

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE WORD OF GOD



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

July 2016

The Bond of Perfectness

Yrjo Pesamaa
February 1970 CM

Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.

John 17:20-21

IN THIS HIGH PRIESTLY PRAYER before His suffering, Jesus reveals the purpose of His work in the midst of mankind. First of all, a person should come to rightly understand what perfection is.

We have all come, already through original sin, into the unfortunate state whereby we are inclined toward evil and powerless toward good. God gave His holy Law in which He reveals His righteousness and what He requires of man. This Law was so demanding that not one person could fulfill it, but all came under its curse.

But God loved His created child, into whom He had breathed His own spirit (which is the immortal portion of man), and did not leave him in the hands of the devil, the murderer of souls. In His love for us He sent His own Son who as man fulfilled the Father's demand. This demand was so severe that the sinless One had to be sacrificed for sin. Here is evident the love of Jesus, the Son, toward us, the accursed.

Jesus went among His own people doing good, healing the physically ill and, above all, the sin-sick. Because He was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin," He fulfilled the Law, which was given through Moses, written on tablets of stone, and which thundered from Mount Sinai as the voice and demand of God. It was dark there and the earth trembled.

It was dark also when the cry "It is finished!" was heard from the cross. Jesus, the only begotten Son of God, rose from the dead, for death, which is the wages of sin, could not hold Him, the sinless One. After that He established His kingdom where the office of the Holy Spirit was to be the spoken word of reconciliation, which still echoes upon earth through the sanctified children of God.

Perfection, therefore, is the Son of God who by His Spirit lives in the hearts of those who in faith own Him as their treasure. Whoever believes that the redemptive work of Jesus has been on his behalf and with the saints of God receives the blessing in the name and blood of Jesus, through the laying on of hands, is released from the curse of the Law. The law of

A new *Commandment*
I give unto you,
That ye love one another;
as I have loved you,
that ye also love one another.
By this shall
all men know
that ye are
my disciples,
if ye have love
one to another.

John 13:34-35



love, which is in his conscience, now begins to lead him. We notice from the text that the children of God, who have Jesus the Son of God as their perfection, love one another. Motivated by this love, they make up a visible union upon the earth. This bond, which has been received as a gift from heaven in the midst of the blessed, should be evident to the world.

The enemy of the soul, however, knows if he can cause a disruption of that love which binds the children, the fruit will be dissension and strife. When we look at things in the light of what God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have given to us and still continually give, one would not think that strife should arise. All is given to us by grace. God has sent us to preach reconciliation. John writes: *if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* (1 John 1:7)

Those who desire to partake of this Christian fellowship, must here preserve this precious gift of love. Love is in the keeping. Do not, therefore, child of God, carry upon your conscience anything against another but with a sincere heart approach him and ask forgiveness for your lovelessness so that the bond, which at the same time binds you to the Savior, would not be broken. If you do not forgive another, neither will the heavenly Father forgive you. Humble yourselves under the guidance of the Word of God, that the world may see that we are one, as the Father and the Son are one, and the third Person also, namely, the Holy Spirit...

In a time when love grows cold and evil gains the upper hand, the heart of God still burns with love and desires to reconcile the lovelessness between brothers. God, our dear Father, forgive us! Amen.

The Commandment to Pray

Martin Luther

TO PRAY AS THE SECOND COMMANDMENT teaches, is to call upon God in every need. This He requires of us and has not left it to our choice. We are under obligation to pray if we would be Christians, just as we are under obligation to be obedient to father and mother and to civil authorities. By invocation and prayer the name of God is honored and rightly used. This you must remember above all things, and thereby silence and repel such thoughts as would withhold or prevent you from praying. Just as it avails nothing for a son to say to his father: What is the use of being obedient? I will go and do as I please; it is all the same—when there stands the commandment, Thou shalt and must obey: so likewise it is not left to my own choice whether I pray or not; I am required and in duty bound to pray or incur God's wrath and displeasure.

This we must observe and remember above all things, and thereby silence and repel the thoughts which would deter or withhold us from prayer by the plea that prayer is a matter of little consequence or confined as a duty to those who are holier and more pleasing to God than we. The human heart is by nature so perverse that it always flees from God, thinking that He is averse to our prayers because we are sinners and have merited only His wrath. In opposition to such thoughts, I say, we should give heed to this commandment, and turn to God in order to avoid aggravating His anger by such disobedience. By this commandment He makes plain that He will not thrust us aside nor cast us out because we are sinners, but that He would rather draw us to Himself and induce us to humble ourselves before Him, to confess our misery and need, and pray for mercy and help. We read in the Scriptures of His anger against those who, when punished for their sins, did not return to Him and by prayer soften His anger and seek His mercy.

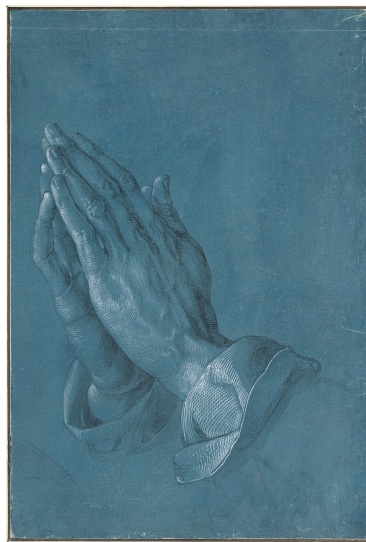
From the stress laid by God upon prayer in His commandment, we should conclude that for our life we should not despise prayer when the duty to prize it highly is so obvious. The command to pray is on the same level with the other commandments. A child should beware of disobedience to parents; it should always reflect: The work is one of obedience and what I do is done with the understanding that I move in the path of obedience and divine precept; on this I rest, of this I boast, therein I seek my pride, not because of my own worthiness, but because of the commandment. So also our prayer and that for which we pray we should

consider as demanded by God and done in obedience to His command, and we should think: As a matter of my merit it is nothing, but it avails because God has commanded it. So whatever be his prayer, everyone should always come to God in obedience to this commandment...

The first and most necessary point, therefore, is that all our prayers be based upon obedience to God, regardless of our persons, whether we be sinners or saints, worthy or unworthy. And we must know that God will not have this commandment treated as a jest, but will be angry and punish us if we do not pray, just as He punishes all other disobedience; and also that He will not permit our prayers to be in vain or lost. For if He did not mean to hear us, He would not bid us, with solemn commandment, to pray.

Again we should be the more impelled to pray because God has promised that our prayer shall certainly be fulfilled; as He says in *Psalms 50:15*: *Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee...* and as Christ says in *Matthew 7:7-8*: *Ask, and it shall be given you... For every one that asketh receiveth.* Such promises should arouse and kindle our hearts with a desire and love to pray; He testifies by His Word that our prayers are heartily pleasing to Him and shall surely be heard and granted, so that we may not despise prayer, nor beat the air, and pray in uncertainty. You can hold up the promises and say: I come to Thee, dear Father, and pray; not of my own accord nor in my own worthiness, but because of Thy command and promise, which cannot mislead nor deceive me. Let him know who disbelieves these promises, then, that he provokes God to anger by grossly dishonoring Him and charging Him with falsehood.

And we should be the more persuaded and induced to pray because, in addition to the command and promise, God comes to our aid and puts into our mouths the very words we are to use, that we may know how sincerely He is interested in our needs and may never doubt that such prayer is pleasing to Him and shall surely be heard. So this prayer is superior to any that we may be disposed to frame for ourselves. For in them our consciences might ever be in doubt and say; I have prayed, but who knows if it pleases God, or if I have used the right form and measure? There is no more admirable prayer on earth, then, than the Lord's Prayer, because it bears the superior testimony that God loves to hear it. We should not surrender it for all the riches of the world. ~



Praying Hands Albrecht Dürer
Wikimedia Commons



The voices of the people of that Pentecost day were heard by more than the crowd that gathered outside the house. As RCH Lenski says so eloquently, "This is the first full chord of that symphony of confession, testimony, prayer and praise that was soon to rise to the throne of the Redeemer from the tongues of all nations of the world." Every Christian now joins with them in this symphony.

Pastor Ron Holmgren; Hockinson, Washington

Life Without the Gospel

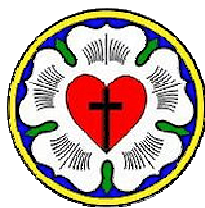
Pastor Bryan Wolfmuehler

Used by permission from tabletalkradio.org.

IMAGINE LIFE WITHOUT THE GOSPEL. For many people, even for many people that we know, this is their reality. What would such a life be like? How would we live, think, be?

Without the Gospel we have only the law, only demands, rules, a raging conscience which is devouring us or which is caged and ignored. Without the Gospel there is no Jesus on the cross, no forgiveness of sin by His blood, no comfort in His Word. What is the result of such a void?

The answer is two-fold: pride or despair. A Pharisee or a Judas. Without the Gospel we are flung toward pride on the one hand, and despair on the other. Our Lutheran Confessions give us this insight:



As long as they hear the bare preaching of the Law, and nothing concerning Christ, and therefore do not learn from the Law to perceive their sins aright, [they] either become presumptuous hypocrites (who swell with the opinion of their own righteousness) as the Pharisees, or despair like Judas.

[Formula of Concord, Epitome V.7]

We have to do something with our sin. If we cannot confess our sins and hear the promise of forgiveness, then we are set to get rid of our sins in another way. Either we act like we have overcome sin, or we know that sin has overcome us. Without the Gospel we go around like Pharisees or like Judas, governed by pride or despair. These are the only options. (There is perhaps a third option: total indifference to sin, but this is really the worst form of pride.)

Pride tries to handle sin by overcoming it. We see this effort embodied in the Pharisees. By all accounts they were very pious and outwardly holy. They added to the Ten Commandments hundreds of extra laws, but the common thing about all of these laws is that they were keep-able, do-able. This is the way of all man-made laws.

We tend to think that all the extra laws the Pharisees invented would make things more difficult; their standard

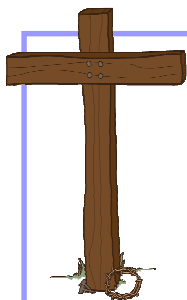
would be more difficult to keep, but the opposite is true. As more laws are added the simplicity of the Ten Commandments is obscured. Traditions tend toward externals, and while the Ten Commandments demand love and sacrifice, traditions demand certain clothes and manner of hand washing. The law demands our heart, soul, mind and strength; traditions may be kept with our hands.

"Don't smoke." "Don't dance." "Don't eat meat." Please add to the list your favorite man-made law. Whatever laws we add to the Scriptures might be difficult, but they are always possible. And this possibility is where pride lives. Whenever humanity invents a law it dulls the accusing edge of God's law until you have mere instruction that asks for correction instead of demanding repentance. This is the road of pride, the way of the Pharisee.

The other road taken without the Gospel is the path of despair. This is the result of the law doing what it is meant to do: it convicts us of our sin. The law shows us our sin; it always accuses. But the Lord intends that the Gospel would then come around to comfort us with the forgiveness of our sins. Without this comfort despair is given free reign; despondency runs free. This is the way that Judas went, and King Saul.

While our pride seeks to overcome sin, despair results from being overcome by sin. The Lord intends neither. He does not leave us to handle sin and death by our own resources and strength. His solution for our sin is the death of Jesus, His suffering, His blood, His cross and the resulting forgiveness and life. We take up the battle against sin not with our will or emotions but with our Lord Jesus and His Word of forgiveness and life.

Would that the Lord would keep us both from presumptuous pride and despair of His promises, and keep us in the comfort of His Gospel. And more, for all of us know people who live without the Gospel; whose lives are a swing between pride and despair. May God open our lips to speak His law and shed the light of His Gospel into the darkness of pride and despair. Amen.



THE CURRENT EFFORT OF SO MANY religious leaders to harmonize Christianity with science, philosophy and every natural and reasonable thing is, I believe, the result of failure to understand Christianity and, judging from what I have heard and read, failure to understand science and philosophy as well. At the heart of the Christian system lies the cross of Christ with its divine paradox. The power of Christianity appears in its antipathy toward, never in its agreement with, the ways of fallen men. The truth of the cross is revealed in its contradictions. The witness of the church is most effective when she declares rather than explains, for the gospel is addressed not to reason but to faith. What can be proved requires no faith to accept. Faith rests upon the character of God, not upon the demonstrations of laboratory or logic.

The cross stands in bold opposition to the natural man. Its philosophy runs contrary to the processes of the unregenerate mind, so that Paul could say bluntly that the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness. To try to find a common ground between the message of the cross and man's fallen reason is to try the impossible, and if persisted in must result in an impaired reason, a meaningless cross and a powerless Christianity.

A.W. Tozer

For Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect. For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God.

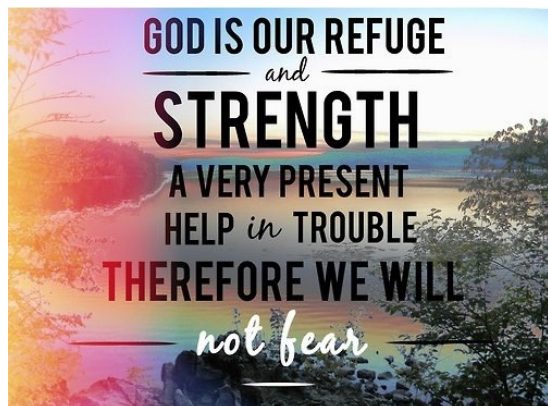
1 Corinthians 1:17-18

God Is Our Refuge and Strength

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington
Hebrews 4:14-16

Dear Children,

Hello and I hope this finds you having a good day. If you are not having such a good day, I pray that God will come to you and give you that peace or happiness that is missing.



YOU CAN ALWAYS TAKE YOUR CARES to Jesus and He will hear you. Many times in our life when we call on Him or ask things of Him, He does not answer right away, but in His time He will. Oh, there are many times in life when He comes quickly because He loves and cares so much about His children.

Jesus loves His children and is always calling them to Him. Many times we do not want to hear Him or do not think He has the best answer for our problem, but one can expect to suffer some kind of consequence for their disobedience. When we listen to God and Jesus and do His will, not ours, it pleases God.

Children, it is much the same when you don't obey your parents when they know what is right for you. They get upset and I'm sure you have experienced discipline from them. It hurts, doesn't it? Our carnal person does not always want to follow the right way. Our flesh is sinful and we find ourselves choosing to do that which does not please God. This can be in big ways, or often in small ways, but in the eyes of God, wrong will never be even a little bit right. God will not strike you down when you are tempted, but He has promised to make a way to escape from that sin that keeps slyly getting in your path. Pray to Jesus at these times and you will be strengthened.

*Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (into sin). There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: **but** God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; **but** will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.*

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

You may ask, "How does Jesus know about being tempted?" Here are the very verses to answer that.

*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, **Jesus the Son of God**, let us hold fast (like using an anchor to stay close to Jesus) our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; **but** was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may **obtain mercy**, and **find grace** to help in time of need.*

I highlighted some of the words to stress how much our God loves us. He is so loving, merciful and full of grace.

I have experienced God's grace, mercy and peace, many times in my life and still do. He is ever ready to keep picking us up when we are weak. He will continue to carry us and finish the work of faith that He has put in my heart as well as to all who desire to serve Him and Him alone.

I want to encourage you, reader in the faith, to keep the faith, press on, fight that old devil the enemy every time he bothers you. Tell him to get going and leave you alone. He does not like that but God's power will send him running.

The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.

Psalm 103:8
God be with you today.
God's peace.

Praises

When I'm alone and hurting, Jesus, think of me.
When my thoughts consume me, Jesus, rescue me.
When life is more than I can handle, Jesus, comfort me.
When Satan presses near, Jesus, save me, please.

When all I can cry is "Oh God, please be near,"
When all I can do is pray that You hear,
When all I can say is "Jesus, I fear,"
When all I can hope is that You're here...

That's when I know that You really are true
You understood and You really knew
How much I needed You to see me through
All of my struggles; it's easy for You.

You're my Abba Father, my God and my King.
You love me so much, I can't help but sing.
Your praises I lift up, and let them ring
From valleys to mountains over everything.

I can't do anything on my own—
Can't even stand alone.
I falter, fail, stumble, moan,
But You can hear my cry, my groan.

You alone are the One I need,
The only One with Whom I plead.
You're the One Who can feed;
Your name is like nectar and mead.

You are the One to Whom I flee,
When Satan comes and persecutes me.
Thank You for making me free!
Thank You, Jesus, for loving me!

Rachel Matson
Prescott Valley, Arizona

The Sonship of the Believers

Paul Kretzmann

from The Popular Commentary of the Bible

ST. PAUL WRITES IN A strain of exultant joy: But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, placed under the Law, in order that He might ransom those under the Law, that the sonship we might receive. In the figure used by the apostle, time is regarded as a measure, or vessel, which was filled up to the top. When the time of this present world-age had reached the point which had been determined by God, then His great counsel of love was put into execution. God sent forth His Son, who had been with Him, in His bosom, from eternity. "If He was to send Him, He must have been there before. He must have been in existence before He came and became a man." (Luther, 12, 228.) God sent forth His Son, begotten out of His own substance, equal with the Father in power and honor, of the same essence, and yet a different person. The Son of God came into the world in a miraculous manner, made or born of a woman, of the Virgin Mary, as a true, natural human being, with flesh of her flesh and blood of her blood. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary. Thereby He was placed under the Law, by an act of voluntary humiliation on His part. Unlike the ordinary human being, He was not subject to the demands of the Law, for He Himself was the Lawgiver. But God subjected Him to the Law, and Christ willingly submitted to this humiliation. His circumcision on the eighth day was a sign of this submission, whereby He openly declared that He took upon Himself the obligation to fulfill the Law, to bear the curse and the punishment of the Law. For His object in doing so was to pay the ransom for our deliverance from the power of the Law, which would have continued forever but for His coming. Although Paul refers especially to the believers of the Old Testament as being under the bondage of the Law, his words have a wider application and bring reassuring comfort to the believers of all times. This is brought out by the declaration that we, all believers, whether of the Jews or of the Gentiles, should receive the sonship of God. By fulfilling the Law, Christ has delivered us from the coercion, from the curse of the Law. We are no longer in its power, we are no longer its slaves. The price of our ransom has been paid, the Law no longer has any jurisdiction over us. From the most degrading slavery we have entered into the most honorable relationship to God: we are the children of God, not indeed by nature, but by adoption, by God's deliberate acceptance of our unworthy selves, for the sake of His only begotten Son. How utterly the claims of the Judaizing teachers were refuted by this powerful Gospel-preaching!

God does not send His Spirit to slaves that are still bound with the shackles of the Law; it is to His sons that He gives the Spirit of sonship.

What effect this action on the part of God has in our case, Paul shows in a triumphant conclusion: Because, then, you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, Abba, Father. So, then, you are no longer a servant, but a son, but if a son, then also an heir through God. The sonship is not confined to the believers among the Jews, but is expressly designed for the Gentile Christians as well; now that Christ has come, God accepts all that believe in Christ as His dear sons and daughters. And this sonship involves a relation of the most intimate confidence and love between the heavenly Father and His adopted children. To each individual one God has sent and given the Spirit of His Son into his heart. The Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, is active in the work of regeneration and sanctification: the Father sends the Son's Spirit, but this same Spirit is incidentally the believers' guarantee of sonship, through Him they attain to the consciousness of sons of God. Because He

has taken possession of their hearts, therefore the believers are able to speak to God as their dear Father in full confidence, to cry to Him in the full assurance and strength of their faith's persuasion: Abba, Father! The Aramaic and the Greek terms are set side by side, the equivalent expressions being intended to emphasize more strongly the idea of Father. So God sends the Spirit that lives in His Son, in order to make us sure that we are His brothers and coheirs; for just as He addresses God as His dear Father, so we also should have the conviction of the unspeakable goodness and grace of God and trust in Him as dear children will in their dear father. And in order to bring this truth home to each and every one of his readers, Paul says, in the singular, that every one of them is no longer a servant, a slave, but a son. God does not send His Spirit to slaves that are still bound with the shackles of the Law; it is to His sons that He gives the Spirit of sonship. The apostle reminds every member of the Galatian congregation and therefore every Christian of all times of the fact that he, by virtue of the indwelling of the Spirit, is a free child of God. What a disgrace, then, for Christ, our Savior, if we should voluntarily place ourselves under the Law and with this idea attempt to fulfill the Law, instead of showing the loving mind of obedient children! This emphasis becomes all the greater if we remember that children are also heirs of all the possessions of the father. The believing Christians are heirs of God; righteousness and salvation, eternal life with all its bliss, is theirs. ~

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

Romans 8:16-19

The Sin Sick Soul

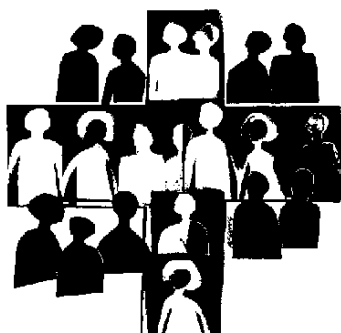
Mark Sunnarborg
Rhinelander, Wisconsin

"I find no balm in Gilead to heal this sin sick soul."
There is a word the soul desires for healing the sin sick soul.
This Word of God is shown to us in healing the sin sick soul.

The Word of God is not **just believe**; but faith in Christ is what we need.

There is a word—the word of faith—to heal the sin sick soul.
This word of faith speaks to all for healing the sin sick soul.
"Yes, there is a balm in Gilead to heal the sin sick soul."
There is oil and there is wine to heal the sin sick soul.
This oil and wine believers possess to share with those in need.
The oil of gladness is the Spirit of God in healing the sin sick soul.
Wine is used, the blood of the Lamb, to cleanse the sin sick soul.
The blood washes sin away to heal the sin sick soul.
"Oh yes, there is a balm in Gilead for healing the sin sick soul."
Oil and wine are this balm in healing the sin sick soul.
There is a word which we speak to heal the sin sick soul.
The penitent soul can hear this word to heal their sin sick soul.
"Be of good cheer! Though thy sins are crimson red, they shall be white as snow."
This word of faith is what we preach to heal the sin sick soul.
The seeking soul can find relief for their sin sick soul.
"In Jesus name and in His blood sins are proclaimed forgiven thee."
Pouring in oil and pouring in wine is what we do to heal the sin sick soul.
Without oil and without wine there can be no healing for the sin sick soul.
There is a time and there is a day this Word of God is heard to heal the sin sick soul.
This day of grace is the day and the time to heal one's sin sick soul.
When the day of grace is ended and time will be no more,
You will find no balm in Gilead to heal thy sin sick soul.
Luke 10:25-37 speaks of healing for the sin sick soul.
Jesus said "Go, and do thou likewise."
Pour in oil and pour in wine for healing the sin sick soul.
This we'll do, if God permit, to heal the sin sick soul.

The Community of Christians



A HUMAN BEING IS CREATED AS a body; the Son of God appeared on earth in the body for our sake and was raised in the body. In the Sacrament the believer receives the Lord Christ in the body, and the resurrection of the dead will bring about the perfected community of God's spiritual-physical creatures. Therefore, the believer praises the Creator, the Reconciler and the Redeemer, God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for the bodily presence of the other Christian. The prisoner, the sick person, the Christian living in the diaspora recognizes in the nearness of a fellow Christian a physical sign of the gracious presence of the triune God. In their loneliness, both the visitor and the one visited recognize in each other the Christ who is present in the body. They receive and meet each other as one meets the Lord, in reverence, humility, and joy. They receive each other's blessings as the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ. But if there is so much happiness and joy even in a single encounter of one

Christian with another, what inexhaustible riches must invariably open up for those who by God's will are privileged to live in daily community life with other Christians! Of course, what is an inexpressible blessing from God for the lonely individual is easily disregarded and trampled under foot by those who receive the gift every day. It is easily forgotten that the community of Christians is a gift of grace from the kingdom of God, a gift that can be taken from us any day—that the time still separating us from the most profound loneliness may be brief indeed. Therefore, let those who until now have had the privilege of living a Christian life together with other Christians praise God's grace from the bottom of their hearts. Let them thank God on their knees and realize: it is grace, nothing but grace, that we are still permitted to live in the community of Christians today.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

Forever Life

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

Hello Friend! I understand you are having a hard time. You've been praying, and now your distress has grown worse. You wonder why life is so hard. Is there any relief? Let's look way, way back...

GOD IS AMAZING, MY FRIEND. He spoke, and when the Almighty God speaks, things happen. LIFE happens. God made humans in His own image, in perfect holiness. God's new world was very good—perfect, in fact. God gave one rule to His first children: don't eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Simple and straightforward: if you eat the fruit of that tree, you will die that very day.

Adam and Eve fell. They listened to Satan and disobeyed God. They died that day... not physically, but spiritually. Their natural bodies lived for years, but they were dead inside, and they brought forth living death in their children. We're dead men. Along with blue eyes and blonde hair, or brown eyes and black hair, we inherit the sin nature of our fathers and mothers.

Later, God gave Ten Commandments to His people: I AM the Lord your God, have no other gods before Me; don't swear or lie in My Name; keep My holy day; honor your parents; don't murder; be faithful to your spouse; don't steal; don't betray your neighbor; don't desire your neighbor's wife or property. And God's people broke these commandments, just as Adam and Eve broke the first one.

Who can live a perfect life? As children, we lie before we know what a lie is. We steal and cheat and curse our neighbor. And worse, we sin against our holy righteous God. So it would seem we're doomed, right? And we are, except for God's intervention.

God loved us so much that He didn't let us stay dead. God is love, the Creator of LIFE. He rescued His broken creation. God Himself came to earth as a human, capable of feeling heat and cold, hunger and pain. Jesus lived a sinless life, and He took the sin of the world on Himself. He was betrayed and crucified. Jesus took your place and died a sinner's death, FOR YOU. In exchange, He gives you His perfect holiness. Because Jesus was sinless, the grave couldn't hold Him: He rose again, victorious over sin, death and the devil.

You and I will physically die. Young or old, our bodies will die. But that's only our natural bodies. Our true selves, our souls, will live forever. Jesus says that everyone who believes in Him, who trusts in Him, will be saved eternally and will live forever with Him. That heavenly home has no pain, no sickness, no death... no sin.

You didn't ask to be born the first time, friend. In your first birth, you didn't struggle and strain, and in your second birth, you don't have to struggle. Give up on yourself and your abilities. You CAN'T save yourself; you're lost on your own. You know that you're a sinner and have broken God's holy Law. You know that God requires perfection, and you can't fulfill His demands. Cry out to God that He would continue His work in your heart. He wants you for His own child. He loves you as no one ever has or ever will. He gives you new birth and new life, and your redemption was painful for Him. He DIED for you, friend. And He LIVES for you.

Jesus gave Christians the keys to the kingdom of heaven, and they will set you free. The freedom and forgiveness are really from God, but His ambassadors here proclaim sins forgiven through the blood of Jesus. Believe the Word of the Lord. Your sins, every single one of them, have been taken to the cross with Jesus. The debt against your holy God has been paid. When you trust Him, when you BELIEVE Him, He will wash you as white as snow. God's grace is for you. For YOU. FOR YOU!

Christians don't live a perfect life, my friend. Ask any believer... he'll tell you that he isn't perfect. This sinful nature clings to us. The devil tempts us and tries to trip us. But God sees us through the blood of His Son, and He doesn't see the imperfections. Through Jesus, He sees forgiven children. So, although we feel the blackness of our sin, and it causes us pain, God sees the perfect whiteness of holiness.

Believe God. Trust Him. Read His Word. Be strengthened in the Sacraments. And REST in Him. No more fear, no more pain, no more sin. It's all gone.

Only LIFE is ahead.
FOREVER LIFE.

FOREVER LIFE.
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Life is short...

Eternity is forever...

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In God We Still Trust!

Pastor Rod Johnson
Laurium, Michigan

Again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

Hebrews 2:13

For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.

1 Timothy 4:10

IN MANY PLACES THE BIBLE ENCOURAGES US to be loyal and faithful to our country and its government. We are duty-bound to do so, even when we disagree with things that are proposed to be done. As it is written in *1 Peter 2:13-17*: *Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; Or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: As free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.*

In spite of the times we may complain in disagreement with policies or action by our nation and its leaders, we can still say that **because we trust in God, we are proud to be Americans!** We live in the most blessed country in the world that believes in "Liberty and Justice for all." (Note: *Proud* is a feeling of pleasure and satisfaction about something—in this case, of being an American. This is the meaning used in this context.)

We are not a perfect nation or people, and unfortunately there are many things in our country, such as the approval of abortion, that are ungodly and extremely offensive. If God sees fit, He can bring conflict or punishment upon our nation for various things, but He is gracious to forgive and also to protect His own. Therefore, again we can **trust** and **rejoice** in His mercy and care.

It seems the secular aspects of our nation are moving in an ungodly direction. This contributes to a variety of ways in which persecution of the freedom of speech in public and in schools is being limited. We may indeed "suffer reproach," yet we still have the great privilege of freedom of worship without restraint. Praise the Lord for this blessing! We are still able to hold the assurance that "In God We Still Trust." We know this with absolute certainty because He is faithful and has promised never to leave or forsake His own.

May we, by the power of the Holy Spirit, continue to worship Him in prayer, praise and thanksgiving and proclaim His glory freely to all the world. May He give us daily comfort and consolation by His presence and joy in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Let us pray without ceasing.

Still trusting in Him! In the love of Christ.

In Thee We Trust

O God in heav'n above,
Bless Thou this land we love; In Thee we trust.
We come to seek Thy face.
Our sins blot out, erase;
Pardon us by Thy grace, In Thee we trust.

Bless us with liberty
To honor, worship Thee; In Thee we trust.
Thy Son would we adore,
Thy Word heed o'er and o'er,
In His Name we implore; In Thee we trust.

All in authority
Bless with humility. In Thee we trust.
Peace may we ever know,
Walk humbly here below;
Do justly, mercy show; In Thee we trust.

O God of earth and sky
Creator, be Thou nigh; In Thee we trust.
Thank Thee for those who bled,
By Thy hand we are led,
Thank Thee for daily bread; In Thee we trust.

Mable R Miller

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