

# Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION  
OF THE WORD OF GOD



**Psalms 119:105**  
**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,  
and a light unto my path.**

February 2020

## Costly Grace

Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
Excerpt, The Cost of Discipleship

**C**HEAP GRACE IS THE DEADLY ENEMY of our Church. We are fighting to-day for costly grace...

Cheap grace means grace sold on the market like cheapjacks' wares. The sacraments, the forgiveness of sin, and the consolations of religion are thrown away at cut prices. Grace is represented as the Church's inexhaustible treasury, from which she showers blessings with generous hands, without asking questions or fixing limits. Grace without price; grace without cost! The essence of grace, we suppose, is that the account has been paid in advance; and, because it has been paid, everything can be had for nothing. Since the cost was infinite, the possibilities of using and spending it are infinite. What would grace be if it were not cheap?

Cheap grace means grace as a doctrine, a principle, a system. It means forgiveness of sins proclaimed as a general truth, the love of God taught as the Christian "conception" of God. An intellectual assent to that idea is held to be of itself sufficient to secure remission of sins. The Church which holds the correct doctrine of grace has, it is supposed, *ipso facto* a part in that grace. In such a Church the world finds a cheap covering for its sins; no contrition is required, still less any real desire to be delivered from sin. Cheap grace therefore amounts to a denial of the living Word of God, in fact, a denial of the Incarnation of the Word of God.

Cheap grace means the justification of sin without the justification of the sinner. Grace alone does everything they say, and so everything can remain as it was before. "All for sin could not atone." The world goes on in the same old way, and we are still sinners "even in the best life" as Luther said. Well, then, let the Christian live like the rest of the world, let him model himself on the world's standards in every sphere

of life, and not presumptuously aspire to live a different life under grace from his old life under sin...

Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.

Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.

Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is *grace* because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and *grace* because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is *costly* because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is *grace* because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

Costly grace is the sanctuary of God; it has to be protected from the world, and not thrown to the dogs. It is therefore the living word, the Word of God, which he speaks as it pleases him. Costly grace confronts us as a gracious call to follow Jesus. It comes as a word of forgiveness to the broken spirit and the contrite heart. Grace is costly because it compels a man to submit to the yoke of Christ and follow him; it is *grace* because Jesus says: "My yoke is easy and my burden is light." ~



Cheap grace is grace without the cross,  
grace without Jesus Christ...

# Repent and Believe the Gospel

Pastor Ron Holmgren  
Hockinson, Washington

**But when [John] saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.**

Matthew 3:7-10

**G**OD IS USING HIS SERVANT John, and so John speaks to [the Pharisees and Sadducees] and stops them in their tracks as he calls them children of snakes, a generation of vipers, the brood, a brood of vipers, the children of snakes. That's what he calls them.

John is an amazing person, but I don't want any part of his calling, in that sense, because he ends up—not because of these men, but because of the truth of his message—with his head on a platter. I say that simply because of my weakness, thinking of it. We make men like John into superheroes and we elevate them, but this voice of the one crying in the wilderness is a voice, it's not a man. And the Voice is the Voice of God.

When they came to be baptized of him, he stops them in their tracks. He calls them a brood, a generation of vipers, and then he asks them a question: "Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Who told you to be baptized? Who told you to come here and protect yourself from the wrath to come?"

Who whispered in their ear?

I would say no one could have warned them but the original viper, the snake that deceived Eve, the serpent. And John exposes them, because no one can escape by an insincere, outward use of the means of grace.

And yet, in verse eight, God's grace extends, in the time of grace, even to them. Isn't that wonderful? You brood of vipers! Now go! And return in the right way! God's grace is still there and it calls them to repentance.

*Bring forth therefore fruits meet—suitable, fit, proper—for repentance.* That's all. Change your heart. Come to understand that you are poor, and miserable, and lost, and condemned. Because you cannot but conclude that they didn't have that. They didn't come confessing their sins, they came to be

baptized because they were the good, the rulers, the Pharisees, the Sadducees, who didn't even believe any of the things John was talking about but went along for the ride just to keep in touch, and to keep their position.

God calls them again to repentance, and don't even think—he says in verse nine—that the pride of the nation of Israel is going to save you. Don't even think that somehow your heritage gives you a better position than other people in this world.

What is the difference between a Christian and a non-Christian? Name one thing that our heritage gives—and I do not say this to say anything about our heritage negatively; don't take this wrong—but I have a mother, a father, a grandpa, a grandma, and on and on it goes back. We have Laestadius and Raattama; we have Luther and Melancthon; we have all of these great parts of our Christian heritage. That does not make me a Christian. What has made me a Christian is the call to repentance, to be repenting and believe the Gospel.



Saint John the Baptist and the Pharisees  
James Tissot, Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

They thought that they were secure in their position but he pulls that rug out from underneath them. Being a descendant of Abraham will do nothing. This false confidence must also be moved out of the way, like a mountain, to prepare the way of the Lord. *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.* Again, the language of John is straightforward.

After the call of love and grace is extended to all people, including these Sadducees and

Pharisees that he has just addressed as a brood of vipers—including them—when the call of grace and the love of Christ, when the call to repentance fails to do its work, then the threat and terror of judgment is all that's left. It's all that's left. That's what we read here: *the axe is laid unto the root of the trees*: "trees" plural. It's there, it's ready to cut down the tree, not prune it—that's a different parable, a different illustration. No, this axe is at the root, this isn't even going to leave a stump. This is going to cut the roots loose from the earth. The tree is going to be gone, *cast into the fire*. That's John's warning to them who do not repent and believe the message that he has which includes, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." ~

**I**N OUR HUMANNESS WE OFTEN think that what we want, our will, is the way it should be. So frequently our prayerful appeal to the Father of Lights is that He would do or provide according to our requests. If He does not accommodate our request, we wonder if He no longer hears our prayers or does not care. How far from the truth that thinking is! He hears but also knows what we do not know or fully understand, that what He will provide far exceeds our limited view. He knows the future; we only perceive our present situation.

Pastor Rod Johnson



# Of Repentance

Smalcald Articles

**I**F, NOW, THERE WERE SOME who did not believe themselves guilty of such actual sins in thoughts, words, and works,—as I, and such as I, in monasteries and chapters, wished to be monks and priests, and by fasting, watching, praying, saying Mass, coarse garments, and hard beds, etc., fought against evil thoughts, and in full earnest and with force wanted to be holy, and yet the hereditary, inborn evil sometimes did in sleep what it is wont to do (as also St. Augustine and Jerome among others confess),—still each one held the other in esteem, so that some, according to our teaching, were regarded as holy, without sin and full of good works, so much so that with this mind we would communicate and sell our good works to others, as being superfluous to us for heaven. This is indeed true, and seals, letters, and instances that this happened are at hand.

When there were such, I say, These did not need repentance. For of what would they repent, since they had not indulged wicked thoughts? What would they confess concerning words not uttered, since they had avoided words? For what should they render satisfaction, since they were so guiltless of any deed that they could even sell their superfluous righteousness to other poor sinners? Such saints were also the Pharisees and scribes in the time of Christ.

Here comes the fiery angel, St. John (Revelation 10), the true preacher of repentance, and with one thunderclap and bolt hurls both those selling and those buying works on one heap, and says: Repent! (Matthew 3:2). Now, the former imagine: Why, we have repented! The latter say: We need no repentance. John says: Repent ye, both of you, for ye are false penitents; so are these false saints or hypocrites, and all of you on either side need the forgiveness of sins, because neither of you know what true sin is not to say anything about your duty to repent of it and shun it. For no one of you is good; you are full of unbelief, stupidity, and ignorance of God and God's will. For here He is present of whose fulness have all we received, and grace for grace (John 1:16), and without Him no man can be just before God. Therefore, if you wish to repent, repent aright; your penance will not accomplish anything. And you hypocrites, who do not need repentance, you serpents' brood, who has assured you that you will escape the wrath to come (Matthew 3:7, Luke 3:7)?

In the same way Paul also preaches (Romans 3:10-12): *There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable.* And Acts 17:30: God

now commandeth all men everywhere to repent. "All men," he says; no one excepted who is a man. This repentance teaches us to discern sin, namely, that we are altogether lost, and that there is nothing good in us from head to foot, both within and without, and that we must absolutely become new and other men.

This repentance is not partial and fragmentary, like that which does penance for actual sins, nor is it uncertain like that. For it does not debate what is or is not sin, but hurls everything on a heap, and says: All in us is nothing but sin. What is the use of investigating, dividing, or distinguishing a long time? For this reason, too, this contrition is not uncertain. For there is nothing left with which we can think of any good thing to pay for sin, but there is only a sure despairing concerning all that we are, think, speak, or do, etc.

***This gift daily cleanses and sweeps out the remaining sins, and works so as to render man truly pure and holy.***

In like manner confession, too, cannot be false, uncertain, or fragmentary. For he who confesses that all in him is nothing but sin comprehends all sins, excludes none, forgets none. Neither can the satisfaction be uncertain, because it is not our uncertain, sinful work, but it is the suffering and blood of the spotless and innocent Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world.

Of this repentance John preaches, and afterwards Christ in the Gospel, and we also. By this preaching of repentance we dash to the ground the Pope and everything that is built upon our good works. For all is built upon a rotten and vain foundation, which is called a good work or law, even though no good work is there, but only wicked works, and no one does the Law (as Christ, John 7:19, says), but all transgress it. Therefore the building that is raised upon it is nothing but falsehood and hypocrisy, even in the part where it is most holy and beautiful.

And in Christians this repentance continues until death, because, through the entire life it contends with sin remaining in the flesh, as Paul (Romans 7:14-25) testifies that he wars with the law in his members, etc.; and that, not by his own powers, but by the gift of the Holy Ghost that follows the remission of sins. This gift daily cleanses and sweeps out the remaining sins, and works so as to render man truly pure and holy. ~

*For 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 and Jesus Always

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children far and near,

Hello to each of you. I pray you are well. It is 2:30 in the morning of the last day of the old year. I couldn't get to sleep, so I decided to get up and do something to help me get tired.

As I sit here in the quiet of my house and no lights are on, I hear little traffic and at the moment in my corner of the world or the United States, the biggest share of the population sleeps. The busyness of the land is slowed or stopped for a few hours.

I like this quiet and the fact that God sees me sitting here and knows I couldn't sleep. It is comforting to know God and Jesus are sitting up there in heaven looking down on all the world, and even you. He never stops taking care to listen to prayers or reaching down to so many who need Him even at this time with things that trouble them in their bodies or in their hearts.

**W**E HAVE ALL ONCE AGAIN heard the greatest Christmas story of the birth of Jesus. God sent Him down to earth to one day die for our sins. We can know this, that God had a plan that was SO full of love for all who would believe in His Son. He cares so deeply about His children. He knows absolutely every thing about you.

There is nothing you have done, or do, that He does not see. There are things we do that are not good and it hurts our Lord. No one gets out of God's view; no one can hide anything from Him. There are things adults and children try to hide, and often those same people will become unhappy and life will seem difficult. It is because their conscience bothers them and the Holy Spirit is reminding them of their sin. Listen to your conscience, children; it is the Holy Spirit in you leading and guiding you.

Even people who don't believe often will be unhappy because they have been given knowledge enough of right and wrong. This does not mean they have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts. Only those who believe that Jesus is God's Son and turn from sin and serve Him, have the Holy Spirit.

It is a great blessing to believe in Jesus and speak His name. I praise and thank God for faith.

Jesus came as a babe, and grew to be a boy and then a man. He knew and felt all the things that tempt mankind to sin but He never sinned. He was perfect, and through His perfection He accomplished His Father God's plan for all the world in that He gave His life on the cross so we may have eternal life. The world was in a hopeless state when God saw it was time to send His Son.

Did you children know that between the time of the Old Testament being completed with the book of Malachi and the New Testament's beginning with St. Matthew, there were roughly four hundred years? This is a long time and we have nothing recorded to read. It was called the silent years. It was silent as far as prophets teaching the people things about

God. The prophets in the Old Testament had proclaimed mysteries about God and also that God would one day send His Son. No one knew when that time would be.

So after four hundred years, much had changed in the world. I just finished listening to the Old Testament in November and started listening to the New Testament, and it has a whole different feel to what is going on. Even in the first chapter of St. Matthew, verse 18, we hear of Jesus' birth. *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together (were married), she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.* The New Testament brought new hope for the world.

**That Light that is so often spoken of in the Bible is Jesus. He is the Light of the world. He came to shine into the darkness of the world and save man from that darkness which is sin.**



**If you take even a small candle into a BIG dark room, it will make the darkness go away. Darkness cannot stay where light is. We can say this is like our hearts: when Jesus' light is in our hearts darkness can't stay dark.**

Believers in God and Jesus also have the privilege of calling on God and Jesus when being tempted and the darkness, which we say is the devil, will flee because the devil does not like the name of Jesus.

I pray that each of you who read this, and I pray for myself, that we will cling to Jesus our Light.

Let us go on in this New Year with the name of Jesus on our lips and in our hearts and minds. We have such a blessed hope waiting for us one day. Let us thank God for each day He gives us, and may He keep us watchful.

God richly bless each of you in 2020.

*God's peace.*

**THAT WHICH THE LORD OFFERS IS PRICELESS.** There is nothing in this world that can compare with it. There is no price tag on it, and the most wonderful thing is that it is free to us; we cannot buy it.

Urho Coponen  
August 1977 CM

# The Righteousness of Faith

Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

**C**ONCERNING THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH before God we believe, teach, and confess unanimously, in accordance with the comprehensive summary of our faith and confession presented above, that poor sinful man is justified before God, that is, absolved and declared free and exempt from all his sins, and from the sentence of well-deserved condemnation, and adopted into sonship and heirship of eternal life, without any merit or worth of our own, also without any preceding, present, or any subsequent works, out of pure grace, because of the sole merit, complete obedience, bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us for righteousness.

These treasures are offered us by the Holy Ghost in the promise of the holy Gospel; and faith alone is the only means by which we lay hold upon, accept, and apply, and appropriate them to ourselves. This faith is a gift of God, by which we truly learn to know Christ, our Redeemer, in the Word of the Gospel, and trust in Him, that for the sake of His obedience alone we have the forgiveness of sins by grace, are regarded as godly and righteous by God the Father, and are eternally saved. Therefore it is considered and understood to be the same thing when Paul says that we are justified by faith (Romans 3:28), or that faith is counted to us for righteousness (Romans 4:5), and when he says that we are made righteous by the obedience of One (Romans 5:19), or that by the righteousness of One justification of faith came to all men (Romans 5:18). For faith justifies, not for this cause and reason that it is so good a work and so fair a virtue, but because it lays hold of and accepts the merit of Christ in the promise of the holy Gospel; for this must be applied and appropriated to us by faith, if we are to be justified thereby. Therefore the righteousness which is imputed to faith or to the believer out of pure grace is the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, since He has made satisfaction for us to the Law, and paid for our sins. For since Christ is not man alone, but God and man in one undivided person, He was as little subject to the Law, because He is the Lord of the Law, as He had to suffer and die as far as His person is concerned. For this reason, then, His obedience, not only in suffering and dying, but also in this, that He in our stead was voluntarily made under the Law, and fulfilled it by this obedience, is imputed to us for righteousness, so that, on account of this complete obedience, which He rendered His heavenly Father for us, by doing and suffering, in living and dying, God forgives our sins, regards us as godly and righteous, and eternally saves us. This righteousness is offered us by the Holy Ghost through the Gospel and in the Sacraments, and is applied, appropriated, and received through faith, whence believers have reconciliation with God, forgiveness of sins, the grace of God, sonship, and heirship of eternal life.

Accordingly, the word *justify* here means to declare righteous and free from sins, and to absolve one from eternal punishment for the sake of Christ's righteousness, which is imputed by God to faith (Philippians 3:9). For this use and

understanding of this word is common in the Holy Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament. *Proverbs 17:15: He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just, even they both are abomination to the Lord. Isaiah 5:23: [Woe unto them] which justify the wicked for reward, and take away the righteousness of the righteous from him! Romans 8:33: Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, that is, absolves from sins and acquits.*

However, since the word *regeneration* is sometimes employed for the word *justification*, it is necessary that this word be properly explained, in order that the renewal which follows justification of faith may not be confounded with the justification of faith, but that they may be properly distinguished from one another.

For, in the first place, the word *regeneration* is used so as to comprise at the same time the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake alone, and the succeeding renewal which the Holy Ghost works in those who are justified by faith. Then, again, it is sometimes used so as to mean only the remission of sins, and that we are adopted as sons of God. And in this latter sense the word is much and often used in the Apology, where it is written: "Justification before God is regeneration."

***This faith is a gift of God, by which we truly learn to know Christ, our Redeemer, in the Word of the Gospel, and trust in Him, that for the sake of His obedience alone we have the forgiveness of sins by grace, are regarded as godly and righteous by God the Father, and are eternally saved.***

St. Paul, too, has employed these words as distinct from one another. *Titus 3:5: He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost.* As also the word *vivificatio*, that is, making alive, has sometimes been used in a like sense. For when man is justified through faith (which the Holy Ghost alone works), this is truly a regeneration, because from a child of wrath he becomes a child of God, and thus is transferred from death to life, as it is written: *When we were dead in sins, He hath quickened us together with Christ (Ephesians 2:5).* Likewise: *The just shall live by faith (Romans 1:17, Habakkuk 2:4).* In this sense the word is much and often used in the Apology.

But again, it is often taken also for sanctification and renewal, which succeeds the righteousness of faith, as Dr. Luther has thus used it in his book concerning the Church and the Councils, and elsewhere.

But when we teach that through the operation of the Holy Ghost we are born anew and justified, the sense is not that after regeneration no unrighteousness clings any more to the justified and regenerate in their being and life, but that Christ covers all their sins which nevertheless in this life still inhere in nature with His complete obedience. But irrespective of this they are declared and regarded godly and righteous by faith and for the sake of Christ's obedience (which Christ rendered the Father for us from His birth to His most ignominious death upon the cross), although, on account of their corrupt nature, they still are and remain sinners to the

grave. Nor, on the other hand, is this the meaning, that without repentance, conversion, and renewal we might or should yield to sins, and remain and continue in them.

For true contrition must precede; and to those who, in the manner stated, out of pure grace, for the sake of the only Mediator, Christ, without any works and merit, are righteous before God, that is, are received into grace, the Holy Ghost is also given, who renews and sanctifies them, and works in them love to God and to their neighbor. But since the incipient renewal is imperfect in this life, and sin still dwells in the flesh, even in the regenerate, the righteousness of faith before God consists in the gracious imputation of the righteousness of Christ, without the addition of our works, so that our sins are forgiven us and covered, and are not imputed (Romans 4:6-8).

But here very good attention must be given with especial diligence, if the article of justification is to remain pure, lest that which precedes faith, and that which follows after it, be mingled together or inserted into the article of justification as necessary and belonging to it, because it is not one or the same thing to speak of conversion and of justification.

For not everything that belongs to conversion belongs likewise to the article of justification, in and to which belong and are necessary only the grace of God, the merit of Christ, and faith, which receives this in the promise of the Gospel, whereby the righteousness of Christ is imputed to us, whence we receive and have forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God, sonship, and heirship of eternal life.

Therefore true, saving faith is not in those who are without contrition and sorrow, and have a wicked purpose to remain and persevere in sins; but true contrition precedes, and genuine faith is in or with true repentance.

Love is also a fruit which surely and necessarily follows true faith. For the fact that one does not love is a sure indication that he is not justified, but is still in death, or has lost the righteousness of faith again, as John says (1 John 3:14). But when Paul says (Romans 3:28): We are justified by faith without works, he indicates thereby that neither the contrition that precedes, nor the works that follow, belong in the article or transaction of justification by faith. For good works do not precede justification, but follow it, and the person must first be justified before he can do good works. ~

## On the Sacrament and Love

*Martin Luther*

Whoever is in despair, distressed by a sin-stricken conscience or terrified by death or carrying some other burden upon his heart, if he would be rid of them all, let him go joyfully to the sacrament of the altar and lay down his woe in the midst of the community and seek help from the entire company of the spiritual body—just as a citizen whose property has suffered damage or misfortune at the hands of his enemies makes complaint to his town council and fellow citizens and asks them for help. The immeasurable grace and mercy of God are given us in this sacrament to the end that we might put from us all misery and tribulation [anfechtung] and lay it upon the community, and especially on Christ. Then we may with joy find strength and comfort, and say, “Though I am a sinner and have fallen, though this or that misfortune has befallen me, nevertheless I will go to the sacrament to receive a sign from God that I have on my side Christ’s righteousness, life, and sufferings, with all holy angels and the blessed in heaven and all pious men on earth. If I die, I am not alone in death; if I suffer, they suffer with me. [I know that] all my misfortune is shared with Christ and the saints, because I have a sure sign of their love toward me.” See, this is the benefit to be derived from this sacrament; this is the use we should make of it. Then the heart cannot but rejoice and be strengthened.

When you have partaken of this sacrament, therefore, or desire to partake of it, you must in turn share the misfortunes of the fellowship, as has been said. But what are these? Christ in heaven and the angels, together with the saints, have no misfortunes, except when injury is done to the truth and to the Word of God. Indeed, as we have said, every bane and blessing of all the saints on earth affects them. Here your heart must go out in love and learn that this is a sacrament of love. As love and support are given you, you in turn must render love and support to Christ in his needy ones. You must feel with sorrow all the dishonor done to Christ in his holy Word, all the misery of Christendom, all the unjust suffering of the innocent, with which the world is everywhere filled to overflowing. You must fight, work, pray, and—if you cannot do more—have heartfelt sympathy. See, this is what it means to bear in your turn the misfortune and adversity of Christ and his saints. Here the saying of Paul is fulfilled, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” [Gal. 6:2]. See, as you uphold all of them, so they all in turn uphold you; and all things are in common, both good and evil. Then all things become easy, and the evil spirit cannot stand up against this fellowship.

### STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION (Required by 39 U.S.C. 3685)

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*Anders Sundqvist, Business Manager*



# What Is God's Will?

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

Have you ever heard someone ask the question: *How do I know God's will for my life?* This person may have the understanding that there is one way, one path that God has chosen for them, and they must find that path or miss being in the center of God's perfect will.

**O**NE THING WE KNOW ABOUT the will of God is that He puts us in specific families, in specific positions in our lives. He gives us different interests, different strengths and weaknesses, and we can live at peace within our callings on this earth.

Luther's Small Catechism lists several vocations in a person's life in the section on Confession and Absolution: "Here consider your station in the light of the Ten Commandments, whether you are a father, mother, son, daughter, master, mistress, servant..."

We have all been children of parents, though some parents are no longer living on this earth. God wills that we would honor our parents and superiors... actually He *commands* that we honor them (Ephesians 6:1-2).

On the other hand, some of us are parents. God wills that we love and care for our children, and that we do not provoke them to anger or cause them to stumble in faith. God wills that we raise our children to know Him, that we would instruct them in the things of God. God wills that our children would grow up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Some of us supervise or lead a team at our place of employment, while others are led by a supervisor. God wills that we do our duty faithfully and honestly, serving our employer and coworkers well (Ephesians 6:5-9).

God may not will you to work at a specific job, or to live in a certain city, or to marry a certain person. He gives us a free will concerning these things in this earthly kingdom. We ought to make our decisions about such things carefully and prayerfully, considering what would bring honor to the name of Jesus. Ask your pastor or parents or spouse for their help in making decisions that will have life-long consequences.

After the Apostle Paul wrote the instruction for parents, children, masters and servants, he said this:



*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

**Ephesians 6:10-20**

Another thing—the greatest thing—we understand about the will of God is that He desires that all people would be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:4). The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, but is patient toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9). All people will not be saved, though, because not all will come to repentance and faith. The preaching of the Gospel is vastly important. People will not hear the Word and believe, if there is no preaching. We ought to pray that God would send laborers into His harvest, so that more souls would hear and believe the Gospel. We ought also to speak to our neighbors and friends of the grace of God found in Christ Jesus.

We pray in the Lord's Prayer: *Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven* (Matthew 6:10). Here is the explanation of this petition from the Catechism:

"What is meant by this? The good and gracious will of God is done indeed without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may be done also among us.

"How is this done? When God defeats and hinders every evil counsel and purpose, which would not let us hallow God's Name nor let His kingdom come, such as the will of the devil, the world, and our own flesh; but strengthens and keeps us steadfast in His Word and in faith unto our end. This is His gracious, and good will." ~

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## Faith Pleases God

R. D. Preus

**G**OD IS PLEASED WITH THE Christian's faith not because faith is a virtue, but for Christ's sake, because Christ is the object of the faith; he is pleased with the Christian's life, not because of the nobility or value of his works, but again for Christ's sake, because the believing sinner stands and lives before God in the imputed righteousness of Christ. Even the Christian's worship pleases God, not because of its intensity or sincerity or outward form, but for Christ's sake.

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

Hebrews 11:1-7

### Book Recommendation: Lutheran Book of Prayer

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

Sometimes we may not know what or how to pray in a particular situation. When we are faced with trials and temptations, or when life's circumstances overwhelm us, it can be difficult to form thoughts and words, even to our loving heavenly Father.

I have found the *Lutheran Book of Prayer* very helpful and comforting. There are four weeks of morning and evening prayers included, and beyond the daily prayers are prayers for worship, festivals and times of the Church year, the Church and her work, vocation, the table of duties, and some psalms.

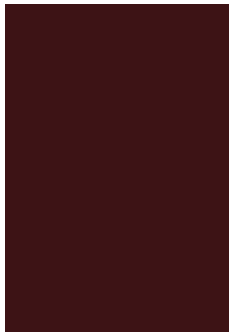
Amazon says:

"*Lutheran Book of Prayer* has assured and guided generations of Christians in their personal prayer life. This fifth edition speaks to the unique needs of contemporary Christians, and strengthens and informs readers as they go to God in prayer. Personal prayers are included for almost any life circumstance, including for morning and evening, worship, our world, our neighbors, ourselves, and the sick.

"Additional features:

- Topical index for prayers
- Selected psalms
- Nicene and Athanasian Creeds
- Ribbon bookmark

"This book makes a great gift! The cover can be imprinted and a presentation page is included."



### Where the Water Meets the Shore

Gordon Kuusisto  
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

I see Jesus at the sea of grace  
Where I so often go;  
I see Him as I wet my feet  
Where the water meets the shore.

I bring to Jesus all my sin  
And all my trials here;  
He sinks them all and comforts me  
And tells me not to fear.

And as I walk to meet Him  
Upon that crimson tide,  
I keep my eyes on Jesus Christ  
So I won't slip or slide.

Oft times when I forget  
To give Him all of my despair,  
I notice that I'm wading deep  
Held down by all my cares.

But then I hear a gentle call  
Telling me to come;  
I feel the weight fall off my back  
I'm lifted once again.