

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 2020

Over and Over Again

Pastor Phil Wilson
Hockinson, Washington

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

Romans 5:12-19

And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: (he uses this word "so" several times here, as he compares the two) for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification.

One small slip of Adam, and we can only imagine the multitude of sin that has come because of that. But Jesus, the free gift which came by Him, through Him, in Him, by God's grace, through faith, is of many offences unto justification.

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

It's almost as if Paul cannot quite stop writing about this. It's too good. He's going to say it again. And we'll say it again, over and over again. We might ask, maybe even some of the young people might say, "Well, why do we need to hear this over and over again, that our sins are forgiven?" What a wonderful thing! I shouldn't even say the young; the young probably desire to hear it. Maybe we who get a little bit older, and we get wise, and we wonder, "Why do we need to hear this same thing over and over again? We know that we are sinners; we know that Jesus has died for us." I think the reason is that this sin looms so huge in front of us, and the devil brings it before us over and over again, our sinfulness and our sin, and we need to be reminded. We need to hold onto that precious promise which is found within the Word, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that we have been plucked out of this miry pit. The glorious Light of the Gospel has shone upon us. Thanks be to God for His wonderful gift of grace. ~



The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed. For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him. For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom

they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, Have they not heard? Yes verily, their sound went into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the world.

Romans 10:8-18

Jesus, the Rock of My Salvation

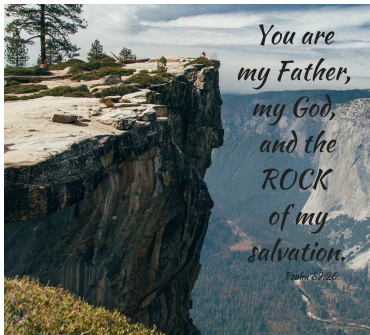
Hans Lampinen
Snohomish, Washington

“Jesus is the Rock of my salvation; His banner over me is love.” (Frank Farian)

*Hear my cry, O God; attend unto my prayer. **From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For thou hast been a shelter for me, and a strong tower from the enemy. I will abide in thy tabernacle for ever: I will trust in the covert of thy wings. Selah.***

Psalm 61:1-4

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT there is a scarlet thread that runs all the way through the Bible. This thread is scarlet or red because of the blood of the Son of God that was spilled on Calvary. It is a thread that is continuous from the Old Testament to the New. These verses really exemplify how those from the old covenant knew of this scarlet thread, of this redemptive work of Jesus Christ.



David, king of all Israel, penned these words obviously under some duress. We could interpret the words *from the end of the earth* into a more common phrase of being at our wit's end, or at the end of one's rope. He recognized that he had exhausted all his resources, which would

have been substantial, and he remembered to where he must turn or cry as he puts it.

This is where Christ comes into the picture. He of course has been there as the “Rock” the whole time, but David seems to focus that picture and recognize Jesus for what He is.

The high places of this Earth are formed from rock. To the naked eye, and in our short existence here, they seem to be unchanging. This is our Savior. The same yesterday, today, and forever. We know Him to be a constant and immovable force, but He doesn't tower over us and cast us in shadow, but instead He leads us up out of the “miry pit to set our feet upon that rock” (Psalm 40).

The hills have always been a place for armies to set up a good defense. Strategically when you are higher than your enemy, you have the advantage. High places provide superior field of view and a position of strength. Our position of strength comes from the One who was lifted up high between heaven and earth on that cross with His arms outstretched. It was from there that His field of view was so good that even though He could see us who were His enemies, He would say, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” He was brought low, but only for that purpose of conquering hell in our behalf, and now He reigns in the most high.

Jesus is that strong tower that provides shelter in which we can rest. He will protect us both from the onslaught of the the devil and the world, but also from our own flesh. It is in this shelter that we can with the Prophet Isaiah be assured that as God's people we can “dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places. (Isaiah 32:18)”

Praise the Lord for this Rock that is higher than I! ~



Attention!

IF YOU WERE IN DANGER, wouldn't you want someone to tell you if he could? Do you know you are in danger? If people were given the truth, the whole truth, nothing but the truth, blazoned across the front pages of every newspaper today there would be in huge headlines “Total epidemic sweeping our nation! Every family is hit with it. Doctors cannot cope with it. All experimenting of doctors, scientists and all top electors is of no avail; for the epidemic still spreads, becoming more and more intense. No one is immune to it. It infiltrates all the high places in government and every home from the lowest to the greatest.”

Our country is in jeopardy! Our nation cannot survive too many years longer, unless a remedy is discovered. What would you do if you saw the headlines in every newspaper

in America? Would you throw the paper down and disgust and exclaim “It cannot happen here”? Can't it? The statement is true. Mankind does not know how to get our country out of the dilemma we are in.

There is an epidemic sweeping our nation! And it is total! What is the epidemic, you ask? Sin, yes, SIN! The sin of forgetting God. The sin of rejecting His Son Jesus Christ. The sin of ignoring His will. The sin of disobeying His Word. The sin of self centeredness! Every person is born in sin, no one escapes, and sin condemns people to die and go to hell.

Is there no remedy for sin? Yes, the Great Physician, God our Creator, offers the cure for the epidemic. Jesus Christ is hailed as the Savior of the world. He will cleanse you from sin. He will bring you into a wonderful relationship with God, the Great Physician who puts the remedy on the doorstep of every heart, but to be delivered from sin, one must obey the instructions of the Physician. Repent—turn to Christ. Believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for your sin. Through His blood shed on Calvary's cross you are saved from the epidemic—sin.

*written in the early 1980s by Jennie Westlake; New York
Submitted by Roger Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire*

More Than Conquerors

John Chrysostom

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.*

Romans 8:31-37

FOR WHAT IS INDEED WONDERFUL is this, not that we are conquerors only, but that we are so by the very things meant as plots against us. And we are not merely conquerors, but we are *more than conquerors*, that is, are so with ease, without toil and labour. For without undergoing the real things, by only setting our mind aright, we raise our trophies against our enemies. And with good reason. For it is God that striveth together with us. Do not then be doubtful, if though beaten we get the better of our beaters, if driven out we overcome our persecutors, if dying we put the living to flight. For when you take the power and also the love of God into account, there is nothing to prevent these wondrous and strange things from coming to pass, and that victory the most advantageous should shine upon us. For they did not merely conquer, but in a wondrous way, and so that one might learn those who plotted against them had a war not against men, but against that invincible Might. See the Jews then with these among them and at a loss quite, and saying, *What are we to do to these men?* For it is marvelous indeed, that though they had hold of them and had got them liable to their courts, and imprisoned them and beat them, they were yet at a loss and in perplexity, as they got overcome by the very things whereby they expected to conquer. And neither kings nor people, nor ranks of demons, nor the devil himself, had power to get the better of them, but were all overcome at a very great disadvantage, finding that all they planned against them became for them. And therefore he says, *we are more than conquerors*. For this was a new rule of victory for men to prevail by their adversaries, and in no instance to be overcome, but to go forth to these struggles as if they themselves had the issue in their own hands.

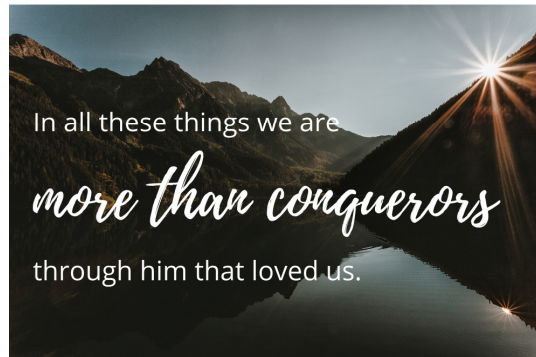
For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

These are great things here mentioned. But the reason we do not enter into them is, because we have not so great love. Yet still though they are great as he wished to shew that they were nothing beside the love wherewith he was loved of God; after it he then places his own, lest he should seem to be saying great things about himself. And what he says is somewhat of this kind. Why speak, he means, of things present, and evils inherited in this life? For even if a person were to tell me of things to come, and of powers; of things, such as death and life; of powers, such as angels and archangels, and all the superior orders of beings; even these would be little to me compared with the love of Christ. For even if a person were to threaten me with that future death to which there is no death, to separate me from Christ, nor if he promised the life without end, would I agree to it. Why mention kings here below and consuls? and this one or that? for if you tell me of angels, or all the powers above, or all

existing things, or all that are to come, they are all small to me, both those in the earth, and those in heaven, and those under the earth, and those above heaven, compared to this charm. Then as though these were not enough to set before them the strong desire which he had, he gives a being to others again of like magnitude,

and says, *nor any other creature*. And what he means is nearly this, even if there were any other creation as great as the visible, and as great as the intelligible, none of them could part me from that love. This he says not as if the Angels attempted it, or the other Powers, far from it, but as wishing to shew quite to the utmost the charm he had toward Christ. For Christ he loved not for the things of Christ, but for His sake the things that were His, and to Him alone he looked, and one thing he feared, and that was falling from his love for Him. For this thing was in itself more dreadful than hell, as to abide in it was more desirable than the Kingdom. ~



O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

Psalm 34:8

WHEN WE ARE ABLE TO TASTE and see that the Lord is good, it changes our hearts and our minds. It gives us a tongue that does not want to dwell on that which is unclean. It doesn't want to dwell on that which is hurtful. It doesn't want to dwell on the dark things of the old man, for we are able to see that they do not produce anything that is of any useful purpose.

Jim Maunu
Vancouver, Washington

Delivered From a Fiery Furnace

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

How are all of you? I hope this finds you well. After my last page you may be wondering how we are all doing here with missing our two dear family members and helping our son and his children.

By God's grace and provision, we are managing as well as we can. The Lord has provided wonderful healing with our grandchildren's broken bones on their legs (each broke one leg). They are walking fine and even able to run and ride bike. We are so thankful for that. Today is June 30th, and tomorrow our son is going on his first longer road trip, with his two children and our youngest son, who is 21.

We can only thank God for all the healing that has happened, for all the many prayers that have been said and are still be offered, and each new day.

I want to also add that on March 15th, a sudden accident took the life of a friend's husband and their children's father, and then on April 23rd, a fellow pastor friend and his family lost his wife and children's mother due to a short battle with a quick onset of adult leukemia cancer and also on April 24th, one of our nephews and his wife and family lost an 11-year-old son/brother/cousin after a fight with leukemia (a cancer) for the fourth time in his life.

We are not the only ones burdened with grief, and each one is different from the other. Yet, they have the same deep sadness of precious lives gone so soon. Please keep us all in prayer. Each precious person whom I mentioned, they loved the Lord.

Today I would like to share an account about three young men who loved God and would only serve Him. You will find the story in the Bible book of *Daniel 3:1-30*.

KING NEBUCHADNEZZAR RULED OVER THE Jews for a time. He treated them well, but he would not worship their God. He worshiped images called idols. He had a statue made from gold, that was 90 feet high and 9 feet thick and had it set up on a plain where it could easily be seen. He then gathered all the people around this idol and commanded them to bow down to it when they heard all kinds of musical instruments start playing. If they did not bow down and worship it, they were going to be thrown into a hot furnace. Most of the people were very much afraid of that happening to them, so they did as the king said.

Three young men named Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego would not go along with the king's command because they only worshiped the true God. When all the other people bowed down these young men did not. It was reported to the king that these men had not obeyed, and this made the king very angry.

Nebuchadnezzar asked that the men be brought to him, and he asked them if what he heard was true. These men were not afraid and answered, saying, *Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will*

deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up. (Daniel 3:17-18)

This made the king so angry that he had the boys thrown into the furnace immediately. OH NO, you might be thinking, but don't worry because after a while the king looked into the fire and saw not only three men in the fire, but four men walking around unhurt. Jesus was with the men protecting them from the fire.



Nebuchadnezzar called the men out of the furnace and they came out.

Let's read verse 27: *And the princes, governors, and captains, and the king's counsellors, being gathered together, saw these men, upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.* Think about how easy it is to get smoke smell in your clothes, and these men didn't have any smell on them. God took very good care of these men because they honored their God and desired to do only His will and not to please themselves.

King Nebuchadnezzar was so amazed at what had just happened with these men that he said, *Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego... (Daniel 3:28)* He admired their faith and trust in the God they served.

Nebuchadnezzar then made a decree that no one could say anything bad about the God these men worshiped. If they did, the king would punish them greatly.

I would encourage you children to stand up for what is right and do that which pleases God and glorifies Him, no matter where you are. God will see you and bless you.

Why do you and I and all believers, believe in God, love Him, and want to do His will? Only for this reason, because He loved us first and He has promised eternal life to all who believe in His Son.

I pray that we could all be like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and continue to love and serve the true God. May God bless each of you children in your walk with Jesus, now and always.

God's peace.

There Is Therefore Now No Condemnation

Paul Kretzmann

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

THEREFORE" IS AN INFERENCE especially from the last verse of the preceding chapter. For since the Christians with their flesh still serve the law of sin and, on account of the weakness of their corrupted flesh, sin daily and much, the conclusion might be drawn, also by themselves, that they are heaping God's wrath and condemnation upon themselves by their sins of weakness with which they are daily battling, that they, although in a state of justification through the merits of Christ, are in a state of condemnation and can never be certain of God's fatherly affection. But this feeling, which would tend also to take away the certainty of redemption, is not justified. "Although sin still rages in the flesh, yet it does not condemn, because the spirit is just and battles against it." (Luther.) This Paul declares with great emphasis: Condemnation is in every sense out of the question; there is none, of any kind or degree; no sentence of condemnation can touch them. It is true, of course, that all sins of the Christians, also sins of weakness, are in themselves under the judgment of condemnation, that the believers must daily seek forgiveness for them in the wounds of Christ. These facts, however, have been fully discussed in connection with the justification of a poor sinner before God. But here St. Paul is treating of the great work of sanctification, which follows upon justification. There are Christians that are deeply concerned about the fact that their life and works, their conversation as believers, is still so far from perfection, that their performance of God's will remains so far behind their intention and desire. But here we are given the assurance that God, reconciled to all men in Christ Jesus, looks upon the justified sinners, upon the regenerated, believing Christians, as though they were altogether in the Spirit, as though they had no sinful flesh to hinder them any more. To them that are in Christ Jesus, that are in Him vitally, by that wonderful union of which the Lord speaks John 15:1-7, that have their being in Him by justifying faith, to them that walk not, do not regulate their entire life according to the flesh, according to their sinful desires, but follow the commands of the Spirit, to these there is no sentence of condemnation.

For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and of death. The present, regenerated state of the Christians, in which we walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, is a proof of the fact that the Spirit has really delivered us from the law of sin and of death. The law of the Spirit of Life is the Holy Spirit,

inasmuch as He determines our entire conduct and transmits to us the life which is in Christ, causing us to live in Christ and with Christ. And in doing this for us, the Spirit has set us free from the law of sin and of death, of sin, which wanted to control and direct our life and deliver us into the power of death, to which we were subject by nature. Thus it is no longer sin, but the Spirit that is the controlling factor in the lives of the believers. Through the work of the Spirit we have died unto sin and become partakers of the resurrection of Christ. "Where the Spirit is not, there the Law is weakened and transgressed through the flesh, making it impossible for the Law to help a man but only unto sin and death. Therefore God sent His Son and laid upon Him our sin, and thus helped us to fulfill the Law through His Spirit." (Luther.) So far as the weakness, the faintness of the Law is concerned, a condition of impotency which was due to its being weakened through the flesh, it should always be remembered that God, in sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and on

account of sin, condemned the sin in the flesh. The Law of God is not in itself weak and impotent, but it is rendered so, its power and effect is suspended through the influence of the sinful flesh. Our depravity makes it impossible for the Law to save us, because it makes the fulfillment of the Law impossible. But when this was the situation,



altogether hopeless, so far as man's salvation was concerned, the mercy of God stepped in. He sent His own Son, the Son that was equal with Him in essence and power, Possessor of the same deity. He sent Him in the likeness of the flesh of sin, like unto the sinners in humanity, a real man, and man's Substitute and Representative in bearing the sin of the whole world with all its consequences, for the sake of doing away with sin and its guilt forever. Christ was the expiation, the sacrifice, for sin. And thus God condemned, spoke the sentence of condemnation upon, sin in the flesh; the sacrifice, the death, of Christ shows that God's justice condemned the sin which rules in the corrupt nature of man. Christ was made a curse, because He bore the curse which must strike sin. And thereby God has declared that sin no longer has the right to keep man in subjection and to force him to transgress the Law of God; He has delivered men from the jurisdiction of sin. And thus the precept, the rightful demand, of the Law may be satisfied, may be fulfilled in us, that is, in those persons that do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. By delivering us from the dominion of sin, Christ has made it possible for us to fulfill the Law of God, to deny and crucify the flesh and to live according to the Spirit. And the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the life in Christ, has loosed us from the bonds, from the dominion and jurisdiction of sin and of death, and now teaches us to walk, to lead our entire lives, in conformity with God's will. ~

Commentary on Romans 6-8

Martin Luther

Translated by Bro. Andrew Thornton, OSB

IN CHAPTER 6, ST. PAUL takes up the special work of faith, the struggle which the spirit wages against the flesh to kill off those sins and desires that remain after a person has been made just. He teaches us that faith doesn't so free us from sin that we can be idle, lazy and self-assured, as though there were no more sin in us. Sin is there, but, because of faith that struggles against it, God does not reckon sin as deserving damnation. Therefore we have in our own selves a lifetime of work cut out for us; we have to tame our body, kill its lusts, force its members to obey the spirit and not the lusts. We must do this so that we may conform to the death and resurrection of Christ and complete our Baptism, which signifies a death to sin and a new life of grace. Our aim is to be completely clean from sin and then to rise bodily with Christ and live forever.

St. Paul says that we can accomplish all this because we are in grace and not in the law. He explains that to be "outside the law" is not the same as having no law and being able to do what you please. No, being "under the law" means living without grace, surrounded by the works of the law. Then surely sin reigns by means of the law, since no one is naturally well-disposed toward the law. That very condition, however, is the greatest sin. But grace makes the law lovable to us, so there is then no sin any more, and the law is no longer against us but one with us.

This is true freedom from sin and from the law; St. Paul writes about this for the rest of the chapter. He says it is a freedom only to do good with eagerness and to live a good life without the coercion of the law. This freedom is, therefore, a spiritual freedom which does not suspend the law but which supplies what the law demands, namely eagerness and love. These silence the law so that it has no further cause to drive people on and make demands of them. It's as though you owed something to a moneylender and couldn't pay him.

You could be rid of him in one of two ways: either he would take nothing from you and would tear up his account book, or a pious man would pay for you and give you what you needed to satisfy your debt. That's exactly how Christ freed us from the law. Therefore our freedom is not a wild, fleshy freedom that has no obligation to do anything. On the contrary, it is a freedom that does a great deal, indeed everything, yet is free of the law's demands and debts.

In **chapter 7**, St. Paul confirms the foregoing by an analogy drawn from married life. When a man dies, the wife is free; the one is free and clear of the other. It is not the case that the woman may not or should not marry another man; rather she is now for the first time free to marry someone else. She could not do this before she was free of her first husband. In the same way, our conscience is bound to the law so long as our condition is that of the sinful old man. But when the old man is killed by the spirit, then the conscience is free, and conscience and law are quit of each other. Not that conscience should now do nothing; rather, it should now for the first time truly cling to its second husband, Christ, and bring forth the fruit of life.

Next St. Paul sketches further the nature of sin and the law. It is the law that makes sin really active and powerful, because the old man gets more and more hostile to the law since he can't pay the debt demanded by the law. Sin is his very nature; of himself he can't do otherwise. And so the law is his death and torture. Now the law is not itself evil; it is our evil nature that cannot tolerate that the good law should demand good from it. It's like the case of a sick person, who cannot tolerate that you demand that he run and jump around and do other things that a healthy person does.

St. Paul concludes here that, if we understand the law properly and comprehend it in the best possible way, then we will see that its sole function is to remind us of our sins, to kill us by our sins, and to make us deserving of eternal wrath. Conscience learns and experiences all this in detail when it comes face to face with the law. It follows, then, that we must have something else, over and above the law, which can make a person virtuous and cause him to be saved. Those, however, who do not understand the law rightly are blind; they go their way boldly and think they are satisfying the law with works. They don't know how much the law demands, namely, a free, willing, eager heart. That is the reason that they don't see Moses rightly before their eyes. [In both Jewish and Christian teaching, Moses was commonly held to be the author of the Pentateuch, the first five books of the bible. Cf. the involved imagery of Moses' face and the veil over it in 2 Corinthians 3:7-18.] For them he is covered and concealed by the veil.



Then St. Paul shows how spirit and flesh struggle with each other in one person. He gives himself as an example, so that we may learn how to kill sin in ourselves. He gives both spirit and flesh the name "law," so that, just as it is in the nature of divine law to drive a person on and make demands of him, so too the flesh drives and demands and rages against the spirit and wants to have its own

way. Likewise the spirit drives and demands against the flesh and wants to have its own way. This feud lasts in us for as long as we live, in one person more, in another less, depending on whether spirit or flesh is stronger. Yet the whole human being is both: spirit and flesh. The human being fights with himself until he becomes completely spiritual.

In **chapter 8**, St. Paul comforts fighters such as these and tells them that this flesh will not bring them condemnation. He goes on to show what the nature of flesh and spirit are. Spirit, he says, comes from Christ, who has given us His Holy Spirit; the Holy Spirit makes us spiritual and restrains the flesh. The Holy Spirit assures us that we are God's children no matter how furiously sin may rage within us, so long as we follow the Spirit and struggle against sin in order to kill it. Because nothing is so effective in deadening the flesh as the cross and suffering, Paul comforts us in our suffering. He says that the Spirit, love and all creatures will stand by us; the Spirit in us groans and all creatures long with us that we be freed from the flesh and from sin. Thus we see that these three **chapters 6, 7 and 8**, all deal with the one work of faith, which is to kill the old Adam and to constrain the flesh. ~

We've Been Set Free

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. **Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?** But God be thanked, that **ye were the servants of sin**, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. **Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.** I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. **But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.** For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 6:12-23

THE WORD “SERVANT” IN THE New Testament could be often translated as “slave.” Slave is not a favorable term in our culture today; no one would ever yield themselves willingly to slavery. But the reality is that because of our inheritance of original sin from our first parents we were born as slaves of sin. We are subject to death because of this inheritance. We are yoked in bondage—in slavery—to sin, to death, and to the devil.

A slave has no choice in his life; he is subject to his master's will. A slave will work, doing what his master wills. He will sleep and eat when his master wishes. Most importantly, a slave cannot free himself. He must be **set free**.

When we were in bondage to sin, we were subject to sin, slaves of the devil. We followed his will and command. And we could not free ourselves. We had to be **set free**.

Paul says, “Don't you know that to whomever you yield yourselves as slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey—either of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?” This almost makes it sound as if we had a choice in the matter, as if we may yield ourselves to either sin or obedience, but Paul's following sentence clarifies that:

“But **God be thanked**, that you who were slaves of sin, have obeyed from the heart (have yielded to) that form of doctrine (teaching) that was delivered to you.” We have heard the teaching, the Gospel, the Good News. It was delivered to us, and we believed it by the working of the Holy Spirit. Then, being made free from sin, or **set free** from slavery to sin, we have become slaves of righteousness. We have been purchased by God; we were bought with a price, the blood of His Son. Now we have become slaves of God.



Paul writes about slavery to God in a human way, equating it to natural human slavery, so our natural minds can understand.

When we were slaves of sin, we yielded to sin, not by our own choice but because we were slaves to it. We lived in uncleanness and immoral behavior which leads to more of the same. Now that we have been **set free** from sin, we yield ourselves to righteousness which leads to holiness. When we were slaves of sin, we were free from (not yoked to) righteousness. What kind of fruit were we growing when we lived in shameful sin? The kind of fruit whose end is death.

We still wage war against the sin in our flesh, but that battle is ultimately won. Being **set free** from sin, and made slaves of God, the fruit we bear is holiness, whose end is everlasting life! The wage we earn from our slavery to sin is death, but **God has set us free**. He has given us the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God!

Our bondage to Christ, by grace through faith, is true freedom. Jesus said: *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.* (Matthew 11:28-30)

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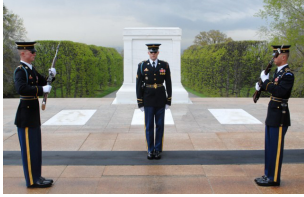
The *Christian Monthly* (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, 19113 NE 144th Street, Brush Prairie, WA 98606. Periodical permit paid in Brush Prairie, Washington.

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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Bring It On!

Rev. Scott R. Murray

AS YOU STAND BEFORE THE Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery you can become mesmerized by the snap and polish of those who guard its precinct. You might even find yourself attracted to the military life by the crisp uniform, the measured steps, the clarity of purpose, and the acceptance of discipline. It used to be said that women were attracted to a man in uniform, although this is perhaps not so much the case any longer. A young man in his dress military uniform is a sight quite different from a battle-grimed man in his fatigues. He sits wearied in body and soul by the burdens of arms, contemplating the horrors of actual combat. He does not relish the work, but undertakes it under orders to defend constitution and country; an evil job that good men must do. When they march to war, they are grim-faced and filled with agony. This is no longer the parade ground exercise that looks so precise and even gloriously beautiful. The reality of battle is quite far from the parade ground.

We too are called to battle by our Lord Jesus. We too must be arrayed for combat when He calls us to arms. We choke on this image of soldiers marching as to war in our squeamish age, when the editors of new hymnbooks decline to print among their hymns the great old standards of militant Christianity like "Onward Christian Soldiers." What gives? Why this squeamishness? It misunderstands the call to arms which Jesus sounds. He does not call us to jihad. He does not ask us to take up our M-16s to mow down the infidels. His arms are not the power which result in slaughter. His victory does not mean that we will stand with our boot upon the throat of our enemies. Rather the opposite case is more likely; that our enemy will stand with his boot upon our throat. Our loss, suffering, and trial are all signs of Christ's glorious, shining victory over suffering and even death.

We must remember who our commander is, what His battle dispositions are, the weapons with which He equips us, and what His victory looks like. We should not fear the battle to which He calls us, because He has led us there having Himself faced down such fell enemies as death, grave, and hell. He leads not from an entrenched position behind the front, but leads the very vanguard into life, as the firstborn from the dead. He will not fail, no matter how grim the battle appears, no matter how many seem the losses. We may approach our enemy's lair without fear or trepidation. We needn't flee from the clash of arms or the cacophony of battle. We may go in our best dress uniform adorned by the weapons of light; weapons given by Him who is the Light of the world. Who goes to war dressed like the bridegroom in his tuxedo, except one who is quite certain of the outcome, dressed for the cessation of war and the signs of ultimate peace? We can waltz into war, because of Christ and His weapons. The battle is joined. Bring it on. ~

Book Recommendation: St Paul's Epistle to the Romans

This book recommendation is slightly different than those that have been offered recently, in that it is a letter within The Book. I've been studying St Paul's Epistle to the Romans, and I've found much comfort and encouragement for the times in which we live.

Martin Luther's Preface to the Romans begins:

This letter is truly the most important piece in the New Testament. It is purest Gospel. It is well worth a Christian's while not only to memorize it word for word but also to occupy himself with it daily, as though it were the daily bread of the soul. It is impossible to read or to meditate on this letter too much or too well. The more one deals with it, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. Therefore I want to carry out my service and, with this preface, provide an introduction to the letter, insofar as God gives me the ability, so that every one can gain the fullest possible understanding of it. Up to now it has been darkened by glosses [explanatory notes and comments which accompany a text] and by many a useless comment, but it is in itself a bright light, almost bright enough to illumine the entire Scripture.

I would encourage you to read aloud the book of Romans, or listen to it being read. It doesn't take an extraordinary amount of time, as an audio reading of the book is about an hour long. Dedicate an hour to listen to Paul's letter to the saints at Rome. You won't regret it! All the words of the Scripture are precious, but, as Luther says above, the more the book of Romans is read, the more precious it becomes and the better it tastes. ~ LM