

July 2021

Washington's "Earnest Prayer"

*Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan*

DEAR FRIENDS,
Five years ago I used the letter below as the centerpiece of our newsletter in July of 2016. Never can I recall a time we have needed to give heed to such majestic instruction as now.

The Prayer below was written by Washington at Newburgh, New York, at the close of the Revolutionary War on June 14, 1783. It was sent to the thirteen governors of the newly freed states in a "Circular Letter Addressed to the Governors of all the States on the Disbanding of the Army."

Circular Letter Addressed to the Governors of all the States on the Disbanding of the Army, June 14, 1783

I have thus freely declared what I wished to make known, before I surrendered up my public trust to those who committed it to me. The task is now accomplished. I now bid adieu to your Excellency, as the chief magistrate of your State, at the same time I bid a last farewell to the cares of office and all the employments of public life.

It remains, then, to be my final and only request that your Excellency will communicate these sentiments to your legislature at their next meeting, and that they may be considered the legacy of one, who has ardently wished, on all occasions, to be useful to his country, and who, even in the shade of retirement, will not fail to implore the divine benediction on it.

I now make it my earnest prayer that God would have you, and the State over which you preside, in his holy protection; that he would incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of subordination and obedience to government, to entertain a brotherly affection and love for one another, for their fellow-citizens of the United States at large, and particularly for brethren who have served in the field; and finally that he would most graciously be pleased to dispose us all to do justice, to love mercy, and to demean ourselves with that charity, humility, and pacific temper of mind, which were the characteristics of the Divine Author of our blessed religion, and without an humble imitation of whose example in these things, we can never hope to be a happy nation.

The wisdom of our founders was immense and remains such today. However, even that once unassailable reasoning is under assault. How can this be remedied when people do not even know the contribution of such great, though faulty, human



beings? Washington provided the answer, "earnest prayer." It is time to take then General Washington's words to heart and pray. None of us know the future but we know that the prayer of the righteous avails much. We Christians who follow in the path of Jesus must invoke that name in prayer with verve and fervor that we may be renewed in "charity (love), humility and pacific (peaceful) temper of mind." The time for some necessary changes may be upon us and that time may yield devastation or a time of renewal. By God's grace, through prayer, we will see the latter. God be with you all. We are thankful for your continuing support in your gifts and prayers. Lord, teach us to pray.

God's peace.

The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. ~James 5:16

He Loved Me and Gave Himself for Me

Martin Luther

...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.

Galatians 2:20

THESE WORDS, “The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me,” are mighty thunderings and lightnings from heaven against the righteousness of the Law and the doctrine of works. So great and so horrible was the wickedness, error, darkness and ignorance in my will and understanding that it was impossible for me to be ransomed by any other means than by such an inestimable ransom. Why do we, then, vaunt the integrity of our reason and claim that our natural powers are left us uncorrupt, that our reason is inclined to the good, that we need do only as much as we can... since here I learn that so much evil lurks within in my nature that the whole world and all creatures were not able to countervail the indignation of God, but that the very Son of God Himself must needs be delivered for the same?

But let us consider well this price, and let us behold this captive delivered (as Paul saith) “for me,” the Son of God I mean, and we shall see Him without all comparison to exceed and excel all creatures. What wilt thou do when thou hearest the Apostle say that such an inestimable price was given for thy sins? Wilt thou bring thy cowl, thy shaven pate, thy chastity, thy obedience, thy poverty? What shall all these do? Yea, what shall the Law of Moses avail, and the works of the Law? What shall the works of all men and all sufferings of the martyrs profit thee? What is the obedience of all the holy angels in comparison of the Son of God, who was delivered, and that most shamefully, even to the death of the Cross, so that there was no drop of His most precious blood but it was shed, and that for thy sins? If thou couldst rightly consider this incomparable treasure, thou shouldst surely damn all cowls, shaven pates, all vows, works, merits, before grace and after, and trample them underfoot, spit upon and execrate them and cast them into hell. For it is an intolerable and horrible blasphemy to imagine that there is any work whereby thou shouldst presume to reconcile God, since thou seest that there is nothing which can reconcile Him but this inestimable, infinite treasure, even the death and blood of His Son, one drop whereof is more precious than the whole world...

Consider well, I pray you, who this Son of God is, how glorious He is, how mighty He is. What is heaven and earth in comparison of Him? Let all the Papists and all the authors of sects, yea, though the whole world take their part, be thrown down into hell, with all their righteousness, works and merits, rather than the truth of the Gospel should be blemished, and the glory of Christ perish. What mean they

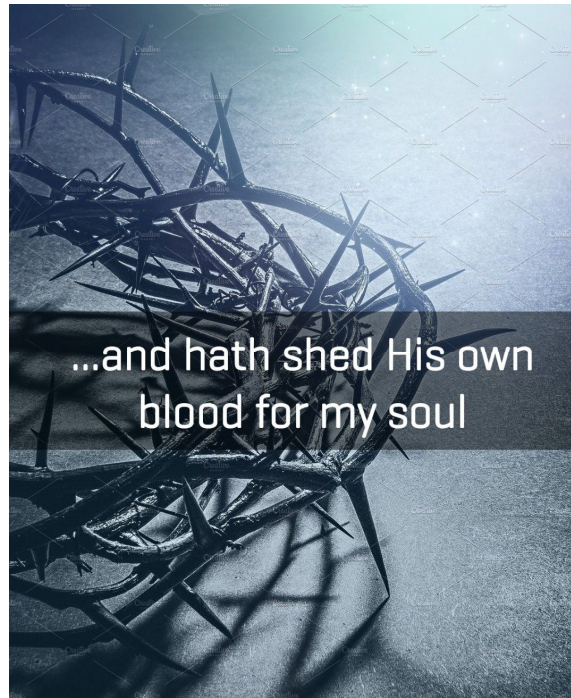
then to brag so much of works and merits? If I being a wretch and a damned sinner could be redeemed by any other price, what needed the Son of God to be given for me? But because there was no other price either in heaven or in earth, but Christ the Son of God, therefore it was most necessary that He should be delivered for me. Moreover, this He did of inestimable love; for Paul saith “who loved me.”

Wherefore these words “who loved me” are full of faith. And he that can utter this little word “me,” and apply it unto himself with a true and a constant faith as Paul did, shall be a good disputer with Paul against the Law, for He delivered neither sheep, ox, gold, nor silver, but even God Himself entirely and wholly, “for me,” even for “me,” I say, a miserable and wretched sinner. Now therefore, in that the Son of God was thus delivered to death for me, I take comfort and apply this unto myself. And this manner of applying is

the very true force and power of faith. He that worketh speaketh not thus: “Christ loved me.”

These words (which are the pure preaching of grace and Christian righteousness indeed) Paul setteth against the righteousness of the Law, as if he said: be it so that the Law is a heavenly doctrine, and hath also his glory; yet notwithstanding it loved not me, nor gave itself for me; yea, it accuseth me, terrifieth me, and driveth me to desperation. But I have now another who hath delivered me from the terrors of the Law, sin, and death, and hath brought me into liberty, the righteousness of God, and eternal life, who is called the Son of God, who loveth me and giveth Himself for me; to whom be praise and glory for ever.

Faith, therefore, as I have said, embraceth and wrappeth in itself Christ Jesus the Son of God, delivered to death for us, as Paul here teacheth, who being apprehended by faith, giveth unto us righteousness and life, for Christ is the Son of God, who of mere love gave Himself for our redemption. And with these words Paul setteth out most lively the priesthood and offices of Christ which are to pacify God, to make intercession for sinners, to offer up Himself a sacrifice for their sins, to redeem, to instruct, and to comfort them. Let us learn therefore to give a true definition of Christ, not as the school-divines and meritmongers do, which make Him a new lawgiver, who abolishing the old Law hath established a new. To these Christ is nothing else but an exactor and a tyrant. But let us define Him as Paul here doth: namely, that He is the Son of God, who not for our desert [deserving] or any righteousness of ours, but of His own free mercy and love, offered up Himself a sacrifice for us sinners, that He might sanctify us for ever. ~



Proclaim His Truth

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll
New York Mills, Minnesota

And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 6:14-29

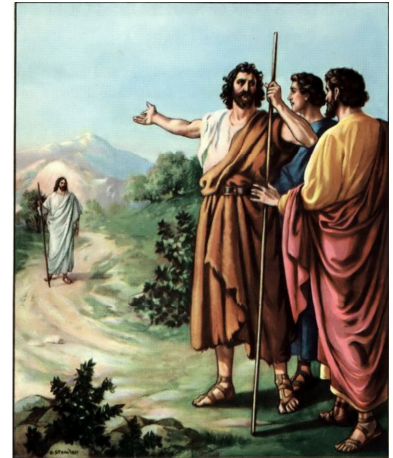
THIS ACCOUNT BRINGS TO MIND the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In Matthew 5:11-12 He says: *Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*

John the Baptist was imprisoned for preaching the Word of God. The King had entered into a relationship that was not in accordance with God's Word. The king had taken for himself his brother's wife. John preached what was given him to preach, and this gained him the wrath of Herodius. She conspired with her daughter to gain his death. Their plan worked flawlessly. Herod granted the request, despite his better judgment, and John the Baptist's head was delivered on a platter.

The grisly imagery that Mark uses paints a clear picture. In the vast history of humanity there have been many who have died for faithfully teaching God's Word. This goes against the wisdom of the world and even the wisdom of our own sinful nature. The sinful nature seeks the pleasure of men but Paul makes it very clear in his epistle to the Galatians. *For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.* (Galatians 1:10)

The next day
John seeth
Jesus coming
unto him,
and saith,
Behold the
Lamb of God,
which taketh
away
the sin of the
world.

John 1:29



The servant of Christ is accountable to God and God alone. He is not to speak to gain accolades or stature among men, but to faithfully preach the Word, and trust that it will do what it is sent to do. This can be a tall order, especially in our day. As Paul tells Timothy in his second epistle to him: *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.* (2 Timothy 4:1-5)

Sadly, Paul tells us that men, in their sin, will not endure sound doctrine, but having itching ears they will gather together around themselves people who basically preach for the pleasing of the ears of men. The comfort for the Christian is found in those very words of Christ quoted above. When men despise us on account of Christ, when we are persecuted on account of the truth, we are to rejoice and be glad. ¶ John the Baptist was faithful to his calling; his preaching resulted in his death. The world has no use for God or His Word. As Christians we are called to bring this Word to the world, even if the end result is imprisonment, scorn, mockery, or even death. We can take heart as Christ says in John 16:33: *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.*

Jesus Christ has overcome the world; the Easter announcement rings true. "He is risen, yea, He is risen indeed." He rose victorious over sin, death and the devil. Victorious over man and his sinful motives. He has gifted us with faith through His Word. The onus is now on us to go forth and proclaim His truth to the world, that all would repent and come to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. This we do as He has equipped us. This we do fearing not men, but God, being faithful to the calling that we have as His children. To this end we hope, to this end we pray, and to this end we thank God for His abundant mercy.

God's peace.

The Twenty-Third Psalm

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children far and near,

Hello to you all. I hope you are well. I was wondering what to share with you and my mind went to Psalm 23. It is such a comforting Psalm and a very good one to memorize. When I was a teen I wrote this on a piece of paper and kept it under my pillow and would recite it often to memorize it.

***The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures:
he leadeth me beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul:
he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness
for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through
the valley of the shadow of death,
I will fear no evil:
for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me
in the presence of mine enemies:
thou anointest my head with oil;
my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me
all the days of my life:
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.***



God is our shepherd and He provides all we ever need. We **never need to want** for anything. A good shepherd takes care of the needs of his flock of sheep, and our God will take even better care of us.

God **leads us His sheep to green pastures**, those places where He gives the best quiet peaceful moments to renew our strength. One of those green pastures would be under the hearing of God's Word.

Sheep need calm water to drink from. They do not like fast running water. God is our shepherd and He leads us to those **still waters**, that are times of calm, peace and refreshing. Maybe someone offers to help you or gives you a kind word of encouragement.

In **restoring our souls**, God provides strength and faith for each day. He is our best strength and He knows when we need to be brought back to Him when we've gone astray. He is the WAY and He leads us in the righteous path that brings us to Him. Jesus died on the cross to restore our souls to Him fully, for His glory.

Yea, though I walk... We often go through times in our life that are very difficult: loss of loved ones, sickness, surgeries, addiction, and I could name many more, and these are those **valleys** that we must go through. But, Jesus is there waiting to help us and we never need fear. Evil lurks everywhere but we need not fear as Jesus is near to help.

The **rod and staff for comfort** is Jesus reaching down to hold you from falling into sin and to guide you back to the right path. That is so very comforting to know how much Jesus cares. You can picture Him walking with you wherever you go.

Our **enemies** could be people who do not like your Christian view, or who just do not like you. We are told to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48). Every battle is the Lord's and we must ask Him to fight for us. Jesus gave us His body and blood in Holy Communion and the enemy, namely Satan, is powerless over this.

In the Psalm it speaks of **anointing the head with oil**. A shepherd uses oil to pour on the sheep's head so that it ran around the eyes and ears and nose to keep bugs away, and to prevent infection that could lead to death. I like to think of God's Word as being the **oil** that fills our hearts and minds with spiritual health and His instructions that continuously lead us in the right way.

My cup runneth over. We often miss experiencing our cup running over. When we do not listen to God or obey His Word and walk how WE want to, we will always run into trouble. Our cup of life in Jesus can be very empty. On the other hand when we allow God to lead, guide and instruct us on our Christian walk we can enjoy so many blessings. Our hearts will rejoice over all that God does for us and then we can say our lives are full and content, thus our **cups run over**. If we can see God and Jesus for who they are and what they have done and do for us we can truly say it is more than enough and we can't help but share with others.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me... When we have a life that is found in Jesus, therein is goodness and He will just keep on giving and giving. He continues to give because He is merciful. He is full of mercy. He will keep giving to his children all the days of their lives and in the end we **will live with him FOREVER!** I know I've said this before, but forever never ends. How fortunate we are who believe in Jesus when we reach the end of our lives. We get to go to heaven and keep on living. Only it will even be better.

I want to encourage you all to keep Jesus in your heart and pray to stay close to Him and learn more of Him every day. Even old people will tell you younger ones that they are still learning. If you have never memorized Psalm 23, I encourage you to do so. God bless you as you learn about your Creator and His Son Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

God's peace.

The Eighth Commandment

Excerpts, The Large Catechism

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.

Over and above our own body, spouse, and temporal possessions, we have yet another treasure, namely, honor and good report, with which we cannot dispense. For it is intolerable to live among men in open shame and general contempt. Therefore God wishes the reputation, good name, and upright character of our neighbor to be taken away or diminished as little as his money and possessions, that every one may stand in his integrity before wife, children, servants, and neighbors.

And in the first place, we take the plainest meaning of this commandment according to the words (Thou shalt not bear false witness), as pertaining to the public courts of justice, where a poor innocent man is accused and oppressed by false witnesses in order to be punished in his body, property, or honor...

Therefore this commandment is given first of all that every one shall help his neighbor to secure his rights, and not allow them to be hindered or twisted, but shall promote and strictly maintain them, no matter whether he be judge or witness, and let it pertain to whatsoever it will.

And especially is a goal set up here for our jurists that they be careful to deal truly and uprightly with every case, allowing right to remain right, and, on the other hand, not perverting anything, nor glossing it over or keeping silent concerning it, irrespective of a person's money, possession, honor, or power. This is one part and the plainest sense of this commandment concerning all that takes place in court.

Next, it extends very much further, if we are to apply it to spiritual jurisdiction or administration; here it is a common occurrence that every one bears false witness against his neighbor. For wherever there are godly preachers and Christians, they must bear the sentence before the world that they are called heretics, apostates, yea, seditious and desperately wicked miscreants. Besides, the Word of God must suffer in the most shameful and malicious manner, being persecuted, blasphemed, contradicted, perverted, and falsely cited and interpreted. But let this pass; for it is the way of the blind world that she condemns and persecutes the truth and the children of God, and yet esteems it no sin.

In the third place, what concerns us all, this commandment forbids all sins of the tongue whereby we may injure or approach too closely to our neighbor. For to bear false witness is nothing else than a work of the tongue. Now, whatever is done with the tongue against a fellow-man God would have prohibited, whether it be false preachers with their doctrine and blasphemy, false judges and witnesses with their verdict, or outside of court by lying and evil-speaking.

Here belongs particularly the detestable, shameful vice of speaking behind a person's back and slandering, to which the devil spurs us on, and of which there would be much to



be said. For it is a common evil plague that every one prefers hearing evil to hearing good of his neighbor; and although we ourselves are so bad that we cannot suffer that any one should say anything bad about us, but every one would much rather that all the world should speak of him in terms of gold, yet we cannot bear that the best is spoken about others. Therefore, to avoid this vice we should note that no one is allowed publicly to judge and reprove his

neighbor, although he may see him sin, unless he have a command to judge and to reprove.

For there is a great difference between these two things, judging sin and knowing sin. You may indeed know it, but you are not to judge it. I can indeed see and hear that my neighbor sins, but I have no command to report it to others. Now, if I rush in, judging and passing sentence, I fall into a sin which is greater than his. But if you know it, do nothing else than turn your ears into a grave and cover it, until you are appointed to be judge and to punish by virtue of your office.

Those, then, are called slanderers who are not content with knowing a thing, but proceed to assume jurisdiction, and when they know a slight offense of another, carry it into every corner, and are delighted and tickled that they can stir up another's displeasure, as swine roll themselves in the dirt and root in it with the snout...

But the true way in this matter would be to observe the order according to the Gospel, Matt. 18:15, where Christ says: If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone. Here you have a precious and excellent teaching for governing well the tongue, which is to be carefully observed against this detestable misuse. Let this, then, be your rule, that you do not too readily spread evil concerning your neighbor and slander him to others, but admonish him privately that he may amend [his life]. Likewise, also, if some one report to you what this or that one has done, teach him, too, to go and admonish him personally, if he have seen it himself; but if not, that he hold his tongue...

But if we gossip about another in all corners, and stir the filth, no one will be reformed, and afterwards when we are to stand up and bear witness, we deny having said so.

Therefore it would serve such tongues right if their itch for slander were severely punished, as a warning to others.

If you were acting for your neighbor's reformation or from love of the truth, you would not sneak about secretly nor shun the day and the light.

All this has been said regarding secret sins. But where the sin is quite public so that the judge and everybody know it, you can without any sin avoid him and let him go, because he has brought himself into disgrace, and you may also publicly testify concerning him. For when a matter is public in the light of day, there can be no slandering or false judging



or testifying; as, when we now reprove the Pope with his doctrine, which is publicly set forth in books and proclaimed in all the world. For where the sin is public, the reproof also must be public, that every one may learn to guard against it.

Thus we have now the sum and general understanding of this commandment, to wit, that no one do any injury with the tongue to his neighbor, whether friend or foe, nor speak evil of him, no matter whether it be true or false, unless it be done by commandment or for his reformation, but that every one employ his tongue and make it serve for the best of every one else, to cover up his neighbor's sins and infirmities, excuse them, palliate and garnish them with his own reputation.

The chief reason for this should be the one which Christ alleges in the Gospel, in which He comprehends all commandments respecting our neighbor, Matt. 7:12: Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

Even nature teaches the same thing in our own bodies, as St. Paul says, 1 Cor. 12:22: Much more, those members of the body which seem to be more feeble are necessary; and those members of the body which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. No one

covers his face, eyes, nose, and mouth, for they, being in themselves the most honorable members which we have, do not require it. But the most infirm members, of which we are ashamed, we cover with all diligence; hands, eyes, and the whole body must help to cover and conceal them.

Thus also among ourselves should we adorn whatever blemishes and infirmities we find in our neighbor, and serve and help him to promote his honor to the best of our ability, and, on the other hand, prevent whatever may be discreditable to him.

And it is especially an excellent and noble virtue for one always to explain advantageously and put the best construction upon all he may hear of his neighbor (if it be not notoriously evil), or at any rate to condone it over and against the poisonous tongues that are busy wherever they can pry out and discover something to blame in a neighbor, and that explain and pervert it in the worst way; as is done now especially with the precious Word of God and its preachers.

There are comprehended therefore in this commandment quite a multitude of good works which please God most highly, and bring abundant good and blessing, if only the blind world and the false saints would recognize them. For there is nothing on or in entire man which can do both greater and more extensive good or harm in spiritual and in temporal matters than the tongue, though it is the least and feeblest member. ~

Stand Fast

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

STAND FAST

THEREFORE IN THE
LIBERTY WHEREWITH
CHRIST HATH MADE
US FREE, AND BE NOT
ENTANGLED AGAIN
WITH THE YOKE OF
BONDAGE.

GALATIANS 5:1

Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.

For I testify again to

every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love.

Galatians 5:1-6

WHEN WE HEAR THE PHRASE “fallen from grace”, we often think of some famous individual who is embroiled in a scandal. Most likely, he or she has succumbed to some moral failure from which they cannot recover. In his letter to the Galatians, the Apostle Paul uses this phrase to describe an entirely different type of scandal. After hearing the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Galatians have given in to the pressure to go back under the bondage of the law. Paul admonishes them in the strongest of terms: *I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the*

grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. (Galatians 1:6-9)

While it may be tempting to distance ourselves from the Galatians, we cannot do so. Because of the sinful flesh, we all tend to think that we can improve upon God's plan of salvation. We agree that God loves us, but surely we must do something to continue in His favor, don't we? The Apostle Paul says “No!” If our human effort is necessary for salvation, then grace is no longer grace. *I do not frustrate the grace of God: for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain. (Galatians 2:21)*

Instead, we are justified by faith. And now that we are justified by faith, there is no turning back. Paul exhorts to *Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. (Galatians 5:1)* Since God has set us free from sin, death and the devil by the blood of His Son, to go back under the law means that we “fall from grace.” May God grant us faith to believe that the work of redemption is finished, and that we may “stand fast” in the victory and freedom given to us by our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36)

Yours in Christ.

The Power of the Word

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

THE WORD OF CHRIST HAS astounding power! We see in the fourth chapter of John some surprising and marvelous truths, that, at first glance, we might pass right over.

When Jesus met the Samaritan woman at the well, the first surprise was that He was talking with a Samaritan woman. Culturally, that wasn't the normal behavior of a Jewish man! Many verses later, John states that the disciples marveled that He was talking with a woman, but that none of them asked why He was talking with her.

After Jesus had told the woman the private details of her life that no stranger should know, she said that she knew that Messiah—the Christ—was coming, and that when He came He would tell them all things. Jesus said, **“I who speak to you am He.”** Jesus clearly stated that He Himself is the Messiah, the Christ, the One who was to come. This is a marvelous truth that can only be comprehended through the eyes of faith.

After Jesus' statement, the woman left her water jar behind to hurry into town and tell the people: “Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?” Leaving her water jar behind was surprising, since she came there specifically to draw water.

A little later in the chapter, John testifies that many Samaritans from that town believed in Jesus because of the woman's testimony: “He told me all that I ever did!” When they met Jesus, they asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed there for two days. Then John writes that many more believed because of His own Word. They told the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, but **we have heard for ourselves**, and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world.”

After leaving Samaria, Jesus came again to Cana in Galilee, where He had turned the water into wine, which had been His first miracle.

At Capernaum, there was a man of authority whose son was very sick. This nobleman came to Jesus and asked Him to come down and heal his son, who was at the point of death.

Jesus told him, “Unless you see signs and wonders, you will not believe.”

The man answered, “Sir, come down before my child dies!”

Jesus said to him, “Go your way. Your son will live.”

And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way. (John 4:50)

The man **believed the Word that Jesus had spoken** to him. He didn't question the Word of Christ, but went away believing that what Jesus had said would come to pass! What faith! What trust!

As the man was going home, his servants met him and told him that his son was recovering. The man asked his servants what time the child had started to get better. When they answered, “Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him,” the man knew that was the exact hour Jesus had said,

“Go! Your son will live.” The Scripture states that the man himself believed, as did the rest of his household. **They believed the Word of Christ!**

This is again the second miracle that Jesus did, when he was come out of Judaea into Galilee. (John 4:54)



The miracle of healing is truly a miracle, but there

also seems to be more miraculous events in this chapter. First, the Samaritan woman believed the Word and spread the Good News of the Christ to the townspeople. Then, many from that town believed because of the testimony of the woman, but when they heard the Word for themselves, many more believed. And lastly, the official at Capernaum believed the Word and so did everyone in his house.

The Word of Christ is powerful! It brings belief from unbelief and life from death. The writer to the Hebrews says: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do. 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 4:12-16) Let us come, believing! ~*

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After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; And found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, lately come from Italy, with his wife Priscilla; (because that Claudius had commanded all Jews to depart from Rome;) and came unto them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought: for by their occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks. And when Silas and Timotheus were come from Macedonia, Paul was pressed in the spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus was Christ. And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.

Acts 18:1-6

HERE WE HAVE PAUL ARRIVING in the city of Corinth and finding Aquila and Priscilla. They practiced the same craft as Paul, that of tent making. Paul had just come from Athens, and prior to that from Thessalonica. In these places he had disputed with the Jews. He was not very well received; in fact, He was mocked and even threatened. Now he comes to Corinth where he encountered more opposition to his teaching and preaching. This time he finds people that he can be comfortable with.

It is not a new thing that people who work in the same vein always have a lot to talk about. If you get farmers together, they will talk about farming and the weather. If you get construction folks together, the conversation invariably goes to the building trades. Oftentimes when women are gathered, they are discussing their children or their day-to-day tasks. There is a great deal of comfort in shared experiences. When we know that we aren't the only ones who are going through life doing what we are doing, we feel a sense of unity and comradeship.

While Paul found some fellowship with Aquila and Priscilla, this is the opposite experience that our Savior had when He came to earth. The gospel of John (1:11) tells us that *He came unto his own, and his own received him not*. We would be inclined to ascribe this solely to the Jews, but we have to realize this is really an indictment of all of us.

In spite of this rejection, Jesus continues to come unto us. He is relentless in His pursuit of all mankind. God's will is that none would perish, but that all would come to repentance. Through Christ's atoning sacrifice we have access to our heavenly Father.

It can be tempting for us to think we are self sufficient. We will then isolate ourselves or move somewhere where there aren't other believers around. But it is so important that we are around others who have the same "vocation," that of being the children of God called to spread the Gospel. It is also necessary to gather with them as often as possible. In this fellowship, we will find comfort and a respite from the strife of this world. We can also encourage each other in the faith, and be strengthened to go forth and proclaim God's Word to a sin sick world in need of His grace and mercy.

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. (1 John 1:3-4)



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