

# 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.

August 2013

## A REST TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Rafael Kurtti

Aug 1960 CM; Submitted by Dave Impola; Seattle, Washington

There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief. (Hebrews 4:9-11)

**B**ECAUSE OF THE DISOBEDIENCE OF the children of Israel, many of them did not reach the promised land. Unbelief caused them to become disobedient. Unbelief even today causes many who start in the spirit to end in the flesh.

Our text begins: *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.* In each of us there is an inward desire to have peace and fellowship with God. This is because, at creation, God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and man became a living soul. This innocence did not last long. The devil, who is the father of lies, deceived our first parents and they doubted God's words, believing a lie rather than the truth. As a result of this disobedience, they lost their innocence and now were held accountable to God for all their acts. Still, through repentance and faith, the first state can be restored through the Seed of the woman who bruised the serpent's head. The Holy Spirit seals the promise of eternal rest in the heart of every penitent believer. The rest to the soul is sweet, especially to those who have gone far in the way of sin. This is only a foretaste of that eternal rest awaiting the people of God.

Our text continues: *For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.* Many who are dead in trespasses and sins make an attempt to better their lives. We are all self-righteous by nature; we do not want to receive salvation as a gift. We would like to give unto God at least a few fervent prayers, a promise that our life has some good points. But God does not want our good works, as they are but filthy rags in His sight. We must come unto Him utterly lost and condemned, without any worthiness on our part.

Jesus said He did not come to call the righteous but sinners. God's Law demands perfect obedience from us, and we find we have broken it in word, deed and thought. We find no possibility of escaping God's wrath in our own works. Only by turning to Jesus, whom God made to be sin for us, can we find a way of escape. Jesus had compassion upon us and took our sins upon His innocent body, suffering in our stead and dying our death that we might live. When our hearts are cleansed by faith, then begins a new life in obedience to God's will.

**T**he person whose sins are forgiven and blotted out in the shed blood of Jesus Christ also has ceased from his own works as God did from His. In *Romans 3:20* are the words: *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin.* A new force and power before unknown now impels a child of God to walk in newness of life, worthy of the name of Christian. No place in Scripture is it shown that the Law is a source of strength to a Christian or that it helps him to deny himself and take up his cross and follow Jesus. We read in *Titus 2:11-12*: *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.*

***A new force and power before unknown now impels a child of God to walk in newness of life, worthy of the name of Christian.***

Luther writes in his discourse on Christian liberty: "The Christian is free and master in all things. The Christian is in bondage and a servant in all and to all. He is free and a master by faith; he is a servant and a slave by love. Although a Christian is thus made free, he voluntarily becomes a slave to act toward his brethren as God has acted toward him through Jesus Christ. I desire,

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says he, to serve freely, joyfully, and gratuitously a Father who has thus lavished upon me all the abundance of His blessings. I wish to become all things for my neighbor as Christ has become all things for me. From faith proceeds the love of God; from love proceeds a life full of liberty, charity, and joy."

All those who are truly born again experience rest from their own labors. As they have known the love of God toward them through Jesus Christ, they, in like manner, show it by a new life, serving God in their fellow man. The Law does not accomplish this, but the grace of God. They serve God in the newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter, for the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life.

To serve in the newness of the spirit means obedience to the Spirit. This is self-denial, sacrifice, humbleness. Paul shows the fruit of the Spirit: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23) Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)*

The child of God knows that one day he will enter into that eternal rest of which the writer of this epistle speaks. The children of Israel, journeying through the wilderness, had God's promise that He would bring them to a land flowing with milk and honey. But many of them hardened their hearts, committed sins, and they did not enter into rest. Even today there is the danger of provoking God's wrath by disobedience and sin. We read in the third chapter of this epistle: *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in*

*any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called To day; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. (Hebrews 3:12-13)*

In the last words of our text we read: *Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief.* As weak and often-erring travelers on the road to eternal rest, we are beset by many temptations, trials and sins. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*

The children of Israel had an earthly high priest who made sacrifice for their sins.

*And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. (Hebrews 9:22-23)*

Because of the imperfection of these earthly sacrifices, God sent His only begotten Son as a perfect and ever-sufficient sacrifice. *By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:10)*

Have you been cleansed in His blood, dear brother and sister? In Jesus' name and blood even today your sins and mine are forgiven. The way into the most holy place was opened when Jesus died upon the cross. All the sacrifice God wants is a broken and a contrite heart. Whenever sins beset us, let us approach this altar in our midst where Jesus' blood still flows for our cleansing and atonement. One day our pilgrimage will cease and we will fully enter into His rest. Then this mortal, sinful body will no longer hinder our praises to Him who love us with an eternal and undying love.

May the love of God and the comfort of the Holy Spirit keep your hearts and souls in Jesus' name. Amen.

## Refresh the Brethren

If we are walking with God there is not a day when we may not, if we wish, be a refreshment to our brethren. This is one of the greatest ministries. It may be no more than a handshake. It may be a word of encouragement almost casually spoken. It may be just the light of heaven on our faces. But if the Lord has got His way with us and we are in the state of having no cloud between ourselves and Him, we shall find that we are quietly being used. We may not know it, for it is better not to seek to know it—indeed it may be better never to know it. But whether we know it or not, we are constantly being used to refresh our brother. When he is low and in darkness, when he has a burden on his heart or a film before his eyes, when he has been tarnished and stained, then to us he will come. He may not stay long, perhaps only for a few minutes. Seek for that ministry. Find grace from God to help him. Often we think it would be good if we could give long sermons that command a wide hearing, but few have that gift, and many are not reached by those few who have. To refresh the hearts of the saints is the kind of ministry which everyone can fulfill and which can reach everywhere. In the valuation of God it is without price.

Watchman Nee

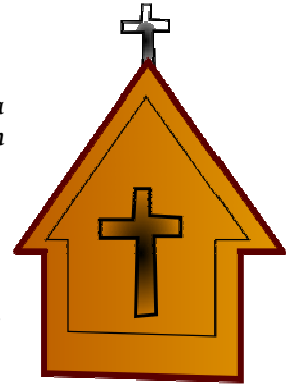
**Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do. And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:11-15**



# Why Do We Come to Church?

Kevin Sarkela  
Battle Ground, Washington



**WHY DO WE COME TO CHURCH?** There could be many reasons we could throw out there:

Do we come to church to become a better person? I don't think that is the reason. The Bible tells us that our works (things we do) are as filthy rags in God's sight. Our works are unacceptable. None do good, no not one. Do we come to be with our friends? Sure, that's part of the reason, but definitely not **THE** reason. Do we come to sing praises to God? Yes, that's part of the church service, but that's not the real reason we come to church.

**T**HE REAL REASON WE COME TO CHURCH is because the church is the place where sinners (yes, that includes me and you, and the whole world) can come to hear God Himself speaking through the lips of a man, talking to each one of us. It is written in *Matthew 4:4: Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.* This word or message includes both **Law and Gospel**, also known as **truth and grace**.

Here is a short reading from a book in my collection:

Truth without grace won't help us. Moses brought truth. Moses brought the Law, and every word of it was true. But it only showed people their sins, their weaknesses, their failings, their lack of love for the God who gave that Law. It doesn't show us anything different. God's Law says, "Don't kill. Don't commit adultery. Don't lust. Don't covet. Don't disobey your parents. Don't swear. Don't use God's name in ways you should never use it. Don't neglect to worship Him, pray to Him, praise Him, and glorify Him at every opportunity." But not one of us can tolerate even a passing glance in the mirror of God's Law, much less a sustained stare. Imagine that your deepest, darkest sins were made evident some Sunday morning before the entire congregation. You'd run away because of the terror, because of the shame. God's Law strips us bare like that. God's Law, when it's taken seriously, shames and embarrasses us; it makes us turn away in fear. It shows us for what we are—sinners. And everything we see in God's Law that embarrasses us, shames us, and frightens us is true. But truth does not necessarily help us. We need truth that comes with grace, which is the kind of truth Jesus the Savior brings. The true grace Jesus brings covers every sin. What sins have you committed? What shameful deeds lie in your past? What hateful and harmful thoughts have you tried to ignore? What guilt haunts you in the dark dead of night? God forgives them all. He washes you clean. As John the Baptist cried, "Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29)

from *Why I Am A Lutheran* by Pr. Daniel Preus

The real reason we come to church is to be **strengthened, uplifted and saved by the Gospel message**, the good news that Jesus has died to pay for your and my sins. This Gospel message is also found in the promises Christ gives us in our baptism, as well as in the Lord's Supper when Jesus tells us that His body is broken and His blood is poured out for the forgiveness of our sins.

This whole idea about why we come to church is summed up well in *2 Peter 3:18: But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen.* What does it mean to grow in grace? Grace isn't something that we do, so how do we grow in it? I believe it means to be continually uplifted, fed, and reminded of the Gospel message, the good news that Jesus has paid for our sins.

I want to close with a short passage from a book I read a few months ago that I found fitting:

Your original brokenness is answered by this grace spilled out of Jesus in promises authored, perfected and completed even and especially at the moment when the gates of hell were most arrayed against Him. He died for you. He rose for you. The battle is over; the victory is won. This is the true Good News. This is the Gospel the Bible speaks of. There is nothing you must do but hear of it, and that is not up to you either. That is what the Church is for. That is what it means to be the Church: together, where the Son of God who was broken in our place speaks His oath to us, promising He has put us on the right side of God's justice forever. This is a free gift, regardless of the state of your heart, mind, or spirit. It is a promise from almighty God, which means it is doubly solid and entirely true.

That's it. That's the only rule of Christianity. Jesus reigns over sin, death, and that dirty old crow, the devil. Jesus says, "I forgive you," and this means light and life and salvation. Period. It's more than okay. It's absolute absolution. Go. You are free.

from *Broken* by Pr. Jonathan Fisk ~

**T**HE BIBLE AS A BOOK STANDS ALONE. There never was, nor ever will be, another like it. As there is but one sun to enlighten the world naturally, so there is but one Book to enlighten the world spiritually. May that Book become to each of us the man of our counsel, the guide of our journey, the inspiration of our thought, and our support and comfort in life and in death.

A. Galloway

# Lot's Wife Becomes a Pillar of Salt

Gwen Wilson

Once again the end of the month comes and it's time to write to you. I would like to share a story from the Old Testament found in *Genesis 19:1-26*. This account is another reminder to the Christian to obey the voice of the Lord.

**And there came two angels to Sodom at even; and Lot sat in the gate of Sodom; and Lot seeing them rose up to meet them; and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground; And he said, Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. (Genesis 19:1-2)**

Lot did not like for these angels to be in the street, as the city of Sodom was a very wicked place. He kept insisting that they come into his house and eat and stay the night, and they finally did.

Before Lot's family and the angels lay down to rest, outside in the street was a gathering of the town's people, both old and young, calling out to Lot, asking, "Where are the men that came into your home?" The people were so bad that they even wanted to break down Lot's door.

Lot stepped out of his home and closed the door behind him. He told the people that in no way was he going to let them even see the men who came into his house, let alone touch them to harm them. The people were very impatient with Lot and moved forward toward him to hurt him. The angels opened the door and pulled Lot into the house and closed the door quickly. Then they caused both the old and the young to go blind so they were made weary in trying to find the door. God allowed this to happen so that Lot and his family would be safe.

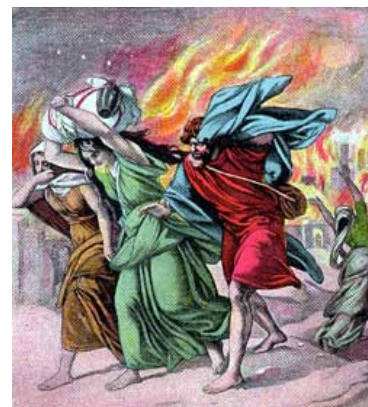
The angels told Lot that if he had any more family than those who were in his house to gather them and get them out of that terrible city, for they were going to destroy the whole city. The Lord had seen how wicked the people there had become and their destruction was nigh at hand. Lot went to warn his sons-in-law to get out of the city because God was going to destroy it, and they just laughed at him.

The morning came and the angels were hurrying Lot to take his wife and his two daughters and GO! before they also died with the rest of the people in the city. They could see that the rest of Lot's family did not care.

Lot, I'm sure, knew the angels were right but was not moving as fast as they wanted him to. Lot, being a father, could not imagine having to leave his home and some of his family behind so quickly, only to be destroyed. He lingered, and the angels grabbed hold of his hands and the hands of his wife and two daughters and brought them out a safe distance from the city and said to them, *Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain; escape to the mountain, lest thou be consumed. (v. 17)*

They were instructed to not look back at the city. They were to totally turn away from this wicked city and not long for it at all. God then sent down on Sodom and Gomorrah (these two cities were close together and both wicked) fire and brimstone and burned them up.

Lot and his wife and daughters went on their way then, BUT his wife could not help herself. She did not trust the words of the angels and she turned and looked back just one more time. She became a pillar of SALT! Lot and his daughters walked on never looking back, but his wife was not to join them anymore. Lot and his daughters made a cave their home.



**T**his is a tragic story, but it teaches us that we should always obey the voice of the Lord. There is still much wickedness in the world and we must pray to God to strengthen us so that we may be able to fight against the devil, the world, and our own flesh. God is able to keep us from falling. Pray to Him when you feel weak and He will strengthen you for your journey here.

*God's peace to you all, in Christian love.*

## A Libel Against God

Human sin began with loss of faith in God! When our mother Eve listened to Satan's sly innuendoes against the character of God, she began to entertain a doubt of His integrity—and right there the doors were opened to the incoming of every possible evil, and darkness settled upon the world. Relationship between moral beings is by confidence, and confidence rests upon character which is a guarantee of conduct. God is a being of supreme moral excellence, possessing in infinite perfection all the qualities that constitute holy character. He deserves and invites the unreserved confidence of every moral creature, including man. Any proper relation to Him must be by confidence, that is, faith. Idolatry is the supreme sin and unbelief is the child of idolatry. Both are libels on the Most High and Most Holy.

A.W. Tozer

# I Look, I Listen, I Hear, I See!

Mark Sunnarborg  
Rhineland, Wisconsin

I look within; I try to find that which I desire...  
I look within and nothing I find will satisfy the hunger...  
I look, I listen, I hear, I see the goodness of God that calls me unto repentance.  
I look; I see the hand of God calling me to Himself...  
I look, I see the small things God has done to smooth my rough edges...  
I look; I see a humbled and a broken heart that's me.  
I search; I find the Gospel message...  
I look, I listen, I hear, I see the preaching of that message...  
I look, I listen, I hear, I see, "Thy name is written in the Book of Life."  
I listen, I hear, "Take one day at a time; you are safe in My hand."  
I look; I see God alone is in control...  
I look, I listen, I know and I feel God's Spirit upon me.  
I listen; I hear the sound of a trumpet...  
I look; I see the coming of the Son of God...  
I look, I listen, I see, I hear, "Thy name is written there."  
I look, I listen, and I hear, "Come, ye blest of the Father."  
I see, I hear, I know that Thy goodness, oh God, is mine forever...  
I have faith, I have deeds, I have faith that is at work.  
I am a child of the King and I have an everlasting hope that resides within.  
In this writing God has added the "I" in for me and I am glad.  
I pray, I ask, I seek and I beseech God on your behalf that you would know the goodness, mercy and grace of God.  
God has placed the "I" in for you and may you rejoice and be able say, "I am glad."



*God's peace!*

## In My Flesh Dwells No Good Thing

I find to this day seven abominations in my heart:

1. Inclining to unbelief;
2. Suddenly to forget the love and mercy that Christ manifesteth;
3. A leaning to the works of the law;
4. Wanderings and coldness in prayer;
5. To forget to watch for that I pray for;
6. Apt to murmur because I have no more, and yet ready to abuse what I have;
7. I can do none of those things which God commands me, but my corruptions will thrust in themselves. When I would do good, evil is present with me.

These things I continually see and feel, and am afflicted and oppressed with, yet the wisdom of God doth order them for my good;

1. They make me abhor myself;
2. They keep me from trusting my heart;
3. They convince me of the insufficiency of all inherent righteousness;
4. They show me the necessity of flying to Jesus;
5. They press me to pray unto God;
6. They show me the need I have to watch and be sober;
7. And provoke me to pray unto God, through Christ, to help me, and carry me through this world.

*John Bunyan*

**F**OR WE KNOW THAT THE LAW IS SPIRITUAL: but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

Romans 7:14-25



# God Is Calling

Frank N. Prouty

April 1985 CM; Submitted by Rhoda Olin; Wickenburg, Arizona

**I**T IS EVIDENT ACCORDING TO the Holy Scriptures that Jesus loves children and wishes them to retain the purity of their childhood when they grow up and come to years of accountability. Jesus took the small children in His arms and blessed them, and when His disciples rebuked those who brought them, Jesus manifested displeasure and said, "Suffer the children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." It is said Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, who suffered martyrdom under Trajan (108 AD), was one of the children whom Jesus took in His arms and blessed.

How precious it would be if all children would keep the purity and innocence of their childhood days. It is sad indeed that many do not, but yield to the allurements of the world and lose their good consciences among fleshly companions in the pursuit of pleasures of the flesh in the world. Some carry troubled consciences, and their worldly enjoyment is always marred by the sting of accusing consciences. They are like the one Jesus spoke of who lay by the roadside half dead. Others get into such a state that their consciences do not trouble them any more. Such ones are like the prodigal son (Luke 15), entirely dead because they have spent all the goods received from God; their consciences are asleep and do not accuse them as they formerly did. Surely the enemy of the soul gloats over such a one who has no thought any more of his terrible condition.

It is a miracle of grace when one awakens from such a state and feels the weight of his sins upon his conscience. The awakened one does not comprehend the fact that God has wrought this work in him out of His great love for his soul; he rather feels that He means to punish him forever in hell on account of his sins. But it is not so, dear soul, for God wills your salvation and is drawing you so that you would get a clear sight of your sins, and God's wrath against sin, and flee to the Mediator between God and man, Jesus Christ, who bore our sins on the accursed tree. Without a knowledge of your guilt you would never seek the aid of Jesus, and indeed you could not, for Jesus says, "No one can come unto Me except the Father draw him."

Dear reader, are you lying by the roadside half dead with an accusing conscience? Behold, Jesus bled on the cross for you! He is the only One who is able to bear your sin debt. God has laid upon Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6); therefore, be reconciled to Him through the death of His Son on your behalf, that you may be saved by His life (Romans 5:10). He came into the world for this purpose, to be a ransom for our sins that we might not perish but have everlasting life through Him. The prophet Isaiah wrote: *Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he*

*hath poured out his soul unto death... (Isaiah 53:12)* We have no strength of ourselves to obtain an inheritance and heirship with Christ, but He will divide it to us Himself for He is the beginner of faith and gives us the power to receive it through the Gospel, which St. Paul says is the power of God unto salvation.

Dear reader, God has through the Gospel placed before us an open door. Therefore, let us take heed to the gracious call of our loving Savior before the door of mercy is shut. Call upon Him while He is near. Do not hesitate for delay is dangerous, as we only have the promise of today. The future as far as it relates to us is unknown in this life, but we know that the reward of faith on the Lord Jesus Christ is life everlasting in the world to come; therefore, be wise in this matter, one and all.

But especially I have in mind those children of Christian parents who have lost their faith through eagerness to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, many of whom I fear may sell their birthright in this period through the deceitfulness of sin and be found on that great day of the Lord without a wedding garment. My prayer to God in the name of Jesus is that it may not be so, but rather that they should turn from their ways and live.

***God wills your salvation and is drawing you  
so that you would get a clear sight of your sins, and God's wrath against sin,  
and flee to the Mediator between God and man,  
Jesus Christ, who bore our sins on the accursed tree.***



Oh, how the dear, loving Savior weeps over the erring children who do not realize the danger they are in or the subtlety of the enemy of the soul, in whose arms they are. How gladly would Jesus gather you as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, as He says of the Jews in the days of His flesh, when the cup of their wrath was full and their judgment very near. They could not discern the time in which they lived, nor understand their own blindness, and they did not know the Lord of glory; therefore the vineyard was taken from them. Let us prize the dear Savior more highly and count His tears shed on cursed ground as precious. May they melt our cold hearts unto repentance and faith, that we may glorify God in the day of visitation. ~

**On my heart imprint Thine image,  
Blessed Jesus, King of Grace,  
That life's riches, cares and pleasures  
Have no power Thee to efface.  
This the superscription be:  
Jesus, crucified for me,  
Is my Life, my hope's Foundation,  
And my Glory and Salvation.**

Thomas Hansen Kingo

# The Forgiveness of Sins

Martin Luther

**T**HERE IS NO GREATER THEME for a preacher than the grace of God and the forgiveness of sin, yet we are such wicked people that, when we have once heard or read it, we think we know it, are immediately masters and doctors, keep looking for something greater as though we had done everything, and thus we made new factions and division.

I have now been teaching and studying this subject with all diligence for many years (more than any one of those who imagine they know it all), in preaching, writing and reading, yet I cannot boast of having mastered it and am glad that I still remain a pupil with those who are just beginning to learn. For this reason I must admonish and warn all such as want to be Christians, both teachers and pupils, that they guard themselves against such shameful delusion and surfeit, and understand that this subject is most difficult and the greatest art that can be found upon earth; so that even Paul had to confess and say (2 Corinthians 9:15) that it is an unspeakable gift, that is, one which cannot be described among men with words so they may regard it as highly and dearly as it really is in itself.

The reason for this is that man's understanding cannot get beyond this external piety of works, and cannot comprehend the righteousness of faith; but, the greater and more skillful this understanding is, the more it confines itself to works and rests upon them. It is not possible for man in times of temptation and distress, when his conscience smites him, to cease from groping around for works on which to stand and rest. Then we seek and enumerate the many good deeds which we would like to do, or have done, and because we find none, the heart begins to doubt and despair. This weakness adheres so firmly to our nature that even those who have faith and recognize the grace of God, or the forgiveness of sins, cannot overcome it with all their efforts and exertions, and must daily contend against it. In short it is entirely beyond human knowledge and understanding, ability and power, to ascend above this earthly righteousness, and to transfer oneself into this article of faith; and although one hears much about it and is conversant with it, there continues nevertheless the old delusion and inborn corruption which would bring its own works before God

and make them the foundation of salvation. Such is the case, I say, with those who are Christians and fight against this work-righteousness; others, critics and inexperienced souls are even lost in it.

Therefore this doctrine, that our piety before God consists entirely in the forgiveness of sins, must be rightly comprehended and firmly maintained. We must therefore get beyond ourselves and ascend higher than our reason, which keeps us in conflict with ourselves and which reminds us both of sin and good works; and we must soar so high as to see neither sin nor good works, but be rooted and grounded in this article and see and know nothing besides. Therefore let grace or forgiveness be pitted not only against sin, but also against good works, and let all human righteousness and holiness be excluded. Thus there are in man two conflicting powers: externally in this life he is to be pious, do good works, and the like, but if he

***Therefore we are to regard the kingdom of Christ as a large, beautiful arch or vault which is everywhere over us, and covers and protects us against the wrath of God.***

aims beyond this life and wishes to deal with God, he must know that here neither his sin nor his piety avails anything. And though he may feel his sins which disturb his conscience, and although the law demands good works, he will not listen nor give heed to them, but will boldly reply; If I have sin, Christ has forgiveness; yea, I am seated on a throne to which sin cannot attain.

**T**herefore we are to regard the kingdom of Christ as a large, beautiful arch or vault which is everywhere over us, and covers and protects us against the wrath of God; yea, as a great, extended firmament which pure grace and forgiveness illuminate and so fill the world and all things that all sin will hardly appear as a spark in comparison with the great, extended sea of light; and although sin may oppress, it cannot injure, but must disappear and vanish before grace. They who understand this may well be called masters, but we will all have to humble ourselves and not be ashamed to keep on learning this lesson as long as we live. ~

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## A Pentecost Season

*Pastor Phil Wilson  
Hockinson, Washington*

**But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.**

**1 Corinthians 15:20-23**

**C**HRIST RESURRECTED FROM the dead has become the firstfruits, the promise of a harvest yet to come. This harvest that was promised came on the Day of Pentecost. Within this Feast of Pentecost there was another firstfruits, another harvest which is yet to come. The ingathering of that harvest which will be until the Lord returns, as the Spirit continues to do its work: to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the whole Christian Church on earth, and keep it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. The Day of Pentecost was a historical event, but we are *in* a Pentecost season, as the Spirit continues to go out and accomplish that which it has been sent to do, namely, to draw people unto Jesus Christ, as the Spirit testifies of Jesus, of His work, of His great love for us... We are *in* a Pentecost season. ~~~

**I believe in the Holy Ghost, the holy Christian church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.**

*What is meant by this?* I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith; in which Christian Church He daily and richly forgives all me and all believers all our sins; and at the Last Day will raise up me and all the dead, and will give me and all believers in Christ everlasting life. This is most certainly true.

*Martin Luther*

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**God is not a deceiver, that He should offer to support us,  
and then, when we lean upon Him, should slip away from us.**

*St. Augustine*