

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 2017

God's Love Has Made Us Real

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy.

And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God.

1 Peter 1:13-21

WHEN I WAS IN COLLEGE, I was introduced to a children's book entitled "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams. The book describes a story of a toy rabbit, made of velveteen, who becomes the possession of a young boy. While the Rabbit enjoys his time with the young boy, he discovers that other toys in the nursery seem to be different than he is. They seem to be more real. The following passage is an excerpt from the book which describes a conversation between the Velveteen Rabbit and the Skin Horse, a toy that helps the Rabbit understand who he is:

"What is Real?" asked the Rabbit one day, when they were lying side by side near the nursery fender, before Nana came to tidy the room. "Does it mean having things that buzz inside you and a stick-out handle?"
"Real isn't how you are made," said the Skin Horse. "It's a thing that happens to you. When a child loves you for a long, long time, not just to play with, but really loves you, then you become Real."

The Skin Horse goes on to share "...once you are Real you can't become unreal again. It lasts for always."

Whenever I read that story, I am reminded of the story of our own existence. All of humankind, made in the image of our Creator, became distorted (unreal, if you will) because of Adam's disobedience. But God has brought restoration, by sending His Son, Jesus Christ to suffer, to be crucified, to die and to rise again for His fallen children. In effect, God's love has made us real!

The Apostle Peter shares that God has loved us for a very long time. In fact, God has loved us from eternity. *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...* Before you first became aware of your sin, before you took your first breath, ...yea, even before the world was created, God loved you with a love that will last

"for always." Even though we celebrate the Christ event that took place some two thousand years ago, God had already determined to love us from the very beginning. Thanks be to God for the forgiveness of sins, Life and salvation given to us through Jesus Christ, ...*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Revelation 13:8) The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

Jeremiah 31:3



The Velveteen Rabbit, Margery Williams
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Bless the Lord

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

THE HEBREW WORD BARAKH, which is usually translated “bless” means “to bestow ability for success” (from the greater person to the lesser) or “to praise a person’s ability for success” (from the lesser person to the greater). It refers to bending the knee or to kneel: to bless God as an act of adoration, to bless man as a benefit to him. To bless the Lord is to speak of His greatness, His mercy, His kindness, and His grace. The list could go on and on.

The psalmist speaks of this wonderfully in *Psalm 103: A Psalm of David*.

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.

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

He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.

For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

The Lord hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul.

Another way to consider blessings is to look at the contradictory word which is cursing. When we bless someone we are speaking well of them and when we curse someone we are speaking evil about them. David in this psalm speaks highly of the Lord, he blesses the Lord. In fact he reminds himself and us as the reader/hearer of this psalm that we are to do this with all of our being. We are to praise God with all of our might and strength; in essence with our very lives, because our lives belong to Him. We read in this psalm that things have changed for us as far as our standing with God is concerned. We who are fallen have been restored. We who are mortal have been given immortality. We who are sinful have had our sins removed. We who deserve punishment because of our rebellion have received a pardon. God in His kindness has exercised mercy toward us; and not just a little mercy, but mercy that is eternal. We have received blessing from our God even though we deserved a curse. God speaks His grace into our lives through the finished work of Christ: His shed blood covers our sins and His powerful resurrection lifts us from the realm of death and cursing into the realm of life and blessing. We are of all people most blessed because *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us*. We bless God because He has taken us out of our oppression and has not rewarded us according to our sins, but rather He took our sins and laid them on His Son so that we would be made right through Him: *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.* (2 Corinthians 5:21)

So come to church and bless the Lord. Speak of Him who is our Redeemer and Savior. Speak of Him who doesn't give you what you deserve but rather what you don't. Speak of Him who would be just in exercising His wrath toward us who are sinners, but chose instead to exercise His mercy toward us. Come into his courts with thanksgiving and into His throne room with praise.

Come to the place where we find grace to help in time of need, the place where we find mercy and forgiveness.

Come to the author and finisher of your faith. Come to Jesus who endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. There you will find mercy, there you will find grace, there you will find forgiveness, and there you will find rest for your weary soul. Come to church and let us “Bless the Lord.”

God's peace.



**“As far as the east is from the west,
so far hath he removed our
transgressions from us.”**

Psalms 103:12 (KJV)

Perfect Love Casts Out Fear

Pastor Bruce Estola
Ironwood, Michigan

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us.

1 John 4:17-19

FEAR HAS TORMENT. It truly does, because there is bondage in fear, but perfect love casts out all fear. The love of God shed abroad in our hearts casts out fear. How else do we explain martyrs going to their death with praises upon their lips other than that they've experienced the love of God?

We live in a day, in a world, where Christianity is coming more and more under assault. I believe that the Scripture says it's going to continue, and increase. The purging of the Church is going to take place. I remember Lynton Silva talking about living in Sri Lanka. He talked about the persecution against the Christians by the Muslims, and how dangerous it was to be a Christian. He said to me, "There are no pretend Christians in Sri Lanka," because if you take the name of Christian, you are putting a target upon yourself. Satan is working against the Church of God because he hates Christ, so he will do whatever he can to destroy the Church.

That's why John's emphasis speaks about how important it is that we are united in love for one another. We are able to, from that love, interact with one another, for if we don't have that love our interaction is going to be fruitless. But if we have that love it's beneficial.

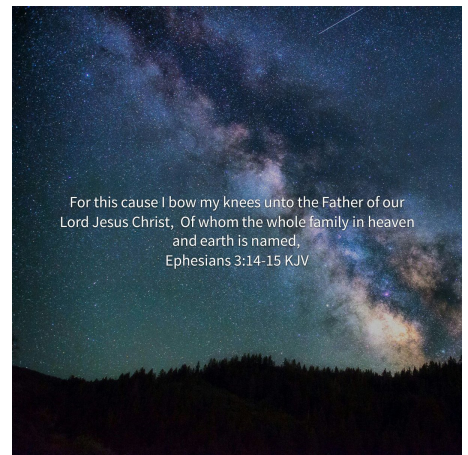
When we have corrected in anger, usually the response you will get from a child is fear. When we have corrected in love, motivated by love, even though it may be a difficult and a hard punishment, we find a different response within the child. So it is as we interact with one another. When we operate from the position of love in our lives as a body of believers, we will find that there will be a much greater sense of reconciliation than there ever would be without love. And that's why it's so important.

Paul speaks about the different things we can have, and be without love. He starts out by saying: *Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.* (1 Corinthians 13:1) Truth alone is not beneficial. Grace alone is not beneficial. The Bible tells us that the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. The power of the grace of God, and the love of God, to come and speak to our hearts, that we knew there was a God who would receive us, who loved us, broke our hearts, by that power which was from above, so that we were able to comprehend, by the revelation of the Holy Ghost, that God truly accepts me in Christ. This worked repentance within us, and brought us to the place that we love the ways of God because we have comprehended His love for us.

*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.

Ephesians 3:14-19



JESUS SAID, "MY PEACE I GIVE UNTO YOU..." This is the "peace that passeth understanding." In other words, the peace that Jesus gives is so great and wondrous that by words it cannot be explained. It is only known by God's children who have it. It comes with the joy of the Lord, by the Holy Spirit. It is not an outward thing, but a heart matter, as Apostle Paul writes that the kingdom of God is "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." (Romans 14:17)

In the 1700's Jonathan Edwards wrote of this peace:

That peace which believers enjoy is a participation of the peace which their glorious Lord and Master himself enjoys, by virtue of the same blood by which Christ himself has entered into rest. It is in a participation of this same justification, for believers are justified with Christ. As he was justified when he rose from the dead, and as he was made free from our guilt, which he had as our surety, so believers are justified in him and through him, as being accepted of God in the same righteousness. It is in the favor of the same God and heavenly Father that they enjoy peace.

This peace comes to the lost through the children of God, blessed peacemakers called to bring the Gospel of peace to the lost, broken souls, wandering aimlessly without hope in the dark night of unbelief and sin. We proclaim Jesus; what He has done is the hope of the Gospel of peace. Can you hear the Savior saying, "Go!" Let us obey, whether far away or close to home. Preach it, sing it, teach it, with words and loving deeds. Proclaim Jesus' blood and righteousness, the Gospel of peace, which delivers from death and the devil; closes hell's wide gate; opens heaven's gate, giving eternal salvation to all who believe.

Pastor Mark Matson
Pasco, Washington

The Psalms

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children of God, in lands close and lands afar,

I do hope this finds you well. I and my family are very well. Thanks be to God.

It is summertime once again when the earth brings forth her fruit. The trees have grown their new leaves, the flowers have wakened from their winter sleep and show off their beautiful colors, and the birds sing their pretty songs. It's a beautiful, refreshing season. God is so good.

Some time ago I shared some Old Testament history with you and I haven't gotten back to it. I would like to write about another Old Testament book, the book of the Psalms.

IT IS SAID THAT THE PSALMS were the hymns of the Hebrews. The word *psalm* means *sacred song*. You may think all of the 150 Psalms were written by King David, but only about 73 were written by David. These are Psalms 3-9, 11-32, 34-41, 51-65, 68-70, 86, 101, 103, 108-110, 122, 124, 131, 133, 138-145. At least a third of the Psalms don't have a known author.

- David sang and wrote about his life as a shepherd, a musician, when he was fighting battles and then when he was king. He also wrote and sang about feeling that, at times, God had forsaken him. David sang praise to God.
- Moses wrote Psalm 90, that speaks of God being man's refuge for every age, every generation. Before the earth was created, God was from everlasting to everlasting. Man sins and forgets God, and still God reaches down to rescue. Moses prays for mercy on the people and that God's beauty would be on the people, and that the people would be established (grown in the Lord).
- Asaph wrote 12: Psalm 50 (God calls the world to judgment), 73-83 (How the wicked prosper – the devastated temple – the righteous judge – God's past help recalled – exhortation to preach the law – exhortation to praise God – a prayer against oppressors). Asaph was a Levite and a leader of David's singers.
- Heman wrote Psalm 88. His Jewish name means *faithful*. He was an Ezrahite and is said to have been a grandson to Samuel the prophet and also one of King David's ministers of music. We know David liked music as he always played a harp while caring for his father's sheep.
- Psalm 89 was by Ethan. This Psalm speaks of the coming of the mighty deliverer – God. Ethan was also an Ezrahite. His name means *strong; the gift of the island*. Ethan, along with Heman and Asaph, was assigned by the Levites to play cymbals of brass. *So the singers, Heman, Asaph, and Ethan, were appointed to sound with cymbals of brass. (1 Chronicles 15:19)*
- The descendants of Korah wrote ten Psalms: 42, 44-49, 85, 87 and 88 (this one together with Heman). These Psalms express gratitude and humility to an awesome God, Almighty in power. Some of these descendants were

doorkeepers in the temple, some were singers, some took care of the meat offerings. These sons were instrumental in the singing.

- One or two were by Solomon. One is Psalm 72: *The Reign of the Lord's Anointed. The Lord shall judge the people with righteousness, the poor with judgment – He shall save the children of the needy – the oppressor shall fear as long as the sun and the moon endure – the righteous shall flourish – all kings shall fall before Him – all nations shall serve Him – He shall redeem the souls from deceit and violence – His name shall endure forever – blessed be the God of Israel who does wonderful things – the earth is filled with His glory. Amen.*

We can enjoy reading the Psalms anytime. There will always be something new for us to learn each time we read them. The Psalms can be comforting. They give so much praise to our great God and many times one can read of His faithfulness and patience with sinful man. We do have such a great, awesome God and He certainly deserves more praise from His people than He gets. I know I definitely need to praise Him more.

Our God will NEVER leave us nor forsake us. Let us praise Him and thank Him daily for all His care, for giving us faith and for sending His Son Jesus to die for our sins. He came to save us and gave every last drop of blood to set us free. He forgives us for ALL our sin.

Maybe you can't write your own songs or psalms of praise but you can sing the Psalms from the Bible. I want to close with a beautiful, encouraging Psalm.



Psalm 100:
***Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands.
Serve the Lord with gladness:
come before his presence with singing.
Know ye that the Lord he is God:
it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves;
we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.
Enter into his gates with thanksgiving,
and into his courts with praise:
be thankful unto him, and bless his name.
For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting;
and his truth endureth to all generations.***

The Blessing of Domestic Life

Martin Luther

And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.

John 2:1-2

LEARN FROM THIS HOW GOD, our Lord, Himself honors the fourth commandment. Where there is a marriage there will be, as a consequence, a family, father and mother, wife and child, man-servant and maid-servant, fields, cattle, trades, and labor for daily bread. Christ desires to teach us that such a state of life is one which is blessed, happy, and ordained of God, so that no one should despise, but rather all should esteem and honor it, even as did Christ.

This Gospel is, therefore, an impressive sermon for our young people, since they can learn from it how to serve God at home, and how needless it is to undertake some extraordinary feat... The man of the house who governs his family with piety, who rears his children and servants in the fear and knowledge of God, and in all that is decent and honorable, lives in a blessed and holy state. Thus also the woman who attends to the wants of her children, who gives them meat and drink, who washes and combs them, needs no other employment more pleasing in the sight of God. The servants in the house, man or maid, serve God, if they are obedient to their employers; yea, if they believe in Christ, God is better pleased with them when they sweep the room or clean shoes than with all the praying and fasting and masses, and all the other so-called meritorious works of the monks.

Let no one, therefore, regard with contempt the domestic life, which is the result of matrimony, nor condemn it, as did the senseless monks, who looked upon marriage as a worldly and unhappy state. Christ Himself is present on a marriage occasion, and thereby blessed the act and everything connected with domestic life. God also manifested by the fourth commandment, which is the most important of the second table, His approval of it, yea, He demands of men that they should honor and respect the family relations.

If thou art a father or a mother, rejoice in thy condition and gladly fulfill its duties, knowing that this is the will and order of God. If thou art a servant, whether male or female, remember that God is pleased with thy services. God Himself instituted and blessed matrimony, and now honors the marriage festival by His own presence and by the performance of His first miracle, after He had already begun to preach the Gospel. Christ could have excused Himself from being present by saying: I cannot come, I must attend to my calling of preaching; the transaction to which I am invited is

of a worldly kind, but my office deals with spiritual matters, and hence I must refuse to come. But He who is the Bishop over all does not permit His office and especial calling to interfere with His attendance at the wedding, with which domestic life begins, but by His presence honors and sanctions this deed, so every one ought now to say: Since my God has so ordained it that I should serve in the state of matrimony and in the performance of domestic duties, whether it be as a servant, as a child, as a husband or as a wife, I will do this right willingly and serve my God with gladness in this condition of life. For I see that Jesus Christ, my Lord and God, the Highest of all preachers, comes to the marriage, thereby not only blessing this ordinance, but also giving the assurance of its continuance and support...

Here we distinctly see how Christ, when He had come to the marriage, did not separate groom and bride, but suffered them to be joined together, yea, He even assisted that the wedding feast might take its proper course. By this beautiful example He taught how becoming it is to perform diligently the household duties; and again how, if privation ever should come, we need not be frightened, but should see to it that we have faith in Christ; then will we find help from Him who made wine from water, and who so blessed our condition in

life that we will ever have enough, though it may seem, now and then, as if we would have to suffer want. Our daily experience teaches this. If man and wife live together in piety, the Lord their God will abundantly bless their industry, so that they earn much more than they imagine. I venture to say that a pious and industrious mechanic would scarcely under-take to support himself and family with the money which he earns in one year, if that amount were counted out to him in a heap at the beginning of the year. But there is a secret blessing of God connected with all this: we earn a penny today and one tomorrow, and economize accordingly, so that the blessing of God is experienced in this quiet economy. In this

way Christ, our Lord, still continues to change water into wine in my house and in thine, if we are but faithful and pious. By His blessing He causes one loaf of bread to supply the place of ten, and one coat to wear longer than otherwise three. If we would but open our eyes, our experience would compel us to exclaim: Lord, in Thee do we trust in the performance of our domestic labors; they also are of Thy institution; Thou didst honor and bless them and still continuest to bless them. Therefore will I cherish my calling and be industrious in it. ~



Detail of servant with water jar from *The Wedding at Cana*
Paolo Veronese; Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

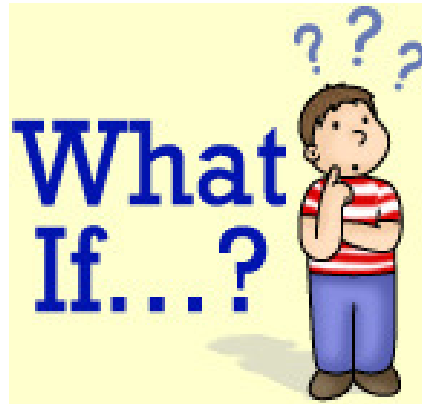
What If...?

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

IT IS AMAZING HOW OFTEN when faced with changes to our circumstances we turn to the worst case scenario, the dreaded: "What if...?" What if this should happen or that should happen? What if this doesn't happen or that doesn't happen? What if? We honestly control so little of what takes place in life that "what if?" becomes an empty question.

The issue was actually answered long ago in the Garden of Eden where there was an "if". God made plain to Adam and Eve not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and told them that if they ate it they would die. They ate and died. So ended the "if" for human beings. Yet a gracious God chose to remedy the "if" by sending His Son in the cloak of fallenness to redeem the fallen through shedding His own blood on Calvary's cross, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. Still the fallen human being can't leave the "if" alone. What if?

Peter was plagued by his failure in denying Jesus and Jesus graciously restored him in full forgiveness for all he had done. Immediately Peter's attention turned to John.



Peter seeing him saith to Jesus, Lord, and what shall this man do? Jesus saith unto him, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou me. Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that disciple should not die: yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die; but, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? (John 21:21-23)

The "if" always indicates that like Peter we are looking at our surroundings and not to Jesus. So Jesus says: "What is that to thee? follow thou me." Jesus is the end of the "what if?" He is also the author and finisher of our faith and faith is the key. Following Jesus means a life of faith and

Jesus never fails. Circumstances will change and people will come and go but the mercies of the Lord endure forever; indeed, as Jeremiah says, they are new every morning.

Changes in circumstances are simply part of our earthly existence, and most are beyond our control. Living in a fallen world will always bring us to the brink of "what if?" but Christ always gives us "It is finished." May we have faith to believe and trust in God's Word over all our uncertainties. ~

Strength from the Lord

Pastor Joel Baker
Plymouth, Minnesota

But David encouraged (strengthened) himself in the Lord his God.

1 Samuel 30:6b

IT WAS STRESSFUL ENOUGH THAT Saul was pursuing David for a time so that he chose to leave the borders of his homeland to live among the Philistines. He was given an area to live in called Ziklag and from there he helped Israelite towns by attacking raiders such as the Amalekites, all the time making the Philistine Prince think he was attacking Israel.

That had to be a difficult time in his life, pursued heavily by Saul and his army, seeking refuge in a normally hostile country, deceiving the Prince as to his purpose there, and fighting against the raiding nomads. Then returning to his city of Ziklag as the Philistine armies prepared to attack Israel he found that the Amalekites had attacked the city, taken his 2 wives captive, along with the rest of the women and children, and burned the city.

Then David and the people that were with him lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep. And David's two wives were taken captives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the wife of Nabal the Carmelite. And David was greatly distressed; for the people spake of stoning him, because the soul of all the people was grieved, every man for his sons and for his daughters.

1 Samuel 30:4-6a



Have you ever had a stressful time in your life wondering how things will ever work out for you? Then there appears to be a slight improvement and you think you're heading for relief only to find a new wave of stress much worse than what you've been going through.

David experienced that and he and everyone with him *lifted up their voice and wept, until they had no more power to weep*. Their families were gone, thankfully not dead, but captives, their homes destroyed, and all was lost. Then, those with David blamed him for this mess, became bitter, and threatened to stone him for it. Completely broken. Nowhere to go, family taken, and even those close to you turned against you. Was it time to just give up?

What did Saul do when he was under duress? He consulted a medium to talk to the dead (Samuel). What did David do? ...*but David encouraged (strengthened) himself in the Lord his God.*

That's where our hope is when we are distressed, completely worn out, stressed to capacity, crying out until we can cry no longer—we can strengthen ourselves in the Lord our God.

I hope you know this wonderful God, who loves you, who sent Jesus to die on the cross for your sins, and in knowing Him, promises to strengthen you when you have no strength, when life seems to be caving in around you. Blessings to you. May you find complete peace in Him.

God Remembers Our Sin No More

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

OUR ALMIGHTY GOD IS ALL-KNOWING. One of the basic doctrines of the Christian faith is that God knows everything.

Before the foundation of the world, He knew that mankind would fall into sin and, because of His great love, He put the plan in place to rescue us. He knew how the plan would be carried out: the virgin birth of the Christ; the ministry; the trial, crucifixion, and resurrection. He knew who would be eternally saved and who would be eternally lost. He knew the end from the beginning.

Almighty God knows all things... He knows the depraved depths to which we humans sink. He knows the horrific deeds committed every moment of every day, all over the world. He knows the disbelief of the atheist, and the skepticism of the agnostic. He knows the outward "sins" that we believers justify to one another, the secret sins that we think we hide. He knows the inner workings of our black and broken hearts.

What a terrifying thought to stand condemned before His holy Law! His Law demands perfection in thought, word, and deed, from conception to last breath. Even we who are washed by the blood of the Lamb tremble before the Law. We confess that we have broken it, and we acknowledge that we owe a debt that we can never pay. We plead the perfect blood of Christ to cover our iniquity.

Something truly amazing happens when we condemned sinners are given faith, when we believe the Word of the Lord and trust Jesus to save us. Our insurmountable debt is removed from our account, paid in full by the perfect Son of God. We are washed whiter than snow. We are clothed in an immaculate robe of righteousness.

And the All-Knowing Almighty God *does not remember* our sin. How can this be?!

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord:

But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all

know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34)

I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins. (Isaiah 43:25)

When our iniquity is forgiven, when our transgressions are blotted out, God only sees the perfection of His Son in us. He sees "Paid in full!" credited to our balance sheet. He sees the snow-white purity of the washing of water by the Word. He sees the immaculate robe of His Son.

When we look within, we remember our sin, past and present. We see the daily deeds of commission and omission. We know full well the war against the devil, the world, and our own flesh, and how many times we lose a skirmish. We feel the weight and burden of our iniquity, and we often draw near to the throne of grace, seeking absolution from our great High Priest.

Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast 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. (Hebrews 4:14-16)

Thanks be to God that He does not remember our sin.



"Oh, for a thousand tongues to sing
My great Redeemer's praise,
The glories of my God and King,
The triumphs of His grace!

"My gracious Master and my God,
Assist me to proclaim,
To spread through all the earth abroad,
The honors of Thy name.

"Jesus!—the name that charms our fears,
That bids our sorrows cease;
'Tis music in the sinner's ears,
'Tis life and health and peace.

"He breaks the power of canceled sin,
He sets the prisoner free;
His blood can make the foulest clean;
His blood avails for me." (Charles Wesley)

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Reformation Sermon of 1845: The Reformation #2

[Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of articles celebrating the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. Last month, we learned about the timely invention of the printing press which allowed for greater distribution of printed materials; this month, we see the desperate need for reformation in the Church.]

ON THE THIRTY-FIRST OF OCTOBER, 1517, my ever-beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, as Dr. Martin Luther, preacher and professor at Wittenberg in Saxony publicly attacked the abomination of papal indulgences, he thereby laid the cornerstone upon which was built the Reformation of the church, which, by God's help, took hold a few years later after having battled long and hard for existence. So if there is any day of the year when we as Lutherans should all be full of joyful thanksgiving and praise to God and pure jubilation and joyful strains, it is today. For the fact that we Lutherans have enjoyed so many countless spiritual benefits, about millions of other Christians, even here to this very hour, we have only the great work of God to thank. What once began on this very day in Wittenberg was God's work, apart from anything that any man could have devised.

It is indisputable: Before that 31st of October nearly a thousand years of spiritual darkness had settled over all of Christianity. Through the cunning of Satan and human indolence and ingratitude, the light of the pure Gospel was lost nearly everywhere and was removed from its rightful place. Only isolated witnesses to the truth broke forth, like lonesome stars shining through at midnight, like the Waldensians in Italy and the Bohemian Brethren in Germany. But on this very day the light of the Gospel once more broke through powerfully, like a heavenly dawn, and scattered the thick darkness with wondrous speed, so that after a few years the full noonday sun of the pure evangelical doctrine lit up all of Christendom. We also walk in those rays here in these Western lands. It is indisputable: Before that 31st of October the Book of Books, the book of divine revelation, the Holy Scriptures lay in the dust, right in the midst of Christianity. Christians were warned that this book was off limits to them, a dangerous book, so that they were barred from accessing the fountain of the water of eternal life. But on this very day God drew the Holy Bible out of the dust again through Luther, gave it into the hands of millions of Christians in their native tongue and thereby handed them the key to the knowledge of the saving truth. Further, it is indisputable: Before that 31st of October, all of Christianity was under the yoke of slavery. The servants of the church had elevated themselves to be masters of the church. Instead of tending Christ's sheep, they only gorged themselves on the people's wealth and sucked the blood from their veins. Yes, in the midst of the temple of God the Anti-Christ, foretold in Scripture, the Pope in Rome, ruled on his throne of Satan. He called himself the vicar of Christ on earth and the visible head of the church. By this title he claimed authority over all temporal authorities, emperors, kings and rulers, introduced his own laws instead of the Gospel and by theft and murders silenced everyone who, enlightened by God, confessed the pure Gospel. But on this very day, God began to break the chains of this tyrant of the conscience, to unveil the evil secret which had so long hung over Christianity and to once again grants freedom to souls who have been redeemed. To this very day we dwell in peace and rest under this protective shelter. Before that 31st of October, Christianity languished in fearful despair and anxiety. Thousands had, in their previous predicament of sin, cried out in vain, "What must we do to be saved?" But there was no answer. Anxious and troubled souls were directed to dead saints, to human works, to their own penance, repentance, works of satisfaction and service. Christ and his fully sufficient service was silenced and the Word about faith gagged. Countless souls wrestled with despair in their chambers and cells. There was no one giving out the Bread of Life. They had to waste away with no comfort. But on this day the river of comfort which springs from Golgotha was opened again and flowed out in abundant streams over the thirsty heirs of Jesus Christ.



C.F.W. Walther

Excerpt from Occasional Sermons and Addresses of Dr. C.F.W. Walther, Publisher Joel R Baseley, 1889

I'll trust in God's unchanging Word 'Til soul and body sever,
For, though all things shall pass away, His Word shall stand forever!

Martin Luther