

# 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.**

January 2019

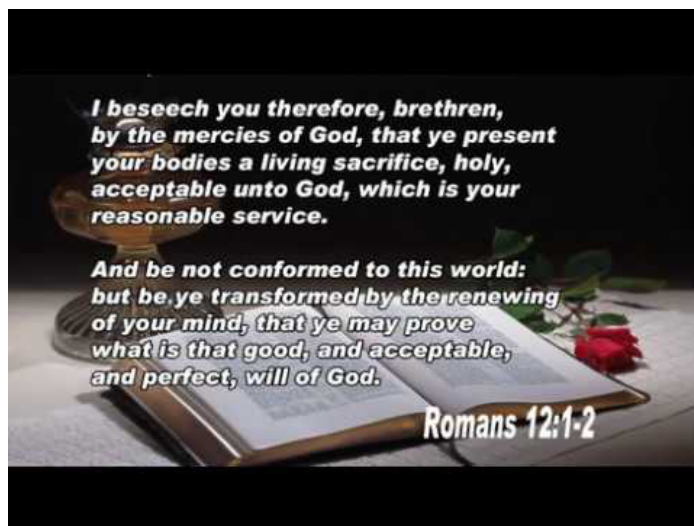
## Serving the Lord!

Pastor Rod Johnson  
Laurium, Michigan

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

**Romans 12:1-2**

**O**UR CHRISTIANITY IS EXPRESSED IN LOVE toward God as well as in love toward our neighbor. These working together are spiritual acts of worship because through them we are serving God. This should not be considered a heavy demand but rather done with a willing heart, mind, and spirit in love. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live our Christianity—not only believing and thinking about it, but also faith expressing itself in love and obedience to the Word of God, with Jesus Christ being Lord of every area of our life.



The Apostle Paul gives guidelines for living as a redeemed people in a fallen world. As a result of the work of grace, having received the gift of faith, the Word implores us that we become living sacrifices because we possess a new life in the Holy Spirit; that we may be able to follow Jesus daily

laying aside our own human desires. This we endeavor to do out of gratitude that our sins have been forgiven through the blood of the cross of Jesus Christ. A living sacrifice of love without hypocrisy!

Our reasonable service, which is a spiritual act of worship, is not a mere ritual activity but the involvement of heart, mind and will. Not a pronouncement of a great spiritual dictate or command, but rather an encouragement to so live life as Jesus Christ directs us, loving our neighbor as we love ourselves. *Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.* (Romans 6:4)

We are led to become a transformed people by the renewing of the mind, living to honor and obey the Lord Jesus. Being transformed is to exhibit a markedly changed nature: of thought and will relating to morality, God's Word, our neighbor and our attitudes. We are changed from self-serving, selfish, greedy, lustful, vengeful, angry sinners to those who are under the control of the Holy Spirit, endeavoring to live by the Spirit in love to God and man. Why? Because He gave His Son to make this new life possible. Therefore, we should with joy give ourselves for His service.

The threefold enemy—the devil, the world and our flesh—constantly project the world's immorality with its corruptive ways into our lives. Therefore not conforming to this world's values ought to go deeper than the level of behavior and customs; it should also be firmly planted in our minds—by the transforming of the mind. We recognize that it is possible to avoid many worldly customs and still be proud, covetous, selfish, stubborn, and arrogant. Only by the Holy Spirit's renewal can we be truly transformed. *For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.* (Romans 8:5)

By so living...ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God, and that Jesus Christ is Lord because the world can see we are Christians by our love. *By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* (John 13:35)

*Serving the Lord together with you in Christ Jesus,  
God's peace!*

# Christ in You, the Hope of Glory

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

*And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from **the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven;** whereof I Paul am made a minister; Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church: Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: **To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory:** Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Whereunto I also labour, striving according to his working, which worketh in me mightily. (Colossians 1:21-29)*

Hope is a word that we use quite frequently in our daily speaking. We use it mostly to convey what we are wishing for in the sense of "I hope I get a good report on my test" or "I hope I get a raise at work." It carries a sense of a wishful thought with a reasonable expectation that it will come to pass, or perhaps no real expectation at all.

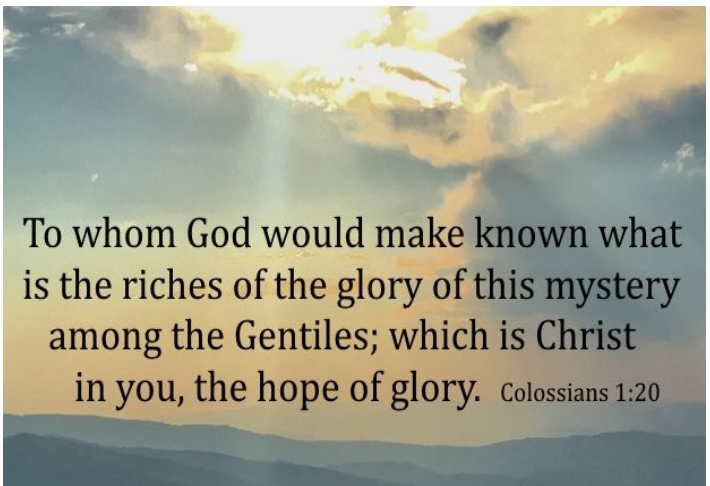
Hope as it is used in the Scriptures carries a different meaning: it speaks of a confident expectation. Hope is an essential characteristic of the Christian life, as we will see when we examine some of its uses in the Scriptures.

*Hebrews 6:17-20: Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, **we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul,** both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. Our hope serves as an anchor for our soul, which means that it extends beyond this life into the eternal. Jesus has entered into heaven itself to appear in the presence of God for us: In Christ we have access to the gracious Father. Our hope is secure in Christ who went the way of the cross in order to anchor our hope securely behind the veil into heaven itself.*

We now are living in hope because what we are cannot be fully seen. We live between the times, meaning that we live between the time of the resurrection of Christ and the time of His Second Coming. We are members of an eschatological community (living in the end times) determined by the reality of a future that has already begun, but are still waiting its consummation or completion. *1 Peter 1:3-5: Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,** To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Not only are we living in hope, the confident expectation of*

His Coming, but our hope itself is living because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We have been brought into newness of life by the finished work of Christ. Christ Himself has brought us into new birth and thus into a living hope by which we now live.

The hope we live in does not put us to shame. The reality of Christian hope is based on two things: God's victory over evil in the death and resurrection of Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit. *Romans 5:1-5: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and **rejoice in hope of the glory of God.** And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: **And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts** by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. It is the Holy Spirit indwelling us that reminds us of the love of God. The hope that we have is not based on human effort or imaginations. It is based on the love of God as shown through the work of Christ. *Romans 5:8: But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.**



The object of Christian hope is the coming manifestation of Christ. What is now the ground of our hope will in that day be fully revealed. Hope insists that the Christian wait with eager longing for the great day when all of God's promises are fully realized. *Romans 8:24-25: **For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.*** Hope is an encouragement to believers in the midst of sufferings, but it also prevents believers from being content with their current circumstances. We always are mindful of the work of Christ on our behalf and the eternity that dwells within us now. Truly it is Christ in you, the hope of glory that makes our hope what it is. We are confident that this New Year will be good because of the hope we have in Christ. He is our hope, the anchor of our soul, our living hope, our hope that does not put us to shame, and our hope for the future. It is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Amen.

*Happy New Year and God's peace.*



# The Greatest Commandment

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

**E**VERYONE LIVES BY A MORAL CODE. We all have categories into which things fall; of right and wrong, good and bad. And, if you survey the people of the world, you will find that, while there are significant differences, that these categories have a great deal of overlap. For instance, every society in the world has some sort of an injunction against killing another person. And this holds true, even if some of those societies also have exceptions to that overall rule.

The Bible tells us why this is the case. In Romans 2:14-15, Paul writes that, even those who did not receive the special revelation of the law of God, have the law written on their hearts. And God did this so that all people everywhere would be, in some sense, restrained from absolute evil. In this way, the Lord has blessed all of humanity, by not completely removing His hand from them, thus allowing the full consequence of sin to run its course.

But to Israel, God spoke from heaven and gave more than just a general revelation of Himself. He gave them His law. He told them that, in keeping the law, a person would be righteous before Him.

Now, when the law of God is before a person, they have only two alternatives. The first is that they look at that law and they realize that they are hopelessly unable to live according to it. That, on every single point it condemns them because they do not, and cannot, keep it. And they are driven to despair. And it's this state of despair which prepares a heart to hear the Gospel gladly, and to cling to it as the only hope of salvation.

The other option is that a person can look at God's law and determine to keep it. So they go about redefining what is meant by every point of the law, so as to make sure that they are able to show that they measure up. And when they find themselves able to do so, they inevitably will find themselves proud that they are able to do what others cannot.

It was one of those who had taken the second path, who approached Jesus one day with a question: *Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.* (Matthew 22:35-40)

This man wanted to test Jesus. He thought that he knew the commandments inside and out... after all, he was one of the Pharisees who felt that they kept the law. They had made every one of the commandments achievable. But Jesus' answer is perfect. He shows what true height one must achieve to keep God's law. After all, what person can say that they have loved the Lord their God with ALL their heart, ALL their soul and ALL their mind? None can truly claim this. Nor can any person claim that they have loved their neighbors as themselves.



Jesus knows that this lawyer is proud of being one who keeps the law, but in His mercy, He wants to show him that he can't. That he is condemned on all points. Jesus, in His explanation of the Commandments, would drive him to despair. Because it's only in despairing of oneself, that anyone can recognize their need of a Savior.

The moral codes of our day are shifting moment by moment. And it can be uncomfortable to tell people that there is an objective standard of right and wrong which opposes theirs. But the Christian church dare not shrink from clearly stating God's law to the unsaved world, because it is only in realizing that they stand condemned before that law, that people find that they need a Savior.

*May the Lord richly bless you.*

***And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6:9-10)***



Furthermore, if there is anything in us it is not our own; it is a gift of God. But if it is a gift of God, then it is entirely a debt we owe to love, that is, to the law of Christ. If it is a debt owed to love, then I must serve others with it. Thus my learning is not my own; it belongs to the unlearned and is the debt I owe to them. My chastity is not my own; it belongs to those who commit sins of the flesh, and I am obligated to serve them through it by offering it to God for them by sustaining and excusing them, and thus, with my respectability veiling their shame before God and men. Thus my wisdom belongs to the foolish, my power to the oppressed. Thus my wealth belongs to the poor, my righteousness to the sinners.

*Martin Luther*

# Seek the Lord with All Your Heart

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

**A** NEW YEAR AWAITS US. Christmas is past and the gifts have been opened, enjoyed, and probably set aside. But the Babe in the manger, namely Jesus, the best gift given will always remain the gift that one can enjoy being blessed by, over and over. Jesus is that gift that keeps on giving.

He gives us strength, peace, hope, new hearts, forgiveness, comfort, joy and more than I have paper to write. He always hears our prayers, feels all our ills, He sees when we are sad, He is glorified when He sees us walking and serving Him.

Jesus was born in a manger, to this earth a stranger.

There were many who welcomed Him and many who didn't.

He was threatened to be killed when He was a new Baby, and Joseph and Mary were warned by an angel to flee to other countries to save Him from harm.

Jesus was that Babe that the wise men from FAR away made the long journey to see, and they brought Him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. These gifts have a very special meaning.

Jesus, that young 12 year old boy who was filled with the Holy Ghost, sat talking, asking, and answering questions of the Bible-brilliant men, and His wisdom amazed the masses.

Jesus was an obedient son and served Joseph and Mary in their home.

Wherever He went, His knowledge from His Father God could not be stopped. He taught the people as He walked through the streets and the countryside. He was ever doing good, ever serving.

There were always those who followed Him, not to take His words to heart but to ridicule and accuse Him of teaching bad things.

There were always those who wanted to put Him to death.

This Jesus who we Christians say we serve desires that we follow Him. Hear Jesus in this verse: *St John 12:26: If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.*

Jesus would not want us to say we love and serve Him, and just live how we want, and just keep Him in the back of our minds and pray for help in trouble. No, He wants to be the leader in our lives and to have us happily follow Him.

God LOVED the people in the world so much that He sent us His only SON to be that Babe born in the manger. Jesus LOVED us so much that He did what pleased His Father God and came down as that Baby.

Jesus was loved by so many and hated by so many. It is still the same today. NOTHING in this world can ever take God or Jesus out of it. They are the great I AM. They always have been even before the foundation of the world. Jesus came that we might have life forever with Him in heaven.

I pray that you children, and all who say they love the Lord, would serve Him with your whole heart. I pray that we could all serve Him as He so deserves. He loves us so much and is willing to do anything for us. He waits every moment to hear your prayers and to do His Father's will for us. One day Jesus will break through the clouds and return to take His children to heaven. I pray that He will find us walking in truth.

**Only fear the Lord, and serve him in truth with all your heart: for consider  
HOW GREAT THINGS HE HATH DONE FOR YOU.**

**1 Samuel 12:24**

*Wishing you all a blessed and HAPPY NEW YEAR!  
God's peace.*



*The Adoration of the Wise Men by James Tissot*



# Of Love and the Fulfilling of the Law

Apology to the Augsburg Confession

**W**HEN WE HAVE BEEN JUSTIFIED by faith and regenerated, we begin to fear and love God, to pray to Him, to expect from Him aid, to give thanks and praise Him, and to obey Him in afflictions. We begin also to love our neighbors, because our hearts have spiritual and holy movements [there is now, through the Spirit of Christ a new heart, mind, and spirit within].

These things cannot occur until we have been justified by faith, and, regenerated, we receive the Holy Ghost: first, because the Law cannot be kept without [the knowledge of] Christ; and likewise the Law cannot be kept without the Holy Ghost. But the Holy Ghost is received by faith, according to the declaration of Paul, *Galatians 3:14: That we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.* Then, too, how can the human heart love God while it knows that He is terribly angry, and is oppressing us with temporal and perpetual calamities? But the Law always accuses us, always shows that God is angry. [Therefore, what the scholastics say of the love of God is a dream.] God therefore is not loved until we apprehend mercy by faith. Not until then does He become a lovable object.

Although, therefore, civil works, i.e., the outward works of the Law, can be done, in a measure, without Christ and without the Holy Ghost [from our inborn light], nevertheless it appears from what we have said that those things which belong peculiarly to the divine Law, i.e., the affections of the heart towards God, which are commanded in the first table, cannot be rendered without the Holy Ghost. But our adversaries are fine theologians; they regard the second table and political works; for the first table [in which is contained the highest theology, on which all depends] they care nothing, as though it were of no matter; or certainly they require only outward observances. They in no way consider the Law that is eternal, and placed far above the sense and intellect of all creatures [which concerns the very Deity, and the honor of the eternal Majesty], *Deuteronomy 6:5: Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thine heart.* [This they treat as such a paltry small matter as if it did not belong to theology.]

But Christ was given for this purpose, namely, that for His sake there might be bestowed on us the remission of sins, and the Holy Ghost to bring forth in us new and eternal life, and eternal righteousness [to manifest Christ in our hearts, as it is written (John 16:15): He shall take of the things of Mine, and show them unto you. Likewise, He works also other gifts, love, thanksgiving, charity, patience, etc.]. Wherefore the Law cannot be truly kept unless the Holy Ghost be received through faith. Accordingly, Paul says that the Law is established by faith, and not made void; because the Law can

only then be thus kept when the Holy Ghost is given. And Paul teaches, the veil that covered the face of Moses cannot be removed except by faith in Christ, by which the Holy Ghost is received. For he speaks thus: *But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart. Nevertheless when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away. Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. (2 Corinthians 3:15-17)* Paul understands by the veil the human opinion concerning the entire Law, the Decalog and the ceremonies, namely, that hypocrites think that external and civil works satisfy the Law of God, and that sacrifices and observances justify before God *ex opere operato*. But then this veil is removed from us, i.e., we are freed from this error when God shows to our hearts our uncleanness and the heinousness of sin. Then, for the first time, we see that we are far from fulfilling the Law. Then we learn to know how flesh, in security and indifference, does not fear God, and is not fully certain that we are regarded by God, but imagines that men are born and die by chance. Then we experience that we do not believe that God forgives and hears us. But when, on hearing the Gospel and the remission of sins, we are consoled by faith, we receive the Holy Ghost so that now we are able to think aright concerning God, and to fear and believe God, etc. From these facts it is apparent that the Law cannot be kept without Christ and the Holy Ghost.

We, therefore, profess that it is necessary that the Law be begun in us, and that it be observed continually more and more. And at the same time we comprehend both spiritual movements and external good works [the good heart within and works without]. Therefore the adversaries falsely charge against us that our theologians do not teach good works while they not only require these, but also show how they can be done [that the heart must enter into these works, lest they be mere, lifeless, cold works of hypocrites]. The result convicts hypocrites, who by their own powers endeavor to fulfil the Law, that they cannot accomplish what they attempt. [For are they free from hatred, envy, strife, anger, wrath, avarice, adultery, etc.? Why, these vices were nowhere greater than in the cloisters and sacred institutes.] For human nature is far too weak to be able by its own powers to resist the devil, who holds as captives all who have not been freed through faith. There is need of the power of Christ against the devil, namely, that, inasmuch as we know that for Christ's sake we are heard, and have the promise, we may pray for the governance and defense of the Holy Ghost, that we may neither be deceived and err, nor be impelled to undertake anything contrary to God's will. ~

## 2019 Apostolic Lutheran Church Calendars

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Corrie Karlsen, ALC Calendar Committee

# Arise, Shine, for Thy Light Is Come

Martin Luther

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

Isaiah 60:1-3

**T**HIS LESSON IS AN EXHORTATION TO FAITH. It also proclaims the future worldwide preaching of the Gospel and the gathering of Christians from all nations. The reference to the Gospel as a light, a brightness, a glory of the risen Jehovah, implies a distinction between the light of the Gospel and that of the Law.

This distinction should be carefully marked to avoid confounding the Gospel and the Law and terming “Gospel” what is Law and “Law” what is Gospel. Gospel is a proclamation of life, a doctrine of grace, a joy-giving light, promising and presenting Christ with all His blessings.

But the Law is a proclamation of death, a doctrine of wrath, a sorrow-yielding light, for it reveals our sins, demanding a righteousness we cannot produce. The conscience, recognizing that it deserves death and eternal wrath, is filled with sorrow and unrest. But this prophecy of Isaiah touches the wretched conscience in a cheering way. It reanimates it, fills it with joy and liberates it from the Law and from sin. *Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee.*

Why does Isaiah say “thy light” when God’s light is meant? At the same time it is God’s light, it is Jerusalem’s light and the light for us all. It is God’s because He gives it; it is ours in that we are enlightened by it and enjoy its rays.

Undoubtedly the prophecies of Isaiah and the other prophets concerning Christ almost universally have origin in the promise God made to Abraham: *In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.* (Genesis 22:18) These words clearly indicate that Christ, the seed of Abraham, is to be made known in all the world. For Christ to accomplish this in person was impossible; it must be done through the instrumentality of preaching. Not only was it necessary to proclaim the Gospel, but also to explain the character of the preaching—to show it a proclamation of blessings and of grace intended for the blessing of the whole world.

We have frequently spoken of the little word “glory.” It means honor, brightness, or splendor. The Gospel is simply a grand report, a noble cry, having origin in a glorious reality; it is not a mere empty proclamation. Thus the Gospel is God’s glory and our light. It is our light in that it reveals God to us. It is God’s glory in that it is the medium whereby His work—all His glorious doings—are proclaimed, extolled, recognized and honored in the whole world.

We learn from our text here what the Gospel is and what is its message. It is the coming of Light, the rising of divine glory. It speaks only of divine glory, divine honor and fame. It exalts only the work of God—His goodness and grace toward us. It teaches the necessity of our receiving God’s work for us,

His grace and goodness, even God Himself, if we would secure salvation. The Gospel produces in us a twofold effect. First, it rejects our natural reason, our human light. It conclusively shows them to be mere darkness. Had we within ourselves light instead of darkness, it would not be necessary for God to send the Light to rise upon us. Light enlightens, not light, but darkness. This epistle lesson forcibly expels and severely condemns all natural wisdom, all human reason, heathen arts and the doctrines and laws of man. Conclusively, these are absolute darkness, since it is necessary for the light to come. So we should guard against all human doctrines and the conceits of reason as darkness rejected and condemned by

God, and should wake and arise to behold only this Light, to follow it alone.

Second, the Gospel casts down all the glory of and pride in our own works, our efforts, our free will. We cannot draw comfort nor derive honor from these. On the contrary, they but contribute to our shame in the sight of God. If there were in ourselves anything worthy of honor and glory, vainly would the divine honor and glory rise upon us. Since the latter are called for, clearly there is in us nothing but what is productive of our shame. Paul says on this point: *All have sinned,*

*and come short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23) So the Gospel condemns all our efforts and exalts only the goodness and the grace of God—in other words, God Himself. It permits us to console ourselves only with Him and to glory in no other.

Divine light teaches us to trust in God, to believe in Him, to leave all to Him, to submit readily to His workings, to accept whatever in His providence may present, bearing all and performing every duty, and to serve our neighbor throughout life. With such faith there is no difference in works; all works are alike. Having faith, well may we serve God in erecting buildings, in planting and threshing, in performing any sort of external works. These things are the proper expression of faith, of divine light. God regards them as service to Him, as devotional conduct. So little, however, does human nature, man’s reason, know of the truth, that it proceeds to condemn this faith as error and heresy.

When the majority of the Jews refused to cultivate the fruits of the Gospel (and fruit essentially accompanies the Gospel), and continued in their blindness, the Gospel expanded into all the world, gathering the Gentiles in place of the blinded and fallen Jews.

Finally, Isaiah said that they should proclaim the praises of Jehovah. The true, the special, work of a Christian is to confess his sins and his shame, and to proclaim God’s grace and work in himself. No man who fails to behold God’s grace and this light of the Gospel can show forth God’s honor and praise. No man who clings to his own light, his own human nature, who values his own works and his own efforts, can perceive the grace of God. He continues in his old and blind nature of Adam. He does not rise to behold the light; he prefers to sound his own praises.

True Christians proclaim only the praises of Jehovah, and they are taught to do so undoubtedly by the light of grace and the Gospel. ~



# Love Your Neighbor

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

*Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but **thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**: I am the Lord. (Leviticus 19:17-18)*

*And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself**. There is none other commandment greater than these. (Mark 12:29-31)*

The motto of our day is "Love Yourself First!" We are encouraged to love ourselves so that we will have the resources within to love others. We are exhorted to become the best version of ourselves. We are told to acknowledge that we are unique and amazing, and there is no one else like us. We have been told, in so many words, to ignore the interests of others and to esteem our own interests.

This isn't a new concept.

The baby boomers have sometimes been called the Me Generation, but each decade since has had its own "self-focused" label: the rebels of the 1960s, the hedonists of the '70s, the egocentrics of the '80s, the cynics of the '90s, the social media millennials, the selfie generation... on and on it goes with each successive decade focused on themselves and their own successes, failures, glories and disasters.



What does the Scripture mean when it says to love our neighbor as ourselves... that we need to love ourselves first so that we can love our neighbor? This is completely contrary to the Scripture's meaning!

We ALREADY love ourselves. We AUTOMATICALLY love ourselves. We don't need a command to do so. Ephesians 5:29

says that no one hates his own flesh, but nourishes it and cherishes it. We want to love ourselves, so the command to "Love Yourself First" is an easy one to hear.

Loving our neighbor, on the other hand, isn't so easy or fun. It requires humility and giving up of self. It requires us to esteem the other.

*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; **but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.***

*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:1-11)*

We know that we do not love God or our neighbor properly, and that we will love ourselves first until this mortal puts on immortality. Nevertheless we pray that God would give us loving hearts to one another, to bear with one another, for love is of God.

*Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.*

*No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:7-16) ~*

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## The Law Kills, the Gospel Makes Alive

Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*

Matthew 5:17-22

**T**HE LAW IS INTENT ON KILLING US, and if you need proof of that, you just have to read the Sermon on the Mount, where Jesus says something like this: “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder, and that whoever murders will be liable to judgment,’ but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment, whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council, and whoever says, ‘You fool’ will be liable of hell fire.”

You see, the Law that just stands there by itself, “You shall not murder,” could perhaps be keepable, doable. I could say that I haven’t murdered anyone today because I haven’t taken an icepick to anyone’s back or something like this, but when Jesus takes the Law He unfolds the fullness of it. He doesn’t dull it; He makes it sharp, so that this Law cuts. So when we see Jesus’ definition of murder, we know that we have broken it, and this Law condemns us. He does the same thing with the Law against adultery. If you even look with lust, then you’ve committed adultery in your heart.

Jesus unfolds the spiritual use of the Law which is to bring us death, to show us that we’ve all broken the Law, and what we deserve because of our breaking the Law is God’s wrath and His punishment. Then we are ready for Jesus’ cross, because there He bears the wrath and punishment that we deserve because of our sin; there He takes it on Himself. We murderous, adulterous, lying, blasphemous thieves, we who deserve God’s wrath, instead Jesus gets it and we get His love, His smile, His forgiveness, His grace, His life, His hope. We get all of these things, not because we deserve it, but because Jesus died for us. So praise God that through the Law we’re killed, but through the Gospel we’re made alive. ~

If we went back right to the beginning of time, when God created Adam and Eve, they had a full relationship with the Father, with their Creator. In fact, when they heard Him coming to visit with them, (I’m sure just like we can experience as fathers: when we have young children and we come home from work, they come running to us.) Adam and Eve would run to their Creator. They would *run* to Him. They had a free relationship with Him, for they freely knew that He was their Creator and they had no fear of Him. But when they fell, when Satan came and deceived them, notice the whole change:



*And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons. And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? (Genesis 3:7-11)*

That innocence, that freedom that they had with the Father had ended, for He had told them when they had taken of that fruit that, surely, the day they eat of it, they would die. We know it wasn’t talking about a physical death because they lived hundreds of years later. This death was a separation. It was a separation in that there was not that relationship that they had with their Creator after that time. God promised them that He would send them a Savior. An animal had to die and its blood was shed, which pictured the Sacrifice that God would provide for them.

Mark Aho

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