outside-of-us, alien righteousness is imputed to us, credited to our account! ~

My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.

1 John 2:1-2

Christian Monthly Vol. LXXIV—No. 9

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

US: \$12 (Washington residents add your local sales tax)

Canada: \$18 (US money order only) Foreign: \$25

Send articles for publication to:

Lois Matson, Editor

Email: cm@apostoliclutheran.org

Phone: (360) 904-6951

Postal Mail to:

CHRISTIAN MONTHLY

PO Box 2126

Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA

Address subscriptions, payments,
and Book Concern orders to:

Anders & Clara Sundqvist, Managers

THE BOOK CONCERN

PO Box 2126

Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA

Phone: (360) 896-7344

Email: books@apostoliclutheran.org

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org

Eastern Mission: eastern@apostoliclutheran.org

Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

The *Christian Monthly* (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, 19113 NE 144th Street, Brush Prairie, WA 98606. Periodical permit paid in Brush Prairie, Washington.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604

General Disclaimer: The material in the *Christian Monthly* is reviewed for scriptural soundness and to ensure that it does not conflict with the teachings of the ALCA. Publication does not imply that other material by included authors has been so approved.



HAVE YOU MOVED? Please notify the Book Concern of address changes. We must pay return postage on undelivered mail.

He Is Our Righteousness

Adolf Koberle

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 1:30-31

IN THE STUBBORN PRIDE OF [man's] "I will do it all myself," he prefers to think that there is an ascending development, through innumerable reincarnations, rather than to turn from such aspirations to self-abasement. He would rather enlighten the darkness of his understanding with the feeble light that comes from the most intense introspection, than to accept the light of God as a gift. He would rather benumb his faculties with the ceaseless, feverish intoxication of erotic or mystical excitement so as not to have to see the death sentence that hangs over him. At any cost he wants to pay the price himself, to attain justification through sanctification, reconciliation through merits, salvation through soaring aspirations, the knowledge of God through the removal of limitations "by his own reason and strength!" And yet on each of these roads the honest man comes at last to those final limitations that turn the pride of the heart into despair. Infra-worldly as well as super-mundane mystical aspirations have never met with lasting success but have always terminated in insipid, barren emptiness; the will continually desires new bondage when it ought to be free and happy in its service; the titanic efforts of the intellect only plunge it into new contradictions.

Because a feeling of self-importance, that transforms its distress, always remains in the penitence of our own self-condemnation, God has disclosed His judgment on the world in the Cross of Jesus so as to crush us utterly and completely by the judgment it reveals. Here He shows the world what it would never have fully realized by itself, the end of its own wisdom and willfulness and the judgment of God on both. Legalistic Pharisees who boasted of their place with God, zealous scribes who desired to be a light to those walking in darkness (Rom. 2:17-20), intellectual Sadducees, politically clever rulers who possessed a quite up-to-date wisdom, enthusiastic disciples, eager crowds of pilgrims who riot in the pious emotions of the rich ritual of the great holy days, they all—this truly imposing multitude of the representatives of zealous seekers after holiness—they all despise, hate and put to death the Servant of God, because He did not bring them clever ideas, flattering praise or intoxicating power, but in its place condemning, redeeming, divine love. By their actions they all reveal the bankruptcy of humanity whose most intensified piety accomplishes nothing more than the derision and rejection of God in God's name. ~

If I Knew I Would Die in Three Days...

RECENTLY WE TOOK A WALK and talked about serious things. One of you said something that I remember quite well. He said, "If I knew that I would die in 3 days, I would take my money out of the bank, buy a huge piece of Swiss cheese and eat incessantly." Now we laugh about this, and the one who said it meant it only as a joke; but, you know, one really shouldn't make a bad joke about dying, even if it isn't meant maliciously, because there are quite a few people who really would do something very similar to what that boy said. They think of nothing else but the movies, eating, and drinking. The people of Jerusalem told the prophet, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die (Isaiah 22:13)." Why, indeed, can so many treat this issue so lightly, in a way that we ought not at all? You know the answer! Surely it is because so many people believe that with death everything is finished and at an end. The older ones among you have often discussed and argued with someone who believes this as well. You have noticed how difficult it is to change a person's opinion. We have so little to say about death because none of us is acquainted with it or has experienced it. I readily admit that you will never be able to prove what we are discussing today. Thanks be to God that it can't be proved, but you can believe it. You see, if we know that God has entered into a relationship with us, then how can we imagine that the good Lord is capable of rejecting us completely? We should, after all, rely on God's faithfulness. Otherwise, everything certainly is at an end.

Now, if we make up our minds to believe courageously in our Lord Jesus' words (one cannot believe without courage), then we have to go all the way. The time will come for all of us when Jesus will knock at our door for the last time and will call us to go. Who knows when it will be! Maybe when we're 80 years old, maybe this very week.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer