

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE WORD OF GOD




Psalm 119:105

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.**

January 2012

Something New

*Pastor Gerald Southerton
Hancock, Michigan*



The new year is upon us. The new year gives people a new start and many make resolutions to change their behavior. People look forward to the new year because, innately, they know they are not perfect. Even people who do not know Jesus Christ know that something is not right within themselves. This is ignored most of the time, but as the new year approaches, people start to examine themselves and find they are lacking. So they start to make resolutions of how they are going to get better. Rarely do people follow through with these for very long, because the true power to change is not within the sinful human being. It is only through repentance and believing the Gospel of Jesus Christ that true change comes. We who have received this Gospel message and come to repentance (which means change of mind) and faith have something much greater than a marker of the passage of time to which to look forward:

And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, 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 away 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 are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, Write: for these words are true and faithful. (Revelation 21:1-5)

This portion of the Revelation of Jesus Christ to John shows us the true "new thing" for which all humanity and creation is longing.

For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope, Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.

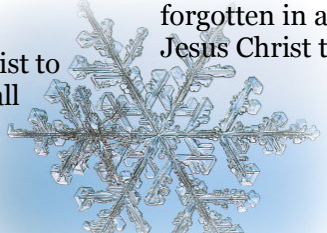
(Romans 8:19-23)



The whole of creation longs for something new.

The reason that the new year is such a big secular holiday is that people are longing for something new. The problem is that many people don't know that what they are looking for is found within the person of Jesus Christ. It is in Him that we are transformed and made new. But we also wait for the time when Jesus will again be revealed and our bodies will be redeemed and this body of sin will disappear. As we move into the new year, let's spread the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ so people would come to know that real newness of life does not come with the passage of time but rather with the forgiveness of sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. The new year is a good time to get into conversations about change because people are looking at what they want to change in their lives to be better. Instead of making resolutions that will be forgotten in a few days or weeks, spread the message of Jesus Christ that will change lives for eternity.

God bless your new year!



The Love of the Father

Pastor Wayne Juntunen
Esko, Minnesota

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. (1 John 3:1-7)

Do you feel alone, rejected, forsaken? Are you struggling with your self-worth? Do you hate yourself? Friend, do yourself no harm! Satan—our chief enemy—wants to destroy you, but God loves you. You are His unique, handcrafted individual, whom He sent His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, to rescue and bring back to Himself. You are of such worth that all the gold and silver of this world is not enough to buy you. You have been purchased with the precious blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:19). In truth God owns you! Jesus Christ paid the purchase price: His own life. He took all your sin and suffered the just judgment of God on account of it. He died on Calvary's cross for you, because He loves you so much. Please let Him love you! Don't believe the lie that you are "good-for-nothing."

Perhaps you are arguing with yourself, "How do I know God loves me?" The Bible says: *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)* You are part of this world that God loves. Maybe you're saying, "How do I know there even is a God?" You don't know; you can't know. Jesus became Man to dwell among us so that we could begin to know God. Jesus said: *This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)* Our minds have been blinded by the prince of this world so that we cannot know God (2 Corinthians 4:3-4), but God came in the person of Jesus, and today, through the power of His Holy Spirit, He makes Himself known. He does this because no one seeks after God. We are powerless to come to Him because of unbelief, so God devised a marvelous plan by which we can believe: through the hearing of His Word (Romans 10:17).

When you believe, when you trust Christ to be your Savior, your whole value system will change. The way you look at everything—yourself, your life, the world, friends, family, possessions—is changed. The fundamental change is evident immediately: you are a child

of God. This sense of belonging is our most important need. Whatever our roots or heritage, belonging to God is all that matters.

John compels us to grasp the fact that God has so abundantly lavished us with His love that we should be called the children of God. It is without exception the love of God that has made such a relationship possible. By nature we are children of wrath and enemies of God. Christ's whole purpose was to bring us back to God so we could have life in its fullness, as God always intended it to be.

While this essential, foundational relationship has been established, we realize that none of us is what we shall be. We are at various levels of maturity in our walk of faith, but that does not change our position with God in Christ: we are His children. Thankfully we have the promise of His Word that having begun the good work in us, He will bring it to completion. Let us not become discouraged when we fall back into old patterns or give evidence of walking in the flesh rather than in the power of His Spirit. Our heavenly Father knows how to correct us.

One of the means of discipline which our heavenly Father uses to transform us more and more into the image of Jesus is the attitude and response of non-believers to us. We ought not expect the children of darkness to treat kindly the children of light. Belonging is so crucial to us that we have a difficult time accepting rejection and ridicule. We must be careful, of course, that we are not the cause of rejection and ridicule as a result of how we behave or respond to those who are not believers. Rejection and ridicule by worldlings is the norm rather than the exception ...*therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him (Christ) not.* Jesus told His disciples to expect tribulation. This is the acid test of our own spirit. How we respond to criticism and conniving is indicative of the strength of our relationship with our heavenly Father.

Maturity in Christ takes a lifetime. By His grace we are now the children of God, but what we will be has not yet been made known. Living as a believer in fellowship with our infinite, almighty, holy God holds such a fantastic, indescribable future, we cannot begin to fathom it. Jesus said, "I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly (John 10:10)." In transforming us from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord, a purifying work is continually occurring. Praise God there is continual maturing. Because we have this hope within us of becoming like Christ, we constantly live with a desire to be pure; this is nothing less than the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Because we still possess both the old and new natures, an on-going battle can rage within us.

Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not. John is describing a continuous, on-going pattern of disobedience and rebellion. His words portray a way of life that is a walk according to the flesh. Anyone who claims to be a follower of Christ but "continues to practice sin" has neither seen Christ or known Him. He or she is living a lie.

Let's be honest: we all sin. We don't love as we ought. We get impatient, angry. We say and do things we regret. God wants us to admit our sins, to agree with Him about our sins. And He wants to forgive us. Seek out a brother or sister in the Lord whom you can trust and unburden your conscience. God will give you the grace to do it. Then believe that through the name and in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, God forgives you! God can forgive us because He has borne the pain and

sorrow of our sin. Through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, who died in our stead, God declares us just and righteous as we trust Christ to be our Savior. Thus through Christ we are both saved and live. Our lives are the visible evidence of faith—the fruit of faith—which God describes as righteous because it does not spring forth from us but rather out of Christ Himself, dwelling within us by His Spirit. This is nothing less than our expression of loving God because He first loved us! ~

God's Peace!

Rev. Elmer R. Liimatta, Chaplain
Chassell, Michigan



The Christian life is an experience. While we have great teachings of doctrine and history, there is the real adventure of daily living and walking with the Lord. Sometimes I fear that we only see the outward "religious disciplines" and not the fulfillment of our communion with the living Lord.

Have you ever considered how our greeting of "God's peace" has developed? It is an interesting discussion. It is not my peace, it is not the congregation's peace, and it is not the peace of our denomination, but it is GOD'S peace. Many think that the greeting refers to when Jesus sent out the twelve apostles to preach to the house of Israel saying: *And when ye come into an house, salute (greet) it. And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you. (Matthew 10:12-13)*

In the book of Judges, we find that Gideon was called of the Lord to lead His people to victory over Midian. While Gideon was just a humble farmer, his experience led him to discover that his Lord is the God of peace: Jehovah-shalom (Judges 6:23-24). There are seven different names given to our God in Scripture; each is a compound word which descriptive of our God, and each was learned through an experience of a believer.

It is so amazing to realize our God is a God of peace. As soldiers and Americans, we pledge to work for peace, not war. We will take up arms when needed, but we will return to peace and to our vocation as soon as we can.

I was surprised one day when a pastor of another fellowship greeted me with, "God's peace! Yes, I know I don't agree with you on everything, but the greatest thing I can wish for you is God's peace."

Please don't take lightly our greeting. Take the time to look the person in the eye and give a firm handshake. Don't martyr the greeting. It is peace from God, asking the question, "Are you walking in God's peace?" ~

New Year 1945

Dietrich Bonhoeffer was a Lutheran pastor, theologian, and martyr. After a two year imprisonment for his part in the German resistance movement against Nazism, he was executed in April 1945, only days before the Nazis surrendered to the Allied forces. This poem, composed at the Gestapo prison in Berlin during very heavy air raids, was one of the last messages received from him.



With every power for good to stay and guide me,
Comforted and inspired beyond all fear,
I'll live these days with you in thought beside me,
And pass, with you, into the coming year.

The old year still torments our hearts, unhastening:
The long days of our sorrow still endure.
Father, grant to the soul Thou hast been chastening
That Thou hast promised—the healing and the cure.

Should it be ours to drain the cup of grieving
Even to the dregs of pain, at Thy command,
We will not falter, thankfully receiving
All that is given by Thy loving hand.

But, should it be Thy will once more to release us
To life's enjoyment and its good sunshine,
That we've learned from sorrow shall increase us
And all our life be dedicate as Thine.

Today, let candles shed their radiant greeting;
Lo, on our darkness are they not Thy light,
Leading us haply to our longed-for meeting?
Thou canst illumine e'en our darkest night.

When now the silence deepens for our harkening,
Grant we may hear Thy children's voices raise
From all the unseen world around us darkening
Their universal paeon, in Thy praise.

While all the powers of Good aid and attend us,
Boldly we'll face the future, be it what may.
At even, and at morn, God will befriend us,
And oh, most surely on each new year's day!

Jesus in the Temple & Wise Men Come to Worship Him

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

It is now a new year, the year 2012. It may be another year as we mark time, but with God, time is all the same. He is the same ALL the time. It is the Christmas season and we just celebrated the birth of Jesus. Let's look in *St. Luke 2*, and then *St. Matthew 2*, to touch a little on some of the events that took place after Jesus was born.

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb. And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord.
(Luke 2:21-22)

This was a special day for Joseph, Mary and Baby Jesus, as they went to the temple in Jerusalem to present Jesus to the Lord. The "Lord" mentioned in verse 22 is God, Jesus' Father. Jesus was being presented to His own Father in heaven. That is amazing!

Simeon was a man in Jerusalem who served and loved God. The Holy Ghost had shown him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ. The same day that Joseph and Mary were bringing Jesus to the temple, the Spirit led Simeon to the temple. *Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart (die) in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him. And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. (verses 28-35)*

A widow named Anna lived in the temple and served God with fastings and prayer night and day. *And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem. (verse 38)*

After they had done everything at the temple that they needed to do, Joseph and Mary took Baby Jesus home to Nazareth. *And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. (verse 40)*

Jesus continued to grow in His parent's home. Far away in another country some wise men had seen a new star. They were given an understanding about a Baby having been born who was the Messiah (Christ). They started their LONG journey. It would take them many months, as travel on camels would be quite slow.

As they traveled, the new star always went before them leading the way. Just as God led the Israelites out of Egypt by a pillar of fire at night and a pillar of cloud during the day, so God was leading these wise men.

When they finally reached Jerusalem, they went to the palace to inquire of King Herod: *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:23)* Herod was jealous of his place as king and did not want anyone to take him from his throne. Herod called his own wise men to ask them if they knew something of this Baby, and they said that He would be born in Bethlehem, as the prophet had said. Just before the traveling wise men left to find Baby Jesus in Bethlehem, Herod asked them when they had first seen the star, as he was trying to figure out how old this Baby would be. Then Herod told them to come back and tell him so he could come and worship the Baby too.

The wise men left, and as they stepped outside, there was the leading star in the night sky. It went before them and it stopped over the house where the young Child was. *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. (verse 10)* This

was the moment for which they had come so far. When they came in, there was the **"King of the Jews."**

The wise men knelt down in worship and reverence before the Child and offered unto Him treasure, gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. Jesus may have been a small Child, but the wise men knew He was the Christ.

The wise men were warned by God not to go back to Herod, who set out to kill this Baby; but God's protecting hand was over Jesus. God told Joseph to take Mary and Jesus to Egypt when Herod was searching for Jesus, and finally, to Nazareth, as the prophet of old had said He—Jesus—would be called a Nazarene.

Jesus grew to be a Man. When He was 30 years old, He began preaching to the people, telling them about who He is, God's Son, and teaching all who would listen about His Father in heaven and how much God loves everyone and desires that all would be saved. He does not want people to live in their sins but to live and be like Jesus.

I pray that Jesus will be the most important Person in our lives in this new year and that we will serve Him and Him alone.

*Happy new year to you all!
God's peace!*





Seek the Lord

the late Alvin Holmgren, April 1961 CM

Submitted by Jim Kurtti, Reedley, CA; John Matson, Brush Prairie, WA

In the ancient writings of the prophet Isaiah, we are counseled to seek the Lord while He may be found and to call upon Him while He is near (Isaiah 55:6).

This teaching, weighed only in the light of man's carnal intellect, does not seem significant, because the popular, though unbiblical, understanding of our day is that the Lord may be easily found, that He is always near. It is true that those who have sought, called upon, and found the Lord experience daily the comfort of His nearness and the joy of His presence. Theirs is Christ's promise *...lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.* (Matthew 28:20) They can say with the Psalmist: *If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.* (Psalm 139:9-10) The prophet, however, is speaking to unregenerate and unsaved sinners: *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.* (Isaiah 55:7)

The unsaved are cautioned that the Lord is not always near nor can He always be found unto salvation. After John the Baptist was cast into prison, Jesus began to preach: *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* (Matthew 4:17) In other words, repentance must be made when the kingdom or church of God is near. Manmade structures of wood and stone do not comprise the church of God, for God does not dwell in temples made with hands. Apostle Paul says, *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?* (1 Corinthians 3:16) The Lord is near unto salvation only when His church is near, that church made up of living stones *...built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone.* (Ephesians 2:20)

The experience of awakening, or bringing man to the recognition of his sins, can be effected by the Spirit of God through His Word without contact with the church. This awakening Paul experienced en route to Damascus when he was blinded by the heavenly light and heard the audible voice from heaven. However, in the actual experience of new birth, the disciples of Jesus play a significant part. They are ambassadors in the service of God, to proclaim to burdened sinners the words of release from the wages of sin—the good news that God is no longer angry with them but that He comforts them with the assurance of the forgiveness of their sins in the name and blood of Jesus Christ.

Though the Lord spoke to Paul when he was traveling to Damascus, He was not near to him there unto salvation. Paul prayed earnestly for three days and nights, but the same voice which he had heard earlier did not console him. Only when the church of Jesus Christ, represented by Ananias, approached him did Paul receive his sight and become filled with the Holy Ghost. Paul was born again when Ananias laid hands on him and said, *Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent*

me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. (Acts 9:17-18) Paul did not receive the forgiveness of his sins through prayer or by direct revelation, but he received that assurance in the way Jesus had ordained for all repentant sinners—through the hearing of the preached Word. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Romans 10:17)

Jesus said to His disciples on the evening of His resurrection day: *...Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* (John 20:22-23) In the Scripture, we do not find that Jesus, after commissioning His disciples, healed the sick, raised the dead, or freed the sinner from his burden of sin. This work He delegated to His disciples. The Apostle Paul, who was converted much later, was not among the disciples who were present at this time of commissioning by our Savior, yet he states: *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...* (2 Corinthians 5:20)

...the Word was present and preached.

In the accounts of conversions, or new births, recorded in the Acts, a disciple has been present at the time of the new birth to proclaim the Gospel. Peter was the Lord's emissary to bring the good news to Cornelius (Acts 10-11). Peter and the apostles preached repentance and the forgiveness of sins on the day of Pentecost, and three thousand souls were saved (Acts 2). At Philippi, where Paul and Silas were imprisoned for the preaching of the Gospel, they spoke the Word of the Lord to their jailer and all who were in his house (Acts 16). In every instance, the Word was present and preached.

The Holy Scripture, in its entirety, bears out the fact that the Lord is to be found unto salvation only when His church is near. Jesus said, *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* (Matthew 18:18-20) Therefore, it behooves us to seek the Lord today. Biblical prophecy tells us: *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the LORD, and shall not find it.* (Amos 8:11-12)

How dreadful for those who have opportunity to avail themselves of the grace of God but allow their day of visitation to pass idly by! Though they traverse the continent looking for the glad tidings of the Gospel, their efforts shall prove fruitless. It shall be more tolerable in that day for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them. Let us remember that the Lord said, *My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh...* (Genesis 6:3) *Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near.* ~



Alive with Christ

Pastor Robert Maki
Worcester, Massachusetts

The Holy Ghost
revealed to
Simeon that he

would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:25-35). Simeon came by the Spirit into the temple, took Jesus into his arms, blessed God and said, *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation... Simeon blessed Joseph and Mary and said to Mary, ... (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

Before the birth of Jesus, the angel of God told Mary she was highly favored; the Lord was with her and she was blessed among women. It is true that God had chosen Mary to bring forth His Son, but God knew and loved Mary when she was yet in her mother's womb, just as He loves and knows each of His children. Mary believed God's Word spoken by His messenger. She responded, *Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.* (Luke 1:38) Oh! the sincerity and purity of childlike faith. Many times, Mary heard the words and beheld the miracles of Jesus and heard wondrous revelations of the Christ. She pondered these and kept them in her heart.

Has it been much different for us in our walk as childhood Christians? Through our childhood years, we have been lovingly

nurtured with God's Word by caring parents who have directed us in the way we should walk. How often we had found ourselves doing the wrong things and had to seek forgiveness because we had been taught that was the right way to do things. There comes a time for every childhood Christian when a soul-piercing takes place, that the thoughts of our hearts may be revealed. What do I believe and why do I believe it? The relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ becomes very personal. Simeon told Mary that a sword shall pierce through her soul also, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. When did this occur? When Mary stood by the cross of Jesus, seeing Him in His suffering (John 19:25).

Hebrews 9:27: ...it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment. By God's love and mercy for fallen mankind, in this life—God's time of grace—He has granted we go through judgment first before death. In this judgment, we are found guilty. As Mary's soul was pierced, likewise we each, at some time in our life, go by way of the cross (as John Bunyan describes in *The Pilgrim's Progress*), and recognize that it is my sins that have nailed Jesus to that cross. We know we can do nothing to

save ourselves; we know that in me (that is, in my flesh) there dwells no good thing (Romans 7:18). We die to ourselves.

We are not left to perish there. The blood, shed by the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world, is applied to our souls and hearts when by faith we hear and believe the Gospel message: "All your sins are forgiven in Jesus' name and blood." We become new creatures in Christ. We are able to believe that our names are written in heaven and we belong to the Lord Jesus Christ because He has purchased us with His own blood. The final judgment will be to us a judgment onto eternal life because we are covered by the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We become new creatures in Christ.

The Apostle Paul writes in Romans of a baptism that is not of water: *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? ...For if we have been planted together (become united with Him) in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection. ...Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him.* (Romans 6:3, 5, 8) ~

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Beauty in the Garden

So often when I look around
I see salvation's plan.

Washed in the blood,
We become as white as snow,
And death's grip has lost its hold.
In Christ's work upon the cross
Salvation's story is told.

Poem & Photo Nora Mickelsen
Yacolt, Washington





Tithing

Shane Juuti
Gimlet, Alberta, Canada

For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine

ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3:6-12)

The last part of this Scripture has wonderful promises. It tells us to stop robbing God and bring our tithes into the storehouse. Many people use this passage to say we should bring a tenth of our wages to the church so we will be blessed, and the church will be able to do God's work. If we read about the widow's mites, and the feeding of the multitudes, we quickly see how foolish it is to think God depends on our giving to

accomplish the furthering of His work. Let's instead turn to the Old Testament and read about natural tithing, so we have direction in applying this spiritually.

We first read of tithing in Genesis 14, where Abram gave tithes of the spoils to Melchizedek. In Nehemiah 10, the firstfruits of our ground, flocks, even our sons, should be brought into the treasure chambers where the vessels of the sanctuary and priests are.

When we gather, we are in the treasure chamber. We are the vessels of the sanctuary, and priests of God. The tithing is the telling or sharing we do. As Abram did, we share with one another how God gives us victory in our battles here. As in Nehemiah, we share how God has given increase and understanding in our spiritual walk. Especially one who is new in faith desires to share what God has done for them. We share of the fruits of faith we witness from "our ground," and how we see what faith has done in our lives or the lives of those with whom we come in contact on our walk. I believe we are doing well if we are able to express even ten percent of the goodness that God has done for us.

If we do this, God promises there will be meat in His house; there will be an abundance of spiritual food, and an overflowing of the blessings His food brings.

Let's not get caught up in talking and worrying about how we should deal with problems that may come. Let's not worry about how we can achieve the furthering of God's work, or the best way to get people to hear God's Word. That is God's concern. If we focus on these things, we are robbing God of glory and praise. We are to glorify and praise God. We do this when we tell what He has done for us in its fullness and share how thankful we are for His mercy to us.

May God richly bless each and every one with the grace and truth found in Christ. Amen.



As I sat down to do my Rosetta Stone lesson, a thought crossed my mind. First some details: Rosetta Stone is well known for its super-high success rates of teaching other languages focused on a method they refer to as "immersion." Dictionary.com defines this as "state of being deeply engaged or involved; absorption." This tactic fully engages you in the language you are learning (Spanish, in my case), using graphics, speech and writing. Since I started there has been absolutely nothing in English. So I'm sitting here with a headset/mic on thinking, speaking and seeing nothing but Spanish and, wow, does one learn quickly!

So here's my thought: God wants us to be immersed in His grace! Thinking, breathing, sharing... on and on. Focusing on His Word in every aspect of our lives, every moment of every day. The more we seek God, or immerse ourselves in Him, the closer our relationship becomes, and the more He will magnify His light through us! He wants us to seek a more personal relationship with Him. *And ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)*

Kenneth Niemitalo
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God is never in a hurry but spends years with those He expects to greatly use. He never thinks the days of preparation too long or too dull.

The hardest ingredient in suffering is often time. A short, sharp pang is easily borne, but when a sorrow drags its weary way through long, monotonous years, and day after day returns with the same dull routine of hopeless agony, the heart loses its strength, and without the grace of God, is sure to sink into the very sullenness of despair. Joseph's was a long trial, and God often has to burn His lessons into the depths of our being by the fire of protracted pain. Like a true goldsmith, He stops the fires the moment He sees His image in the glowing metal. We may not see now the outcome of His beautiful plan; it yet may be long concealed, but faith may be sure that He is sitting on the throne, calmly waiting the hour when, with adoring rapture, we shall say, "All things have worked together for good." Like Joseph, let us be more careful to learn all the lessons in the school of sorrow than we are anxious for the hour of deliverance. There is a "need-be" in every lesson, and when we are ready, our deliverance will surely come. God is educating us for the future, for higher service and nobler blessings; and if we have the qualities that fit us for a throne, nothing can keep us from it when God's time has come. Don't steal tomorrow out of God's hands. Give God time to reveal His will. He is never too late; learn to wait.

*He never comes too late; He knoweth what is best;
Vex not thyself in vain; until He cometh—REST.*

Do not run impetuously before the Lord; learn to wait His time. The minute-hand as well as the hour-hand must point the exact moment for action.

*from Streams in the Desert, Compiled by Mrs. Chas. E. Cowman
Submitted by Dave Impola
Everett, Washington*

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Abide With Me

Abide with me! fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens: Lord, with me abide!
When other helpers fail, and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day;
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away;
Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou Who changest not, abide with me!

Not a brief glance I beg, a passing word,
But as Thou dwell'st with Thy disciples, Lord,
Familiar, condescending, patient, free;
Come not to sojourn, but abide with me!

Come not in terrors, as the King of Kings,
But kind and good, with healing in Thy wings;
Tears for all woes, a heart for every plea—
Come, Friend of sinners, thus abide with me!

Thou on my head in early youth didst smile,
And, though rebellious and perverse meanwhile,
Thou hast not left me, oft as I left Thee;
On to the close, O Lord, abide with me!

I need Thy presence every passing hour:
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter's power?
Who, like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, oh, abide with me.

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless:
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes,
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies;
Heav'n's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee;
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

*Henry Francis Lyte
Submitted by Eva Niemela
Baraga, Michigan*

Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life.

1 John 2:24-25