

February 2021

Rejoice Evermore

1 Thessalonians 5:16

Alvin Holmgren
March 2000 CM

REJOICE EVERMORE. The Gospel message is a joyful sound! The day of the new covenant was ushered in by the announcement: *Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy. (Luke 2:10)* The long-awaited day had come. The prophecy was fulfilled. The seed of the woman had come to bruise the head of the serpent. The promise given to Abraham was realized: *And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed. (Genesis 22:18)*



Christianity is joy! Joy proceeds from the certainty that, through Christ, we have access to God, the Father. In Christ we have forgiveness for all our sins. Christian joy grows out of a personal faith in the Savior. This joy cannot grow in any other soil. Many people in the world consider Christianity to be dull—just a life of sacrifice and tears. They view Christians as having no freedom. Because they think we have no freedom, they also think we have no joy.

Why do they think this way? Because they have not experienced the emancipating power of the Gospel. Without having felt this power, they cannot possibly know the joy of salvation. The very essence of the Gospel is experienced in its ability to deliver us from the bondage of sin, and to rescue us from the wages of sin. When we believe that Gospel, the joy of the Lord becomes our strength.

This joy is not mere human sentiment. It is that deep and enduring joy, anchored at Calvary, where the sin debt was paid in full. It is also in the Lord's resurrection, where the joyous and life-giving message of the Gospel was extended to us by our blessed Savior. He said, *Because I live, ye shall live also. (John 14:19)*

Now I don't mean to say that there are no tears in a Christian's life. Tears also belong to us. It has been rightly said that the joy that cannot weep is a joy that is suspended in space, a joy that has no foundation. Our lives are described in the Holy Bible in these words: *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. (2 Corinthians 6:10)*

Joy in the Lord and sorrow over sin are inseparably bound. Tears are the anchors of gladness. In the midst of sorrow, a child of God can rejoice with sanctified joy. It is even possible that our joy in God is the purest and strongest when we walk through the valley of tribulation.

There is another truth that I must mention. It is this: joy in the Lord is not something we can produce. It is the Holy Spirit who creates this joy; it is one of the fruits of the Spirit.

It has been said that the joy and thanksgiving are like twins. In looking back upon your experience, if you returned to the Father's house as a prodigal, was the festival celebrating your return one of sorrow in remembrance of what you have wasted in your life of sin? No, I am sure there was rejoicing, as is recorded in the well-known parable of the Prodigal Son. There was music and dancing because he had returned, and the Father had received him safe and sound. The servants brought out the best robe and put it on him. He was given a ring for his hand and shoes for his feet. The fatted calf was brought forth, and the celebration was one of great happiness.

My friends, friends of Jesus, there is joy in a Christian life, a joy that is our strength. We rejoice, as Jesus said, because our names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. We rejoice because we believe we are included in the multitude written of in the last book of the Bible: a multitude that no man could number, who had come out of great tribulation, and had washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. This is a multitude of blood-washed saints from whose eyes God will wipe away all tears.

Yes, my friends, we have reason to rejoice today and tomorrow and every day. Yes, we have reason to REJOICE EVERMORE. ~



Crowned with Loving Kindness

C.O. Rosenius

Bless the Lord, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his

benefits: Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases; Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies; Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed. He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

Psalm 103:1-7

WHEN GOD FORGIVES A MAN all his sins, and heals all his shortcomings, then he has been not only preserved from wrath and condemnation, but also, is immediately the object of the most inconceivable love on the part of God, the great, divine love which passeth knowledge. He embraces him with a heartfelt love such as that of a tender mother to her baby, or that of a loving bridegroom to his bride. This is the most wonderful and glorious thing God has revealed in the Holy Writ. It contains many wonderful words about this. As Christ Himself says plainly that "joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth," the way it was with the father of the prodigal son, when he was allowed to see him again. And in Isaiah 62 it says: *As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.* And again: *Thou shalt be called Hephzibah... for the Lord delighteth in thee.* And the Lord Himself says about His faithful: *Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good.* Or first: *And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.* *Yea, I will rejoice over them to do them good...* (Jeremiah 32:40-41) And the Lord says again: *O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee?...For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice.* (Hosea 6:4-6)

And in Matthew 9, Christ showed clearly that the heart of God with such love embraces all that come to the Lord, even though extremely unworthy sinners. Because when the Pharisees murmured against His great kindness to publicans and sinners, He replied: "Go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." The one who believes on Him, even if he is a most unclean publican and sinner, will immediately be most sincerely loved. And that man will henceforth for all his life be carried most graciously in the bosom of the mercy of God, and be preserved from all evil. His soul is forever free from internal depravity. It has been redeemed by a kinsman. And his temporal life will enjoy an

especially gracious care by the same kinsman, our Savior. Yes, on all sides he will be surrounded by the benefactions and mercy of God, the way a golden crown surrounds, covers and adorns the head. This is the meaning of the words: *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies.* Because the Hebrew word for "redeemeth" means that a kinsman cares so much for his relatives that if necessary he redeems them.

What follows next in our psalm also belongs to the same gracious care on the part of God. *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* As the eagle is renewed when its old feathers fall away, and he gets new ones again, so also we are renewed when the Lord refreshes our soul with comfort. And if the Lord does not give the gift of faith, we cannot possibly have real comfort and peace. He is the Author and Finisher of our faith. Furthermore, if somebody oppresses or judges us in an unjust way, the Lord judges rightly, protects and helps us in our cause. As it says here: *The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* For instance: our most respected enemies revile us most bitterly. They distort our words and boldly call us heterodox and false Christians. And we keep silent though we would often be able to rebut their reviling in clear words. We keep silent and behave "as a deaf man that heareth not, as a dumb man in whose mouth are no reproofs (Psalm 38)." Still God executes our cause so gloriously that it grows more and more, and our adversaries become more and more commonly known for what they are. All this is only the result of the Lord's faithfulness, if we can only believe and rest and wait upon Him. *The Lord executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.* How graciously and faithfully and kindly did not the Lord behave toward Moses and the children of Israel? *He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.*

Thus we now have the great advantage that we need not be uncertain about the will and intention of God. Let us reflect upon the fact that God Himself has revealed Himself on earth. He Himself has spoken and said what His will and counsel are, as regards our salvation. Moreover, He has shown by glorious deeds who He was. He has proved to be that Almighty Himself, that Creator Himself. If only we reflect upon this, then we will not go about and guess and think at random as to the will and intention of God with us. No, we should only look into the Word of God. There we shall see His ways and His heart. And there we shall become as certain about what God thinks of us, as if the judgment had already been declared. Oh, what great grace! ~

Jesus Will Be There

Though darker, rougher, grows the way,
And cares press harder day by day,
And nothing satisfies.
The promise sure before me lies
Of that blest place beyond the skies
Where Jesus waits for me.

With sight too dim to visualize
The scene, though spread before my eyes,
I know it will be fair;
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
The things that are for us prepared,
But Jesus will be there.

Robert R. Pentecost

No Other Doctrine

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

As I besought thee to abide still at Ephesus, when I went into Macedonia, that thou mightest charge some that they teach no other doctrine, Neither give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which minister questions, rather than godly edifying which is in faith: so do. Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; 7 Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm... And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.

1 Timothy 1:3-7, 12-17

THE APOSTLE BEGINS THIS EPISTLE by charging Timothy to remain committed to the teaching of “no other doctrine” than that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul tells Timothy that he is to give no “heed to fables and endless genealogies,” which only cause questions and uncertainty, instead of edifying the body of Christ.

The Gospel is not about what we do for God, but what God has done for us in Christ. At the heart of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the message of grace. Paul clearly spells this out in sharing the example of his own life. Paul was “a blasphemer, and a persecutor and injurious,” seeking to destroy the church. But God was merciful to Paul. He says:

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

In other words, Paul says that God was merciful to Him, so that we might know that God grants mercy to everyone. It is this message of grace that changed the life of Paul and that the world needs to hear. May God grant us grace to heed “no other doctrine” than that of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Yours in Christ.

In the Twinkling of an Eye

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:51-58

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED THE DURATION of the twinkling of an eye? (Twinkle, as it is used here, is a synonym for “blink.”) How long does it take to blink? However you may measure it, it’s very fast. When Christ returns to the earth again it will take that amount of time for us to be changed to be like Him. This is how complete His victory is over sin, death and the devil; there’s no agonizing or prolonged process but a change in a moment. The victory is Christ’s and when He returns we will receive the full benefit of His victory in an instant.

The ancient church fathers understood this reality and they lived their lives in a reflection of it. In their awareness of the finished work of Christ they had a clear sense of eternity, that everything would change in a moment, but once the change was complete there would be an eternity of unchangeableness. Right now times in our world are difficult: budgets are strained, political situations are in flux, there are conflicts all around us, and the future, in the estimation of many, is bleak and uncertain. Sadly, that simply shows that the world has the wrong view of reality. The fathers had the right one: they knew that the times were always in God’s hands and they also knew that they themselves were held preciously in those same mighty hands. They lived in the assurance of the promise of a day that would be brighter than the finite mind could imagine and, with that day in mind, they persevered through tribulation.

May God grant that we sense the power of His hands that uphold us even now, the hands from which no man is able to pluck us (John 10:29). *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)*

God’s peace.

Jesus, Twelve Years Old and Filled with Wisdom

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

I would like to wish you all a very blessed new year in the Lord. It has been quite a year for everyone. I do pray the new year is good. The most important thing is to keep Jesus in your heart and in your life. God controls everything, and we can rest in that.

I want to share with you the only account of Jesus' boyhood that is recorded in the Bible. It is found in St. Luke 2:40-52.

JESUS WAS GOD'S SON, AND God was with Him. God protected Him from being killed by Herod, helped Him to grow strong in spirit, made Him wise, and God's grace was upon Him.

I'm sure you remember the account in the Old Testament in Exodus when Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt for good. Remember how Pharaoh kept refusing to let the people go, and God sent ten plagues upon Pharaoh's people. In the last plague, the angel of death was to come, and the oldest child in each home was going to die. The night before this was to happen, the Israelites were instructed to kill a choice lamb, cook it, eat it and put its blood on the outside door posts and across the top door post of their houses. God told Moses that when this was done, the death angel would not bring any death to that home, but it would "pass over." It went just as God planned. His people were safe, but of Pharaoh's people, the oldest child died, even in Pharaoh's house. This killing of the lamb was to be a yearly celebration from this point on for all generations of God's people.

Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. (Luke 2:41-42)

The Passover celebration was taking place and Jesus was to go with His parents to be part of it. It was a big deal to be going, and they had to travel three days to Jerusalem. They would walk, and many other travelers and acquaintances walked along with them. They would stop by the side of the road and picnic along the way. At night if the weather was favorable, they would sleep under the stars, or perhaps there were homes where they could stay. It was definitely a journey that was very memorable.

When they were gathered together during the feast days, they would once again be reminded of the flight from Egypt so MANY hundred years before. They would thank God for protecting them.

After the feast days were over Joseph and Mary started their walk back home. There were many people with them,

all traveling together. Joseph and Mary had supposed that Jesus was among the people, not bothering to check to make sure He had come along. Only after traveling for a whole day, when they had stopped to rest for the night, did they realize that Jesus was not with them. He had actually stayed behind in Jerusalem. After looking for Him among the crowd and not finding Him, they turned back to Jerusalem.

They looked for three days around the city of Jerusalem and finally found Jesus in the temple, sitting in the middle of doctors (wise men), listening to them and asking them questions.

And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. (Luke 2:47-48)

Jesus' parents were very worried about their Son as they had no idea what had happened to Him. That is how we parents are, as we love our children and don't want any harm to come to them. Quite often, too, children will do things that worry their parents, but they don't think about that.

What was Jesus' reply to His parents? *How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not (did you not know) that I must be about my Father's business (doing God's work)? (Luke 2:49)*

They did not understand what Jesus said, and Mary could only think about it in her heart.

God had work for Jesus to do already at twelve years of age. Jesus was being obedient to His Father's will. Jesus was also obedient to His earthly parents. As He saw their love for Him and their desire to have Him come home with them, He went with them to Nazareth. *And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2:52)*

Jesus was a child like any other child in many ways, but we know that He was sent to earth in a very special way and for a very special purpose. He began His Father God's work at this early age, but He went home with His parents and was obedient to them. He grew up to be a man and complete the work God had for Him, and that was to teach the people about God and

Himself and to die on the cross. He came to give His life in death, so that we would be saved.

We can't thank Him enough for this sacrifice. I pray we will follow Him all our days and one day get to live with Him forever. I'm thankful we were able to remember His birth once more even this Christmas, and my prayer is that we would remember it in our hearts and minds all throughout the year, and be thankful. Children, serve the Lord and He will help you to grow in Him.

In God's peace.



Jesus Found in the Temple
James Tissot, Wikimedia Commons

The Third Commandment

The Large Catechism

Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

The word holy day (*feiertag*) is rendered from the Hebrew word *sabbath* which properly signifies to rest, that is, to abstain from labor...

Now, in the Old Testament, God separated the seventh day, and appointed it for rest, and commanded that it should be regarded as holy above all others. As regards this external observance, this commandment was given to the Jews alone, that they should abstain from toilsome work, and rest, so that both man and beast might recuperate, and not be weakened by unremitting labor.

Although they afterwards restricted this too closely, and grossly abused it, so that they traduced and could not endure in Christ those works which they themselves were accustomed to do on that day, as we read in the Gospel; just as though the commandment were fulfilled by doing no external, manual work whatever, which, however, was not the meaning, but, as we shall hear, that they sanctify the holy day or day of rest.

This commandment, therefore, according to its gross sense, does not concern us Christians; for it is altogether an external matter, like other ordinances of the Old Testament, which were attached to particular customs, persons, times, and places, and now have been made free through Christ.

But to grasp a Christian meaning for the simple as to what God requires in this commandment, note that we keep holy days not for the sake of intelligent and learned Christians (for they have no need of holy days), but first of all for bodily causes and necessities, which nature teaches and requires; for the common people, man-servants and maid-servants, who have been attending to their work and trade the whole week, that for a day they may retire in order to rest and be refreshed.

Secondly, and most especially, that on such day of rest (since we can get no other opportunity) freedom and time be taken to attend divine service, so that we come together to hear and treat of God's Word, and then to praise God, to sing and pray.

However, this, I say, is not so restricted to any time, as with the Jews, that it must be just on this or that day; for in itself no one day is better than another; but this should indeed be done daily; however, since the masses cannot give such attendance, there must be at least one day in the week set apart. But since from of old Sunday [the Lord's Day] has been appointed for this purpose, we also should continue the same, in order that everything be done in harmonious order, and no one create disorder by unnecessary innovation.

Therefore this is the simple meaning of the commandment: since holidays are observed anyhow, such observance should be devoted to hearing God's Word, so that the special function of this day should be the ministry of the Word for the young and the mass of poor people; yet that the resting be not so strictly interpreted as to forbid any other incidental work that cannot be avoided.

Accordingly, when asked, What is meant by the commandment: Thou shalt sanctify the holy day? answer: To sanctify the holy day is the same as to keep it holy. But what is meant by keeping it holy? Nothing else than to be occupied

in holy words, works, and life. For the day needs no sanctification for itself; for in itself it has been created holy [from the beginning of the creation it was sanctified by its Creator]. But God desires it to be holy to you. Therefore it becomes holy or unholy on your account, according as you are occupied on the same with things that are holy or unholy.

How, then, does such sanctification take place? Not in this manner, that with folded hands we sit behind the stove and do no rough, external work, or deck ourselves with a wreath and put on our best clothes, but (as has been said) that we occupy ourselves with God's Word, and exercise ourselves therein.

And, indeed we Christians ought always to keep such a holy day, and be occupied with nothing but holy things, i.e., daily be engaged upon God's Word, and carry it in our hearts and upon our lips. But (as has been said) since we do not at all times have leisure, we must devote several hours a week for the sake of the young, or at least a day for the sake of the entire multitude, to being concerned about this alone, and especially urge the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, and thus direct our whole life and being according to God's Word.

At whatever time, then, this is being observed and practised, there a true holy day is being kept; otherwise it shall not be called a Christians' holy day. For, indeed, non-Christians can also cease from work and be idle, just as the entire swarm of our ecclesiastics, who stand daily in the churches, singing, and ringing bells but keeping no holy day holy, because they neither preach nor practise God's Word, but teach and live contrary to it.

For the Word of God is the sanctuary above all sanctuaries, yea, the only one which we Christians know and have. For though we had the bones of all the saints or all holy and consecrated garments upon a heap, still that would help us nothing; for all that is a dead thing which can sanctify nobody. But God's Word is the treasure which sanctifies everything, and by which even all the saints themselves were sanctified. At whatever hour, then, God's Word is taught, preached, heard, read or meditated upon, there the person, day, and work are sanctified thereby, not because of the external work, but because of the Word, which makes saints of us all.

Therefore I constantly say that all our life and work must be ordered according to God's Word, if it is to be God-pleasing or holy. Where this is done, this commandment is in force and being fulfilled...

On the contrary, any observance or work that is practised without God's Word is unholy before God, no matter how brilliantly it may shine, even though it be covered with relics, such as the fictitious spiritual orders, which know nothing of God's Word and seek holiness in their own works.

Note, therefore, that the force and power of this commandment lies not in the resting, but in the sanctifying, so that to this day belongs a special holy exercise. For other works and occupations are not properly called holy exercises, unless the man himself be first holy. But here a work is to be done by which man is himself made holy, which is done (as

we have heard) alone through God's Word. For this, then, fixed places, times, persons, and the entire external order of worship have been created and appointed, so that it may be publicly in operation.

Since, therefore, so much depends upon God's Word that without it no holy day can be sanctified, we must know that God insists upon a strict observance of this commandment, and will punish all who despise His Word and are not willing to hear and learn it, especially at the time appointed for the purpose.

Therefore not only those sin against this commandment who grossly misuse and desecrate the holy day, as those who on account of their greed or frivolity neglect to hear God's Word or lie in taverns and are dead drunk like swine; but also that other crowd, who listen to God's Word as to any other trifle, and only from custom come to preaching, and go away again, and at the end of the year know as little of it as at the beginning.

For hitherto the opinion prevailed that you had properly hallowed Sunday when you had heard a mass or the Gospel read; but no one cared for God's Word, as also no one taught it. Now, while we have God's Word, we nevertheless do not correct the abuse; we suffer ourselves to be preached to and admonished, but we listen without seriousness and care.

Know, therefore, that you must be concerned not only about hearing, but also about learning and retaining it in memory, and do not think that it is optional with you or of no great importance, but that it is God's commandment, who will require of you how you have heard, learned, and honored His Word.

Likewise those fastidious spirits are to be reproved who, when they have heard a sermon or two, find it tedious and dull, thinking that they know all that well enough, and need no more instruction. For just that is the sin which has been hitherto reckoned among mortal sins, and is called *ajkhdia*, i.e., torpor or satiety, a malignant, dangerous plague with which the devil bewitches and deceives the hearts of many, that he may surprise us and secretly withdraw God's Word from us.

For let me tell you this, even though you know it perfectly and be already master in all things, still you are daily in the dominion of the devil, who ceases neither day nor night to steal unawares upon you, to kindle in your heart unbelief and wicked thoughts against the foregoing and all the commandments. Therefore you must always have God's Word in your heart, upon your lips, and in your ears. But where the heart is idle, and the Word does not sound, he breaks in and has done the damage before we are aware.

On the other hand, such is the efficacy of the Word, whenever it is seriously contemplated, heard, and used, that it is bound never to be without fruit, but always awakens new understanding, pleasure, and devoutness, and produces a pure heart and pure thoughts. For these words are not inoperative or dead, but creative, living words.

And even though no other interest or necessity impel us, yet this ought to urge every one thereunto, because thereby the devil is put to Right and driven away, and, besides, this commandment is fulfilled, and this exercise in the Word is more pleasing to God than any work of hypocrisy, however brilliant. ~

Sweetest Name on Mortal Tongue

Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan
Submitted by Ralph & Barbara Somero
New Ipswich, New Hampshire



The Meeting of Mary and Elizabeth
C. H. Bloch, Wikimedia Commons

And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost: And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

Luke 1:41-42

IT WAS THE NEWS OF the Savior, the story of Jesus, the gospel of salvation that John heard in his mother's womb and he leaped for joy. Even Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost and spake out with a loud voice, *Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* And she also said, *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* She did not feel worthy that the mother of Jesus would bear these tidings to her.

How is it for us, dear friends? Does our heart leap when we hear the story of Jesus? Is He to us the "sweetest note in seraph song, sweetest name on mortal tongue, sweetest carol ever sung, Jesus, blessed Jesus"? God grant that our hearts would sing this Christmas season in the gift of Jesus and the knowledge of His Redemption! ~

New Mailing Address!

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Effective January 31, 2021, subscriptions, payments, and Book Concern orders, and articles for submission to the *Christian Monthly*, may be sent to the following address:

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Thank you!



Unsearchable Riches

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words, Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel: Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ**; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, **according to the riches of his glory**, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints **what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height**; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be **filled with all the fulness of God**. Now unto him that is able to do **exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think**, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Ephesians 3

PAUL WAS MADE A MINISTER of the Holy Gospel, not through his own efforts or by his own will, but according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to him by the working of the Holy Spirit. To Paul this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ**, and to bring to light God's mysterious plan that had been hidden since the world began. Paul was given the grace to proclaim the Light of the world to the Gentiles.

The **unsearchable riches of Christ** are so wide and long and deep and high that they are much more than we can

humanly comprehend. We stumble around in the dark and bump into things until the Light is turned on for us. Then we are able to understand, in some small sense, the great mystery of God's plan. The power of the Holy Spirit makes known, through the life-giving and unsearchable riches of the Word, the abundance of God's grace toward us.



The mystery that Paul proclaims is the Gospel, the Good News that God is not angry with His fallen sons. We've been purchased from the power of the devil and the bondage of death by the holy, precious blood of Christ. The Word brings us this Life and Light, through the mouths of the human servants of God Himself.

Paul prayed for the Ephesian congregation, that God would grant them, **according to the riches of His glory**, to be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit. He prayed that Christ would dwell in their hearts by faith, that being rooted and grounded in love they would be able to comprehend, with all the saints, that richness which is so wide and long and deep and high! He prayed for them **to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge**, and for them **to be filled with all the fullness of God**. There is no lack of knowledge in the love of Christ which passes knowledge, and there is no emptiness in the fullness of God!

These unsearchable riches cause Paul to burst out in a thankful doxology, or hymn of praise, to God. Paul uses more superabundant language in this doxology. To God, Who is able to do **exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think**, according to the power of the Spirit that works in us, to Him be glory in the Church, and in Christ Jesus through all ages, world without end. Amen.

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The Difference Between the Law and the Gospel

*Submitted by Phebe Johnson; Astoria, Oregon
Found among her father's papers*

The Law says: This do and thou shalt live. (Luke 10:28)

The Gospel says: Live and thou shalt do. (Romans 8:1)

Law: Pay me that thou owest. (Matthew 18:28)

Gospel: I frankly forgive thee all. (Luke 7:42)

Law: *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* (Matthew 22:37)

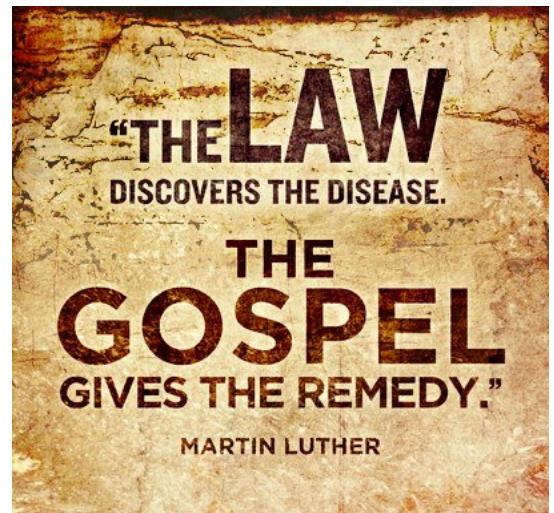
Gospel: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.* (1 John 4:10)

Law: *Cursed is everyone who continueth not in all the things written in the book of the law to do them.* (Galatians 3:10)

Gospel: *Blessed is the man whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered.* (Psalm 32:1-2, Romans 4:7)

Law: *The wages of sin is death.* (Romans 6:23)

Gospel: *The gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ, our Lord.* (Romans 6:23)



The Law demands holiness. The Gospel gives holiness.

The Law says do. The Gospel says done.

The Law extorts the unwilling service of a bondman. The Gospel wins the loving service of a son and free man.

The Law makes blessings the result of obedience. The Gospel makes obedience the result of blessing.

The Law places the day of rest at the end of the week's work. The Gospel places it at the beginning.

The Law says "if." The Gospel says "therefore."

The Law was given for the restraint of the old man. The Gospel was given to bring liberty to the new man.

Under the Law, salvation was wages. Under the Gospel, salvation is a gift. ~

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Isaiah 53:6

HERE WE HAVE THE ENTIRE STORY of the Bible epitomized: man's ruin both by nature and practice; and God's marvelous and all-sufficient remedy. The verse begins with **all** and ends with **all**. The first is the acknowledgment of our deep need. The second shows how fully that need has been met in the cross of Christ. Happy are we to be numbered among those who have put in their claim and found salvation through the atoning work which there took place!

"I was lost, but Jesus found me, Found the sheep that went astray;
Threw his loving arms around me, Brought me back into his way."

H. A. Ironside