

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 2015

Am I a Sojourner or a Settler?

Pastor Bruce Selin
Snohomish, WA

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

Hebrews 11:13

HOW I LOVE TO SING those lofty words, "I'm a pilgrim and I'm a stranger; I can tarry, I can tarry but a night." (*Mary Dana Shindler*) Do I really believe it, or am I indulging in wishful thinking and idealist self-delusion?

Which are we as God's people, sojourners or settlers? Are we different than those in the Bible? If we are God's people, our testimony should reflect the same testimony as these: *Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.* (Hebrews 11:33-40)

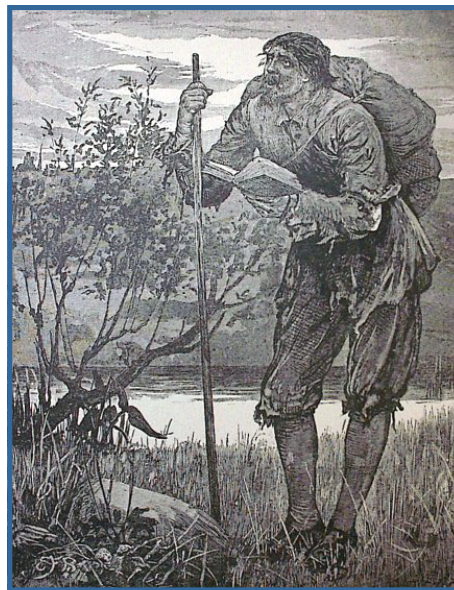
Is this just so much hyperbole? Perhaps we think such examples are only figurative, for another time, another place, a more primitive, biblically illiterate generation. Or perhaps we think they had explicit instructions from God. After all, Abraham WAS told directly by God to leave his home and go to a land that God would show him.

Was Abraham unusual? What about the others we read about? Were they exceptions, or are they our examples? *Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering affliction, and of patience. (James 5:10) For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. (Romans 15:4)* What am I to learn from these examples?

How are they relevant for me? How are they to impact how I live my life? Dear child of God, we are also to be sojourners, pilgrims and strangers in this world. We are *IN* the world, but not *OF* the world (John 15:19, 17:6, 14, 16). If we are not *OF* the world, why are we in the world? Our Lord answers this question unequivocally: *As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. (John 17:18)*

The Apostle Paul explains further: *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (Ephesians 2:10) For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's. (1 Corinthians 6:20)* Since the beginning, man has sought to be a settler in this world. God had other plans when He created our first parents. God told Adam and Eve: *Be fruitful, and multiply,*

and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. (Genesis 1:28)



Wikimedia Commons; Henry Altemus edition
of John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

This command to replenish the earth was repeated to Noah, directing him to move out and fill the earth with God's people (Genesis 9:1). Sadly, how quickly Noah's offspring settled in Shinar and began to build a city, Babel, and a tower. They proudly declared *...and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.* (Genesis 11:4b)

We observe that Abraham dwelt in tents in Canaan, but Lot dwelt in the city, Sodom (Genesis 13:12). Nevertheless, Abraham found favor because he trusted in God's promise, God's Word. God promised that Abraham's seed would be as numerous as the stars of heaven. *And he believed in the LORD; and he counted it to him for righteousness.* (Genesis 15:6) Indeed, we know that while Abraham became the progenitor of numberless offspring and is identified as the father of faith, his greatest legacy is as the forefather of the Messiah promised from Eden.

This world teaches us to settle down, get a job, acquire some real estate, build our net worth, seek peace and security, and make a name for ourselves.

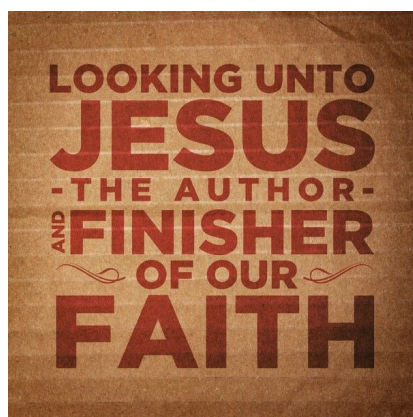
Interestingly, we are told that there would be a further special blessing upon a segment of Abraham's seed: *For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed.* (Romans 9:6-8) God's intent was to make a seed line after Abraham, not according to physical descent, but by promise, by faith. *Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness. Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.* (Galatians 3:6-7) Marvel-

ously, this opens the way for Gentiles, we who are not blood descendants of Abraham. As Abraham's children by faith, shouldn't we endeavor to follow in his footsteps? This world teaches us to settle down, get a job, acquire some real estate, build our net worth, seek peace and security, and make a name for ourselves.

Dear child of God, why do we pursue these vain, worldly aspirations? We are called, just as Adam was, as Noah was, to fill the earth with godly "offspring." This is our sole responsibility, our purpose in this world, accomplished by the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins, in Jesus' name. This was Jesus' final charge to His disciples: *But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth. And when he had spoken these things, while they beheld, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight.* (Acts 1:8-9)

May God grant us such faith that we will be emboldened to live our lives as pilgrims, bringing the kingdom of God to the whole world, acquiring as our only earthly treasure a growing band of vagabonds, the yet estranged citizens of New Jerusalem, those who wander aimlessly in the land we now sojourn through.

And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. (Matthew 9:35-37) ~



Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota

MAY GRACE, MERCY AND PEACE from God our Father and His Son, our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with us today and always! Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossian congregation was written as a result of the minister, Epaphras, making a visit to Paul who was in prison for preaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In this letter Paul wants to assure the believers in Colosse that the life that they now live as a result of believing the Word of truth, the Gospel, is a fulfilled life, a life that is in Christ. He not only speaks of that which has been received by them, but he writes that that which has come to them is bearing fruit and growing in the whole world.

He offers a prayer in which he does not pray for something that they do not already have, but he prays that they will come to a deeper understanding and knowledge of that which they already possess as a result of the truth that the Gospel through the Word has brought to them through faith.

Are any of us ever very far away from the desire for the freedom that the flesh promises? This desire is resisted through recognizing the counterfeit additions offered by the flesh, the world and the devil. Our empowerment to resist this temptation comes through gaining a deeper knowledge of that which God has purchased for us in Jesus Christ, so the impulse to look for something more to satisfy our longings is diminished. When we turn our eyes upon Jesus, the things of this world grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace. In essence, we conclude: "We have it all; why look for more? We have it all in Christ, why do we need to look for anything else?" ~



To Everything a Season

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Spruce Grove, Minnesota

To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; A time to kill, and a time to heal; a time to break down, and a time to build up; A time to weep, and a time to laugh; a time to mourn, and a time to dance; A time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing; A time to get, and a time to lose; a time to keep, and a time to cast away; A time to rend, and a time to sew; a time to keep silence, and a time to speak; A time to love, and a time to hate; a time of war, and a time of peace.

Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

THIS SCRIPTURE BECOMES A REALITY for us as we experience the joy of newborn babies and the pain of death. We weep with those who have lost loved ones and rejoice with the parents of newborns. The newborn cry sounds forth, reminding us that God is the giver of life. We rejoice and ask that our heavenly Father would grant unto the newborns health and many years. We pray that the parents would raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We praise God as we recognize His great love for these little ones and are reminded in the Scripture: *And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall not enter therein. And he took them up in his arms, put his hands upon them, and blessed them. (Mark 10:13-16)* These little ones are of great value to our Father who gives them to us. Little ones are indeed a blessing from the Lord. There is a time to be born.

We have also tasted the bitterness of death. This Scripture reminds us that there is also a time to die. We read in the New Testament that death and its power have been vanquished through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and for this reason we do not despair. We are sad and grieve for those we have lost through death, but we don't grieve as those who have no hope. Jesus told Martha as she was grieving for her brother Lazarus, *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this? (John 11:25-26)* Physical death will take place for each of us because of man's fall into sin, but we will not remain in the power of death for we will be raised again on the last day. There is a time to die.

Solomon reminds us in Ecclesiastes that this life is a temporary one. We plant crops and harvest. We rip down buildings and build new ones. We have times of joy and sorrow. We gather up and cast away. The farmers are constantly gathering stones from their fields. We tear our clothing and buy new ones (we sew). We see times of war and peace. We live in a world that understands itself in terms of seasons. We live and then we die. It is a temporal world and life indeed.

What a joy it is then to understand life in terms of the eternal. We will and have experienced the temporariness of this life, but to those who are in Christ Jesus there is another life that begins here and now and extends into eternity. It is a life that does not measure itself in terms of seasons. This life is defined by Christ Himself as abundant life (John 10:10). He says later on in that same chapter, *And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand (v.28).* This eternal season gives us the ability to live out our lives in this temporal world, for we recognize that what is truly real is what is not seen.

We live in a world where seasons are easily seen and are easily grasped. We can feel them, experience them, and they impact us every day. The eternal season, which those who are in Christ live in now and which will find its consummation in the second coming of Christ, is not readily available to our five senses and is not seen according to fleshly understanding. Nevertheless, it is the only true reality, for it finds its beginning and its end in God Himself. *I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty. (Revelation 1:8)*

So, dear reader, take heart if the season you are presently in is one of sorrow and pain. Be assured it is only a season. The real season that is to come will bring joy beyond compare. In that season we will walk and talk with the Lord Himself. We will rejoice because He is the One who has made it possible for us to be there. The finished work of Jesus Christ, which brought to us the eternal season, we proclaim as we live out our lives in these present seasons. ~



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"For the hurt of the [children] of my people I am hurt. I am black; astonishment hath taken hold on me. Is there no balm in Gilead; is there no physician there? why then is not the health of the [children] of my people recovered?" Jeremiah 8:21-22.

A Dumb Spirit Cast Out

Gwen Wilson

Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

God's peace to you. I'm hoping you're doing well. I want to share a story about a boy whom Jesus healed. You will find this in the Bible, in *St Mark, chapter nine*.

A MAN had a son who from birth had a dumb spirit. "Dumb" doesn't mean that the boy was stupid or dense, but it means that he could not talk. This spirit also tormented the boy.

One day the man came running to Jesus, saying, "Master, I have brought my son, who has a dumb spirit." This father went on to tell the frightful things that had happened to his son because of this spirit. The spirit would tear at the boy and he would foam from his mouth, gnash his teeth, fall to the ground and grow very weak. Other times the spirit made the boy become wild and he would even throw himself into fire or water.

The father tells Jesus that he had taken his son to the disciples so they could heal him, but they were not able to do so. Jesus was frustrated to hear this, and said: *O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him (the boy) unto me.* (Mark 9:19)

While the boy was being brought to Jesus, the spirit tore at him so that he fell to the ground, foaming at his mouth. Jesus saw what the spirit was doing to the boy. He asked the father

how long this had been happening. The father said that he had been that way since he was a little child.

This father begins to feel very desperate as he watches his son lying on the ground and he does so badly wish that his son could be healed. He pleads with Jesus for help. *Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief.* (Mark 9:23-24)

Jesus then rebukes the dumb spirit, and it cries out

and comes out of the boy. The boy lay so still when the spirit left him that some said he was dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. This boy was made well. Never again would that awful spirit be able to do such things to him.

The disciples took Jesus aside and asked Him why they had not been able to heal the boy. Jesus told them that they needed to seek God for strength to be able to do such things. Our story ends so joyfully and it brings me much reason to rejoice in the fact that you and I can worship this wonderful Jesus.

One thing this story teaches all of us is that we must pray to believe that all things are truly possible with God. God can use us in special ways if we have faith in Him who can do all things. Keep the faith. With love and prayers for you. ~



The Possessed Boy at the Foot of Mount Tabor
James Tissot

True Happiness

**But seek ye first
the kingdom of God,
and his righteousness;
and all these things
shall be added unto you.**
Matthew 6:33

Many are searching for happiness, true;
How is it, dear friend, this moment with you?
Do material things count in your search?
Look for the things that satisfy your soul first.

Seek first of all the kingdom of God,
And all things will be added, as you walk on this sod.
Empty-handed, we entered into this life,
To have joy and some sorrow, also some strife.
When we die, we leave all things behind;
We can take nothing but faith along—keep that in mind,
A faith in a Savior who died for our sins.
If we are faithful till the end, we surely can win
A place in mansions prepared for believers.
With that hope in mind, we can be receivers
Of treasures prepared for all Christians one day.
We will be winners with Christ, for He is the Way.

Helia Aho; Babbitt, Minnesota; July 1998 CM

Joy

Pastor Mark Matson
Pasco, Washington

... and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O LORD God of hosts.

Jeremiah 15:16

AS CHRISTIANS IN THIS AGE, let us remember "the joy of the Lord is our strength." Though sorrow and trials are part of life this side of heaven, we are to be joyful children. Why? We are the redeemed of the Lord, united to Christ by faith.

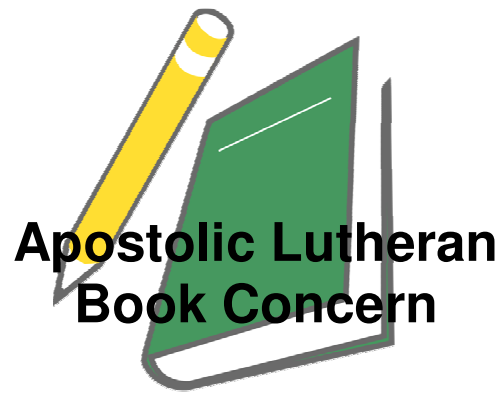
An 1800's English preacher has written it better than I can:

The religion of Christ is the religion of joy. Christ came to take away our sins, to roll off our curse, to unbind our chains, to open our prison house, to cancel our debt; in a word, to give us the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Is not this joy? Where can we find a joy so real, so deep, so pure, so lasting? There is every element of joy—deep, ecstatic, satisfying, sanctifying joy—in the gospel of Christ. The believer in Jesus is essentially a happy man. The child of God is, from necessity, a joyful man. His sins are forgiven, his soul is justified, his person is adopted, his trials are blessings, his conflicts are victories, his death is immortality, his future is a heaven of inconceivable, unthought of, untold, and endless blessedness. With such a God, such a Savior, and such a hope, is he not, ought he not, to be a joyful man? (Octavius Winslow, "The Sympathy of Christ")

The answer is Yes! Yes!! Yes!!! Let Apostle Paul's words speak to us today: *Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. (Philippians 4:4)* Let His joy be fulfilled in our hearts. Let us praise and thank Jesus for the joy He has given us. ~

And Nehemiah, which is the Tirshatha, and Ezra the priest the scribe, and the Levites that taught the people, said unto all the people, This day is holy unto the LORD your God; mourn not, nor weep. For all the people wept, when they heard the words of the law. Then he said unto them, Go your way, eat the fat, and drink the sweet, and send portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this day is holy unto our Lord: neither be ye sorry; for the joy of the LORD is your strength.

Nehemiah 8:9-10



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The Jews and Prophecy

Beth Staudinger
Leslieville, Alberta, Canada

I want to share some Scriptures regarding the Jews and the times we are living in.

THERE IS FIGHTING IN THE Middle East with radical Islam killing their own people of other sects, as well as the Christians there. We see the threat also coming toward Israel and Jerusalem: *And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. (Does this not sound like nuclear war?) And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. (Zechariah 14:12-13)*

And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord GOD: **every man's sword shall be against his brother.** (Ezekiel 38:21)

REGARDING THE JEWS HAVING A visitation before Jesus comes again, which the book of Romans, chapter eleven explains, these verses from the Old Testament seem to verify this: *In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. (Zechariah 13:1)*

And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends. (Zechariah 13:6) (Is not this Jesus?)

And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. (Zechariah 12:10)

A prophecy telling of what will happen to Jerusalem prior to Christ's coming: *Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives... and the LORD my God shall come, and*

all the saints with thee... And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem... (Zechariah 14:1-5, 8)

So will I make my holy name known in the midst of my people Israel; and I will not let them pollute my holy name any more: and the heathen shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel. (Ezekiel 39:7)

And, thou son of man, thus saith the Lord GOD; Speak unto every feathered fowl, and to every beast of the field, Assemble yourselves, and come; gather yourselves on every side to my sacrifice that I do sacrifice for you, even a great sacrifice upon the mountains of Israel, that ye may eat flesh, and drink blood. Ye shall eat the flesh of the mighty, and drink the blood of the princes of the earth, of rams, of lambs, and of goats, of bullocks, all of them fatlings of Bashan. And ye shall eat fat till ye be full, and drink blood till ye be drunken, of my sacrifice which I have sacrificed for you. Thus ye shall be filled at my table with horses and chariots, with mighty men, and with all men of war, saith the Lord GOD. And I will set my glory among the heathen, and all the heathen shall see my judgment that I have executed, and my hand that I have laid upon them. So the house of Israel shall know that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward... Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Now will I bring again the captivity of Jacob, and have mercy upon the whole house of Israel, and will be jealous for my holy name... When I have brought them again from the people, and gathered them out of their enemies' lands, and am sanctified in them in the sight of many nations; Then shall they know that I am the LORD their God, which caused them to be led into captivity among the heathen: but I have gathered them unto their own land, and have left none of them any more there. Neither will I hide my face any more from them: for I have poured out my spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 39:17-29 (KJV))

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you. (Zechariah 8:23)

These whole chapters can be read to give the full picture of what God proposes to do with the Jewish people and Jerusalem, which we may be seeing happening to some extent already. We do not know God's timetable but can rejoice as we are seeing these Scriptures being fulfilled and look forward to Jesus' coming again! ~

There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

Psalms 46:4

The city of Jerusalem points to God's believing church. She is the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High. While the kingdoms of the world are in a state of unrest, conflict, and affliction, God's church can rejoice and know a wonderful peace. For *there is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God.* The stream is the river of God's mercy. Into it flow many brooks of God's manifold grace. There is forgiveness of sins, strength to conquer, help in times of trouble, wisdom to solve difficult problems, perseverance, and steadfastness. This river of grace flows from the fount of God's love. It never dries up. It is crystal clear. It is open to all who will draw from it. Rejoice, and drink from God's clear, deep brooks, from the full flowing streams of God's grace.

Author Unknown

We're Citizens of Heaven

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

I AM A PATRIOTIC CITIZEN of the United States of America, but where is the Christian's real citizenship? Recently I've come to realize more fully that we are not true citizens of any nation, or even of this world. We're foreigners here. We're pilgrims and strangers, just passin' through. We're citizens of heaven. We're uncomfortable in this world that is not our home.

As our nation has strayed further from the truth and as ungodliness and immorality have piled deeper and deeper, our hearts break for this land that we love. Unborn babies are slain by the millions, families are torn by abuse and neglect, husbands and wives are thrown on and off like a change of clothes. And now it is legal for two persons of the same gender to marry.

Because this earth is under the curse of sin and death, why are we surprised when any nation in this world doesn't get "better" by biblical standards? Do we honestly think that unbelieving people will tolerate and love Christians? Should it be any different today for the people of faith than it was in the days of Abel, Enoch, Noah, or Abraham and Sarah? *These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.* For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

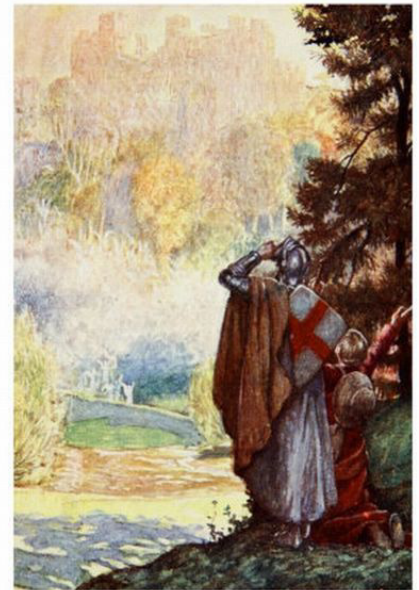
Should it be different today than it was when others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect. (Hebrews 11:35-40) In contrast, Christians in the USA have lived very privileged lives. No stoning for our faith. No scourging or trials, no

bonds or imprisonment. No goatskins or cave dwelling. We haven't been forced to meet in secret as Christians in other nations do.

We haven't needed to defend our faith at all, and perhaps rather than flourishing, our faith has languished on the vine. Do we really believe that we are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people? *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.* (1 Peter 2:9-12) Do we show forth the praise of the One who called us from darkness to His marvelous Light? Do we proclaim the Good News of Jesus to the lost and dying around us? Do we live honorably among the nations? Will our good works bring glory to God in the day of visitation?

How should we then live with regard to national citizenship? We participate in the civil processes within our nation. We defend our Constitution, we stay informed, we vote, we obey the law, and we respect authority. We help our coworkers, family and friends. We live out our vocations and love our neighbors as ourselves. And above all this, we pray for God's continued blessing on our nation. Holy Father, Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

The Pilgrim's Progress
Byam Shaw



Christian Monthly Vol. LXXI—No. 8

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

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

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

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CHRISTIAN MONTHLY

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and Book Concern orders to:

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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.



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Death to Life

Pastor Gerry Southerton
Vancouver, Washington

IN AUGUST 2013, I HAD the opportunity to speak at the ALC Youth Camp. Our theme for the week was death to life, an understanding that we are dead apart from Christ and that only through the working of God are we brought to life. Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. (Romans 6:3-4) For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith. (Romans 1:16-17)

You see, in God working through our baptism, we are brought to life by faith. In this, we are no longer dead but alive. The problem is that we constantly look at the deeds of the flesh and think that because we sin, we are not worthy to be a child of God. That would be true if it were up to us, but it is not up to us. It is God who declared us righteous in Christ Jesus. The lie of Satan tells us that we are not good enough, but as we look at the promises of God we can know for a fact that it is just that—a lie.

For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:13-17) Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:26-39)

Notice that we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. God in Christ blotted out sin in the flesh. Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. We have nothing to do with it. We need, instead of listening to the lie of Satan, to believe the promises of God in Jesus Christ. Paul reminds us of these promises. We need to quit looking at our flesh which will never be converted and instead focus on the finished work of Jesus Christ, the One who sits on the right hand of God and intercedes for us. Jesus is pleased to call us brothers, not because we have done anything to deserve it, but rather out of God the Father's great love for us.

Instead of looking at the deeds of the dead flesh, look to the Author and Finisher of your faith and know that you are a child of God. ~

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

Romans 8:1-4