

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.

June 2012

The Generous Householder

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

Matthew 20:1-16

When I hear the parable of the laborers of the vineyard, my first thought is, "How unfair!" Surely Jesus doesn't sanction the behavior of the householder, does He? It seems only

natural that the laborers who worked the longest *should* get paid the most. The action of the householder offends our natural sensibilities, because we hear the parable with fallen ears and a sin-stricken mind. In fact, we probably aren't really hearing the message of the parable at all, because our focus is misdirected. This account is often referred to as "the parable of the laborers of the vineyard." Perhaps a better title would be "the parable of the generous householder." Jesus even emphasizes this point as He begins the parable: *The kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder...* The parable is not about how poorly the laborers have been treated but, rather, how kind the householder is to all of his laborers. The householder does indeed have every right to spend his money as he

wishes. He was perfectly fair to the laborers who worked for the entire day, for they agreed to work for a penny a day. Those laborers were offended because the householder was equally gracious to *all* those who were invited to labor in his vineyard, regardless of how long they had worked.



Jacob de Wet —17th Century

What a marvelous picture of God's grace toward sinners! God is gracious to us, not because we have labored so hard in His vineyard, but because Jesus laid down His life for us. It is not our work that earns us anything, but the finished work of Christ at the cross merits us the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Christ has paid the price we could not pay in order to give us the gift we could not earn. May God be praised for the grace and mercy He has generously shown us in His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. ~

In Adam All Die... In Christ Shall All Be Made Alive

Cal Niemela
Chassell, Michigan

The desire of every human being is a long and healthy life. Man dreads the thought of dying, and, while he avoids the subject on the one hand, he knows that he must die and therefore spends time and energy caring for his body with the hope that such an investment will put off that fearful reality.

If there is one statement in the Holy Scripture that even the most hardened infidel believes, it is the text we have chosen for this short message: *For as in Adam all die...* (1 Corinthians 15:22) There is not one person so foolish as to deny this Bible truth. All know and believe that man is mortal, having a day of birth and a day of death. Everywhere we see evidence of this unavoidable reality.

The reason each of us must eventually experience the frightening grip of death squeezing the life from our bodies and leaving us a cold corpse is that we all possess the seeds of mortality within our earthly frame. How did they get there you ask? The answer: Adam, the father of all mankind, was told by God in the Garden of Eden that if he ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil he would die, and, as it is recorded, Adam (with his wife Eve) was tempted by the devil, ignored God's Word and warning, and ate of that forbidden fruit. At the very moment of Adam's disobedience, his immortality was dealt a death blow. He was now a dying creature subject to the power of death. Since that time, the posterity of Adam have all been born of corruptible seed (1 Peter 1:23), which binds with strong cords our future to the grave, where our natural bodies will return to the dust of the earth.

If that was the end of the matter it would be bad enough, but it's not; it gets even worse. There was another part in Adam, that spiritual portion or, as the Bible calls it, his "living soul" that was also affected by

his act of disobedience and suffered a like fatal blow. Dead in trespasses and sins, Adam and his children faced eternal death where their souls would be condemned to spend eternity in hell. *For the wages of sin is death...* (Romans 6:23)

Here every sensible and wise person will stop and ponder his own predicament and hopefully ask the all-important question: *What must I do to be saved?* (Acts 16:30) The answer is found in God's Word: *Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...* (verse 31) *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.* (Romans 10:9) In another place Jesus told the people: *Repent ye, and believe the gospel.* (Mark 1:15)

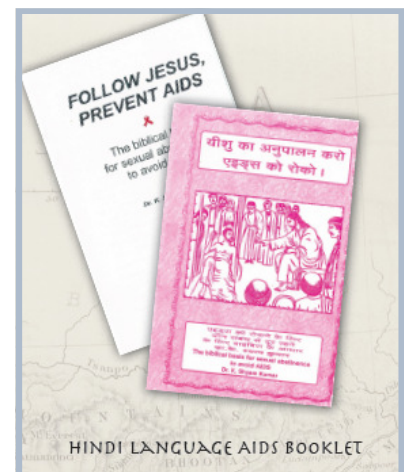
When a person has been given the gift of faith he becomes a new creature in Christ. Unbelief is overcome of faith and it can be said that *God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.* (Ephesians 2:4-7)

Then that person found resting in the finished work of Christ Jesus can rejoice in the closing words of our text, when the Apostle says *...even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* (1 Corinthians 15:22) Later in the same chapter, he says: *For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality* (1 Corinthians 15:53), and that dreadful enemy, Death, is swallowed up in victory! ~

Did You Know?

Though the worldwide HIV/AIDS epidemic has subsided, the rate of infection is still very high, and it remains an incurable disease. India has the largest number of HIV/AIDS cases of any country, more than 12 million. By comparison, America has about 1.2 million cases, with about 40,000 new cases each year. The Mission Hospital in India has been active for many years in educating the people on the disease. In this regard, Dr. K. Syam Kumar of the Mission Hospital wrote a booklet titled *Follow JESUS, Prevent AIDS*, subtitled "The biblical basis for sexual abstinence to avoid AIDS."

Using biblical passages, the booklet encourages readers to remain pure sexually to avoid the disease. It has been translated into 22 languages of India and 4 other languages. More than 4 million copies have been printed. The messages are disseminated through seminars in schools and colleges, churches, street gatherings, house-to-house visits, etc. It has been well received, and pastors in many countries beg for more copies.



The Marriage Feast

Martin Luther

And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding... (Matthew 22:1-3)

The great love Christ has for us is presented to us in this picture of the wedding feast. There are many kinds of love, but none is so ardent and fervent as a bride's love, the love a new bride has to her bridegroom, and on the other hand, the bridegroom's love to the bride. True love has no regard for pleasures, presents, riches or gold rings, but cares only for the bridegroom. If he even gave her all he had, she would regard none of his presents, but say, "I will have only thee." If he has nothing at all, it makes no difference with her; she will, in spite of all that, desire him. That is the true nature of the love of a bride.

This true bride-love God presented to us in Christ: He allowed Him to become man for us and be united with our human nature that we might thus perceive and appreciate His good will toward us. As the bride loves her betrothed, so also does Christ love us; and we on the other hand will love Him, if we believe and are the true bride. Although He gave us heaven, the wisdom of all the prophets, the glory of all the saints and angels, yet we would not esteem them unless He gave us Himself. The bride can be satisfied by nothing, is insatiable. The only one thing she wants is the Bridegroom Himself: *My beloved is mine, and I am his...* (Song of Solomon 2:16) She cannot rest until she has her Beloved Himself. So is Christ also disposed toward me; He will have me only, and besides nothing. If I gave Him all I could, it would be of no use to him; He would have no regard for it. He wants my whole heart, for the outward virtues are only maidservants; He wants the wife herself. He demands that I say from the bottom of my heart, "I am Thine." The union and marriage are accomplished by faith, so that I rely fully and freely upon Him, that He is mine. If I only have Him, what can I desire more?

What do we give to Him? An impure bride, a dirty, old, wrinkled outcast. But He is the eternal wisdom, the eternal truth, the eternal light, an exceptionally beautiful youth. What does He give us? Himself, wholly and completely. He does not cut a piece off for me or give me a little morsel, but the whole fountain of eternal wisdom. If then I am His and He mine, I have eternal life, righteousness and all that belongs to Him. Therefore I am righteous, saved; neither death, sin, hell nor Satan can harm me. If He gave me only a part of His wisdom, righteousness and life, I would say, "That is of no help to me, but I want Thee; without Thee nothing is real and true." When He gives me His servants, His prophets, He gives me only a part; the gifts are only concubines, among whom there is only one who is the true bride. There are many souls to

whom gifts are made—wisdom, love and the like—but they are not the true brides, for they do not say, "Thou art mine," but they court your purse on the side, for they love the gifts. But the true bride says, "Thee alone will I have. Thou art mine, and not the ring, not the jewel, not the present."

What do we bring to Him? Nothing but all our heartaches, all our misfortunes, sins, misery and lamentations. He is the eternal light, we the eternal darkness; He the life, we death; He righteousness, we sin. This is a marriage that is very unequal. But what does the Bridegroom do? He is so fastidious that He will not dwell with His bride until He first adorns her in the highest degree. How is that done? The Apostle Paul says: "He gave His tender body unto death for them and sprinkled them with His holy blood and cleansed them through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5-6)." He instituted a washing; that washing is baptism, with which He washes her. More than this, He has given to her His Word; in that she believes and through her faith she becomes a bride. The Bridegroom comes with all His treasures; but I come with all my sins, with all my misery and heart-grief. Because this is a marriage and union in the sense that they become one flesh, they should embrace each other, although one is even a little sick and awkward; for what concerns one, the other must also bear.

Therefore, the bride says, "I am Thine, Thou must have me," then He must at the same time take all my misfortune upon Himself. Thus are my sins eternal righteousness, my death eternal life, my hell heaven; for these two, sin and righteousness, cannot exist together, nor heaven and hell. Are we now to come together the one must consume and melt the other in order that we may be united and become one. Now His righteousness is truly incomparably stronger than my sins, and His life immeasurably stronger than my death; for He is life itself where all life must be kindled. Therefore my death thus vanishes in His life, my sins in His righteousness and my condemnation in His salvation. Here my sin is forced between the hammer and the anvil, so that it perishes and vanishes. For now since my sin, my filth, is taken away He must adorn and clothe me with His eternal righteousness and with all His grace until I become beautiful; for I am His bride. Thus I appropriate to myself all that He has, as He takes to Himself all that I have.

Now since Christ is mine and I am His, if Satan rages, I have Christ who is my life; does sin trouble me, I have Christ who is my righteousness; do hell and perdition attack me, I have Christ, who is my salvation. Thus, there may rage within whatever will, if I have Christ; to Him I can look so that nothing can harm me. This union of the divine with the human is pointed out in the picture here of the marriage feast, and the exalted love God has to us in the love of the bride. ~

Because He Loves Me So

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Hello to each of you. I am thankful that each of you believes in God and His Son, Jesus, and I pray that He will bless you today. I want to share a poem. Feel free to make up your own tune to it if you like to sing.



I love to hear the story, which angel voices tell,
How once the King of Glory, came down to earth to dwell.
I know that I'm a sinner, but this I surely know;
The Lord came down to save me,
Because He loves me so.

I'm glad my blessed Savior, was once a child like me,
To show how pure and holy, His little ones should be;
I want to be like Jesus when I'm on this earth below.
I know that He will lead me,
Because He loves me so.

He's full of love and mercy; to Him my songs I'll raise.
And though I cannot see Him, I know He hears my praise.
For He has kindly promised that even I may go
To sing among His angels,
Because He loves me so.

Author Unknown

As we all go about our days we can stop to thank God for all He has given us and does give us each day. The best thing He gave us was Jesus, and some day the second best thing He will give us is a beautiful heavenly home with Him, where He has prepared a place for each one who believes in Him. I pray that each of you children will keep Jesus first in your heart. He loves each of you SO much.

A happy and blessed Father's Day to all fathers. ~

From the Mission Hospital in India

(Consequences of the Mission Hospital Operation Theatre not being in operation.)

Many Christian Churches here in India have remembered the value of the Mission Hospital in life-saving situations in years past. An older Christian widow who was sick has one daughter who was also sick and pregnant. Her husband has HIV. She completed her nine months of pregnancy and needed a cesarean section in order to deliver the baby.

Because the Mission Hospital is no longer financially able to perform surgeries such as this, we admitted her to another hospital and paid \$300 in advance. The older widow and daughter are in our church, but very poor, and we have the responsibility to care for them. If the cesarean was not done the daughter and baby would have surely died.

The other hospital operated on the woman, but they could not control the bleeding. She was kept in the ICU for many days and was finally able to be out of danger, but the hospital bill was \$800. At the same time they did not conduct tests to know the clotting and bleeding times and the serum calcium level, which play an important role in clotting.

This is only one story, but there are so many hundreds of stories like this. These poor destitute widows beg you and the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America to pray for bringing the Operation Theatre back to its former working condition so that lives will be saved. This is the humble begging of the very old people who do not have anywhere to turn to for help except to the ALCA church. If the Operation Theatre was fully operational as it was three years ago, the cesarean section and treatments would have cost \$150.

Dr. K. Syam Kumar, Mission Hospital India

From Alvar Helmes:

The Mission Hospital was opened to help with the medical care of the poor and destitute people in that part of India. When the hospital was operating at its peak, the financial support averaged about \$5000/month. But now we have only been able to raise about \$865/month. As a consequence, the Operation Theatre had to be closed. The hospital is still open and patients are examined and diagnosed every day, but the patients must pay for their own medicines (they are given prescriptions) and surgical procedures are no longer performed.

More than 2.2 million people have been examined and treated by the hospital since June 1998. Thousands of lives have been saved through the medical care provided by the Mission Hospital, a Satellite Medical Clinic, and Medical camps conducted in outlying villages and tribal areas. ~

Your Reasonable Service

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

The life of a believer in Christ is a life of service. It is a life of sacrifice, a life lived for the benefit of the other. Sadly, we as Christians often work against one another and not as a body of people working together with the gifts with which God has blessed us. We are to use these gifts for the sake of the kingdom and for the sake of the Gospel of Christ, not for personal gain or in a malicious way. The Scripture reminds us constantly that we are to lay our lives down for the sake of the other. We are to walk in a new way, understanding ourselves as born again, renewed and transformed in Christ. The Apostle Paul writes:

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

Romans 12:1-8

We are instructed by Paul to live our lives differently than perhaps we had been living them. He says this is our reasonable service; in other words, understanding the mercy of God, the graciousness of God, and that we have been saved by His grace, our lives should be lived in the same way. We are to be gracious people, offering grace unto the sinner. It is foolishness on our part to think that somehow we are entitled to this salvation; it is a gift that we have received and we are called to remember this. We, the Gentile people, have been grafted into the good olive tree (Romans 11), wild branches that we are. We are to remember from where we have come. We were strangers to the covenant of Abraham and had no right to the mercy of God. We, who were not the people of God, have been made the people of God. O, how marvelous is the mercy of God and how amazing is His grace!

Our bodies, then, we offer to God as holy and acceptable, a sacrifice that's living. He has given us life. The ways of the world or the age we live in are not the rule and norm in our lives, but rather the ways of Jesus the Christ. He is the One who has

given us a new existence, who has transformed us by His work on our behalf. Our minds are to be stayed on Him and our actions are to emulate Him. This is what Paul means when he says not to think of ourselves more highly than we should, but rather according to the merits of Jesus, the One who has transformed our minds. Paul says:

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name.

Philippians 2:3-9

The question often arises: "How can I a sinner act and behave like Christ?" The answer is found in Scripture. Jesus, when He told His disciples that He would be leaving them, said:

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.

John 14:12-18

It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to act and behave in a Christ-like manner. God, in His mysterious and miraculous way, empowers us by His Holy Spirit. He is gracious and gives us everything we need to carry out our ministry. We have all been redeemed, purchased by the blood of Christ. We are all called to minister or serve within the kingdom, which is the church of the saints. We are not rivals competing against one another. We are a body of believers with

different gifts and abilities. So Paul says, "Do what you are called to do according as God has given you the ability and grace to do so." This is your reasonable service. ~



Emile Renouf—1881
"A Helping Hand"

Our Blessed Heritage

Apostolic Lutheran Church of Berkeley, CA

Mary Ann Karlsen, Secretary

I have all the minutes of the church's yearly meetings starting from 1894 when it was first established.

Twelve Finnish immigrants gathered on March 28, 1894, to organize the Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Church of West Berkeley, California. They chose five men as trustees with Bernat G. Fardig as the chairman. Soon he was elected as their preacher and also was the secretary for many years.

For the first few years, services were held at the Ahlgren home for which they paid \$2.00 rent. A special meeting was held on April 23, 1901, to decide on a meeting place when the Ahlgren home was no longer available. It was decided to solicit funds for building a church. Within a few days, they had sufficient funds to begin building on a lot at 936 Channing Way in Berkeley. The church was dedicated on September 29, 1901, and the following year the decision was made to officially incorporate the church.



Channing Way Church

Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws were drawn up. Translating from the Finnish, the first article states: "The congregation in Berkeley confesses its belief in the Christian living faith that is founded on God's Holy Word as the prophets and apostles have written where Jesus Christ is the chief Cornerstone and holds that this testimony of living faith is the highest law upon which all teaching in the congregation must be interpreted and preached." The second article states: "The voting members are limited to those who have living faith, who have repented of their sins and are born again according to the Word of God."

B. G. Fardig remained preacher and secretary for most of the years until 1931. The minutes increased in length as the church membership grew. Sunday School is mentioned for the first time in 1924 and among the teachers appears the name of John Riikonen. In 1925, for the first time a woman is elected as a trustee. After that several women served as officers and trustees for many years. In 1933, Fardig is the chairman and pastor, and John Riikonen is the new secretary. The following year, John Riikonen is listed as assistant pastor, and in 1934 Fardig's name no longer appears.

Beginning in 1934, John Riikonen served as pastor of the congregation. In 1935, the congregation voted to change its name to the Apostolic Lutheran Church of Berkeley, California, and new By-Laws were adopted. Rev. Riikonen continued as secretary until 1945. By then the congregation was growing; the minutes list many new names of those taking on various duties of the church. The minutes at this time were still written in Finnish and were not written



Pastor Riikonen

in English until 1968. Church services were held in both Finnish and English through the seventies.

I moved to the San Francisco Bay area in the mid-fifties and was happy to join in fellowship with the Christians in the Berkeley church. Many others came to California in the following years. By 1959, the congregation had decided that they needed a larger church and looked for a place to build in Berkeley. However, we were able to buy the Suomi Synod Lutheran Church in the spring of 1960; we moved into that church on the corner of Byron Street and Allston Way in May. This church served the congregation well for forty years, during which we often gathered in fellowship to worship and study God's Word.



Berkeley Church

Rev. Riikonen remained our pastor until 1982. He was well known throughout the ALCA and served on the Central Board for many years. The assistant pastors during this time were Joe Wirkkala, Fred Johnson, Willard Tervo, Jim Kurtti, Ben Luokkanen, and Larry Rasaka; Ivan Seppala moved to the area and became an assistant pastor in 1970. In 1978, he became the first assistant pastor and in 1982, he was elected pastor along with Rev. Riikonen. He has served as pastor ever since. Ivan Seppala also served on the ALCA Central Board and was the secretary for many years. Later assistant pastors include Kirk Otto and now Corrie Karlsen.

Except for a brief period, the church in Berkeley was the only ALCA church in northern California. (There are two churches in southern California—a church in Sanger near Fresno and another in Los Angeles.) Many families have traveled long distances to attend church on Communion Sundays and for special services. Over the years, some have come from Red Bluff, Chico, Paradise, and Woodland from the north; Stockton and Modesto from the Central Valley; San Jose from the South Bay area; and Pioneer from the mountains. Currently, we have members living in Lathrop and Manteca in the Central Valley. Local members have driven up to forty miles to attend church every Sunday.

As the years went by, the elders left this earth to a Better Land, some families returned back to their home states, children grew up and moved to other areas (many to Hockinson, WA), parents retired and left to live closer to their children, and slowly the congregation got smaller. After our 100th year celebration, it was decided to sell our church and we rented the First Apostolic Lutheran Church of Berkeley for several years. When there was no one living in the city, the decision to rent a church in the Walnut Creek area brought us to the Ygnacio Valley Presbyterian Church in Concord. Our services there start at 12:00 noon. We thank God each Sunday for the opportunity to gather together to worship Him and to learn more about the way He has set before us in this world. Please join us when you visit the San Francisco Bay area. ~

The Office of the Holy Spirit

Jim Maunu; Vancouver, WA
March 1993 CM

What is the office of the Holy Spirit? We read in the Catechism that it is to call, enlighten, sanctify and preserve us; the Holy Spirit awakens in our hearts a knowledge of sin, invites us to accept God's grace in Christ, keeps us in the true faith unto righteousness, and forgives our sins daily, and on the last day He shall raise up all believers to everlasting life.

In *Ephesians 1:7, 13* we read: *In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace... In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise.* Paul tells the Ephesians how they are preserved by the Holy Spirit, *Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. (verse 14)*

There are those who would say the Holy Spirit has to manifest itself

in some visible way, such as speaking in tongues, or in a so-called extra manifestation, to prove that He has come to dwell in a person. These extra manifestations that people seek belittle the office of the Holy Spirit. It begins to create an imitation of spirituality that is not based on the Holy Spirit's true office. Paul writes about those who come to preach another Jesus than we preached. He was concerned that they would receive another spirit, different from the one they had before, or a different gospel from the one they had received. Paul says, *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. (2 Corinthians 11:13-14)* These false teachers do not represent the true Jesus, the one and only Holy Spirit whom God has sent. They are further described by Jude: *These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear: clouds*

they are without water, carried about of winds; trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; Raging waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, to whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. (Jude 1:12-13)

May this Comforter freely exercise His duties in us daily as we walk by faith and not by sight. ~

The Holy Spirit's power cannot be harnessed. His power cannot be used to accomplish anything other than the Father's will. He is not a candy dispenser. He is not a vending machine. He is not a genie waiting for someone to rub His lamp the right way. He is Holy God.

Charles Stanley

I have often said that faith makes of us lords, and love makes of us servants.

Indeed, by faith we become gods and partakers of the divine nature and name, as is said in *Psalms 82:6: I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High.* But through love we become equal to the poorest. According to faith we are in need of nothing, and have an abundance; according to love we are servants of all. By faith we receive blessings from above, from God; through love we give them out below, to our neighbor. Even as Christ in His divinity stood in need of nothing, but in His humanity served everybody who had need of Him. We also must by faith be born God's sons and gods, lords and kings, even as Christ is born true God of the Father in eternity; and again, come out of ourselves by love and help our neighbors with kind deeds, even as Christ became man to help us all. And as Christ is not God because He first merited divinity by His works or attained to it through His incarnation but has it by birth, without any works, even before He became man; so we also have not merited by works or love sonship with God, so that our sins are forgiven, and death and hell cannot injure us; but without works and before our love, we have received it in the Gospel by grace through faith. And as Christ first became man to serve us after being God from eternity; so we also do good and exercise love to our neighbor, after we have become pious, free from sin, alive, saved, and sons of God by faith.

Martin Luther

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HAVE YOU MOVED? Please notify the Book Concern of address changes. We must pay return postage on undelivered mail.

You're Special

Ted Griffin

Submitted by Elmer R. Liimatta; Chassell, Michigan

"There are no ordinary people. You have never talked to a mere mortal," wrote C. S. Lewis. It's true—each one of us is a special creation of God.

Believe it or not, no one else is just like you. Your physical appearance, voice and personality traits, habits, intelligence, personal tastes—all these make you one of a kind. Even your fingerprints distinguish you from every other human being—past, present, or future. You are not the product of some cosmic assembly line; you are unique.

But the most important facet of your identity is that God created you in His own image (Genesis 1:27). He made you so you could share in His creation, could love and laugh and know Him person to person. You are special indeed!

The Bible reveals God's total interest in you as an individual. The psalmist wrote in one of his most beautiful prayers, *I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made...* (Psalm 139:14) God knew you even before you were born. Then, and now, He has plans just for you, plans conceived in love.

As we appreciate God's constant concern for us, we really begin to grasp the awfulness of sin. He loves you and me so much; yet how often we go our own way, turning our backs on Him. God's designs for our lives are then blocked; His mercies do not come to the unwilling.

But even here we are precious to God, for He continues to love us even when we pay Him no mind. He still sees us as individuals with great value. No wonder the psalmist declared: *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand...* (Psalm 139:17-18) God is not an unfeeling, cold-hearted monarch of the heavens. He feels our pains; He shares our sorrows. He cares, and He considers each of us important enough to love.

In fact, He loves us so much that He gave His only Son to die for our sins. *Herein is love*, the Bible says, *not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation* (full payment) *for our sins.* (1 John 4:10)

Because you and I are special to God, He wants to forgive us and give us full, meaningful lives. When we trust in Jesus Christ and let Him put our lives together, the Bible says that we become God's masterpieces, created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). Can anyone be more special than that? Yes, you are valuable to God! ~



Stepping in Your Steps

Mrs. Avery Stuttle

Submitted by Iris Seppala
Clayton, California

Climbing the mountain wild and high,
Bold was the glance of his eagle eye,
Proud was the spirit that knew no fear,
Reckless the tread of the mountaineer.

Up and up through the fields of snow
Down and down o'er the rocks below,
On and on o'er the pathway steep,
On o'er the chasms wide and deep.

Hark! O'er the mountain bleak and wild,
Echoed the voice of a little child:
"Papa, look out! I am coming, too,
Stepping in your steps, just like you."

"Papa, O Papa! Just see me,
Walking like Papa—don't you see?"
Pale was the cheek of the mountaineer,
Pale with the thrill of an awful fear:

Paused he quick, and with eager face,
Clasped the child in his strong embrace;
Backward glanced, with his eye so dim,
Back o'er the path he had followed him.

O Father, pause in the path of life,
Rough with the chasms of sin and strife;
When you walk along with a step so free
Among the rocks where the danger be.

List to the voice that is sounding sweet,
List! They are coming—the little feet.
Walk with care; they are coming too,
"Stepping in your steps, just like you."

Happy and Blessed Father's Day!