

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 2020

Sin Renamed Is Still Sin

Pastor Elmer Yliniemi; Frazee, Minnesota
August 2000 CM

But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. (Isaiah 59:2)

THE BIBLE TELLS US THAT it is sin that separates man from God. Since the fall of Adam and Eve, men constantly break the divine law, because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. (Romans 8:7)

According to Scripture, our evil thoughts, desires, and deeds are sin whether done knowingly or unknowingly. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (Romans 7:17) But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (Matthew 5:28)

Sin came first, then came shame, guilt, and blame. Adam and Eve were ashamed and tried to hide from God. They knew they were guilty, so Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed the serpent. The result of that fall has been passed on to the whole human race. Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (Romans 5:12)

Sin is a serious matter. But for the past thirty or forty years, our society has been trying to redefine sin, supposedly so it would no longer offend our Holy God.

One of Satan's weapons is to change the meaning of words. Adultery and fornication are called affairs and relationships, murder has become pro-choice, perverted relationships are alternate lifestyles, addictions are illnesses, divorces are no-fault, anger is assertiveness, greed is good business, and pride is high self-esteem. If we talk about sin, we're intolerant. We are more afraid of offending man than God.

Another tool of Satan involves the use of humor and entertainment. If we can be made to laugh at sin, and to enjoy the sinful lives of others through various media, it becomes more acceptable.

God spoke to Prophet Ezekiel in his day saying, Son of man, say unto her, Thou art the land that is not cleansed... Her

priests have violated my law, and have profaned mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from my sabbaths, and I am profaned among them. And I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none. (Ezekiel 22:24, 26, 30)

Martin Luther lived in such a time, also. He wrote, "A sinner no longer exists in the world; but, God have mercy on us, the world is full of 'saints.' Where vices become honorable virtues, the situation defiles remedy."

Is this the state we are in today? Have we lost the sense of personal sin and guilt? Is there any among us to stand in the gap?

If one does not recognize his sin and God's wrath, he cannot come to repentance and the forgiveness of sins. John that Baptist came to prepare the way for Christ by preaching the Law, which led the people to repentance. Then he pointed them to Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all the demands of the Law through His death and resurrection. The final message of Jesus to His disciples was to preach repentance and remission of sins in His name.



The sinner who knows no guilt is truly helpless. Luther said, "A penitent heart is a rare thing and a great grace... only the Holy Spirit can impart it."

God is still seeking those who are willing to pray, and preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins to a lost world. The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God. Let us not become weary in teaching the Word of God in our homes and surroundings. God's love in Jesus Christ is offered to everyone. When God has made known to us the greatness of our sin, and we are cleansed by the precious blood of Christ, the greatness of God's grace is revealed to

us. Then our hearts and lips can break forth with praise, as did the Psalmist: Praise ye the Lord. Praise the Lord, O my soul. While I live will I praise the Lord: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. (Psalm 146:1-2) ~

Jesus Is the Truth

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? ...

John 18:37-38

PONTIUS PILATE ASKS JESUS A question that certainly resonates with us today. In an age where there is great mistrust in the common sources of information, such as the media, government and the academy, we are quite interested in hearing the answer that Jesus might give. While Jesus does not respond to Pilate's question during that interrogation, we can hear His answer throughout the Gospel of John. There are, in fact twenty-two references to the word "truth" in John's Gospel.

Jesus Christ is not merely interested in the truth. He is the embodiment of truth.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.... For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:14, 17) Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)

As Christ prepares His disciples for His departure, He promises to send the "Spirit of truth" to guide them. The Spirit will do so by directing them to Christ.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me... (John 15:26)

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. (John 16:13)

To come to a proper and truthful understanding about ourselves, the world around us and even God Himself, we

must hearken unto the voice of the Spirit of truth as He reveals Christ through the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the prism through which we can more fully see and engage the world. The author Paul Little writes, "Throughout the ages, and perhaps especially today, it has been a great test of faith to believe that God is good. There is so much which suggests the contrary. Helmut Thielicke points out that fabric viewed through a magnifying glass is clear in the middle and blurred at the edges. But we know that the edges are clear because of what we see in the center. Life, he says, is like the fabric. There are many blurred edges which we do not understand, but they are to be interpreted by the clarity we see in the

centre—the cross of Christ." It is in the Cross that speaks to us of the truth of God's forgiveness, life and salvation.

May God grant us grace to continue to fix our eyes and hearts on the center of the fabric of our existence, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:31-36) ~



The Power of the Gospel

So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

Romans 1:15-16

APOSTLE PAUL WAS NOT ASHAMED of the gospel of Christ, for he knew that it was the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth. So we see again the matter of faith. Those who believe the gospel of Jesus' bloody merits receive God's power to deliver them from sin and darkness unto God's great salvation. It tells us this in Romans 3:23-26: *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.*

Dear friends, where is it that we see and receive this power of God? It is, as I said, in the bloody merits of Jesus Christ, for we read in Corinthians, for the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. This is a wonderful matter, so great beyond measure. This is why Paul was willing, with everything in him, to preach this message to the Romans. The preaching of the cross is a message of deliverance to the captives, the opening of the prison to them that are bound, life from the dead, sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the lame man leaps and walks, the weak become strong, the sorrowful begin to rejoice, the sun of grace shines, hell's door is closed, and heaven's door is open wide to every needy sinner! Thank you Jesus for Thy precious redemption!

Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan

Submitted by Ralph & Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire

He Answered Her Not a Word

from Streams in the Desert, Compiled by Mrs. Chas. E. Cowman

Submitted by Dave Impola; Everett, Washington

Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.

Matthew 15:21-28

IT MAY BE A CHILD of God is reading these words who has had some great crushing sorrow, some bitter disappointment, some heart-breaking blow from a totally unexpected quarter. You are longing for your Master's voice bidding you, "Be of good cheer," but only silence and a sense of mystery and misery meet you—"He answered her not a word."

God's tender heart must often ache listening to all the sad, complaining cries which arise from our weak, impatient hearts, because we do not see that for our own sakes He answers not at all or otherwise than seems best to our tear-blinded, short-sighted eyes.

The silences of Jesus are as eloquent as His speech and may be a sign, not of His disapproval, but of His approval and of a deep purpose of blessing for you.

"Why art thou cast down, O . . . soul?" Thou shalt yet praise Him, yes, even for His silence. Listen to an old and beautiful story of how one Christian dreamed that she saw three others at prayer. As they knelt the Master drew near to them.

As He approached the first of the three, He bent over her in tenderness and grace, with smiles full of radiant love and spoke to her in accents of purest, sweetest music.

Leaving her, He came to the next, but only placed His hand upon her bowed head, and gave her one look of loving approval.

The third woman He passed almost abruptly without stopping for a word or glance. The woman in her dream said to herself, "How greatly He must love the first one, to the second He gave His approval, but none of the special demonstrations of love He gave the first; and the third must have grieved Him deeply, for He gave her no word at all and not even a passing look.

"I wonder what she has done, and why He made so much difference between them?"

As she tried to account for the action of her Lord, He Himself stood by her and said: "O woman! How wrongly hast thou interpreted Me. The first kneeling woman needs all the weight of My tenderness and care to keep her feet in My narrow way. She needs My love, thought and help every moment of the day. Without it she would fail and fall.

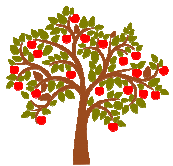
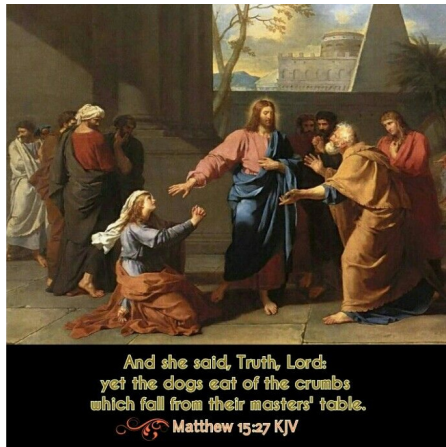
"The second has stronger faith and deeper love, and I can trust her to trust Me however things may go and whatever people do.

"The third, whom I seemed not to notice, and even to neglect, has faith and love of the finest quality, and her I am training by quick and drastic processes for the highest and holiest service.

"She knows Me so intimately, and trusts Me so utterly, that she is independent of words or looks or any outward imitation of My approval. She is not dismayed nor discouraged by any circumstances through which I arrange that she shall pass; she trusts Me when sense and reason and every finer instinct of the natural heart would rebel;—because she knows that I am working in her for eternity, and

that what I do, though she knows not the explanation now, she will understand hereafter.

"I am silent in My love because I love beyond the power of words to express, or of human hearts to understand, and also for your sakes that you may learn to love and trust Me in Spirit-taught, spontaneous response to My love, without the spur of anything outward to call it forth." He "will do marvels" if you will learn the mystery of His silence, and praise Him, for every time He withdraws His gifts that you may better know and love the Giver. ~



THE BIBLE, OR HOLY SCRIPTURE, is like a fair and spacious orchard, wherein all sorts of trees do grow, from which we may pluck divers kinds of fruits; for in the Bible we have rich and precious comforts, learnings, admonitions, warnings, promises, and threatenings, etc. There is not a tree in this orchard on which I have not knocked, and have shaken at least a couple of apples or pears from the same.

Martin Luther

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

Psalms 19:7-10

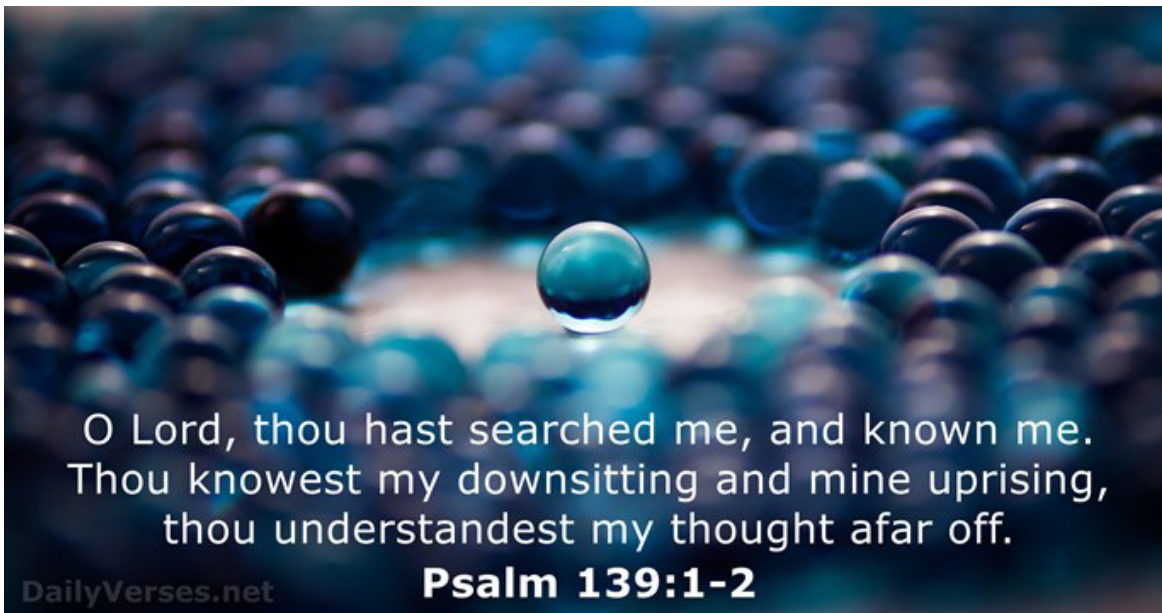
Does the Lord Know Me?

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

[Editor's Note: Dear Children, Gwen is still caring for her grandchildren who are healing from the car accident. She and her family are healing from grief, which causes much sadness. We know that the Lord is near to the brokenhearted. He feels our pain and carries us in His arms. Please continue to pray for Gwen and her family. She wrote this article in August 2002.]

Dear Children, precious in the Lord's sight,

The other morning I opened the Bible to one of my favorite books, the Psalms, and it happened to open to the 139th chapter.



AS WE LOOK AT VERSE ONE, *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me*, the above question is already answered. Yes, the Lord knows us.

He knows where you go, and when you rest. He even knows what you think—even before you know it. He is right beside you and watches where you step. He knows exactly how you feel when you are hurt, sad, angry, lonely, or happy. *Thou compasses my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. (verse 3)*

For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. (verse 4) The Lord does know every word you speak, even if you whisper secrets to a friend. He hears any unkind words we speak. We need to be very careful, and think about what we say. We should ask ourselves: is it good or bad? Will it hurt anyone—even me?

The Lord protects you in front and behind, and keeps His hand on you no matter where you go. He cares so much for you. You can never leave the Lord's sight. As a child of God, His Spirit will follow you all the days of your life.

Verses 7-10 say that if one were to go to heaven, to hell, or to the most desolate place of the sea, you would find the Lord there ahead of you: *Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of*

the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

There is no place where the Lord cannot be, and even in the places I mentioned, the Lord will be there to hold your hand and to lead you.

Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. (verse 12) This verse is saying that where the Lord is, there is no darkness. If people have Jesus in their hearts and truly believe in Him, darkness cannot be in the heart.

I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

(verse 14) Verses 13-16 speak of how God knew all about you before you were born. He saw you in your mother's womb, and even when you did not yet have a real baby look, God had written in His book all about you. Regarding arms, legs, eyes, hair, fingernails, and so on, there is nothing He does not know, for He made you. When you were born and your parents held you for

the first time, they were holding the exact baby that God planned you to be.

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: when I awake, I am still with thee. (verses 17-18)

The Lord is near you and all who love Him. You are always in His thoughts. He is such a great God, and nothing can compare to Him.

Verses 19 -24 speak of enemies, and how our Lord will even deal with them as He has to. God will protect you from them. Sometimes people will do or say mean things to you, or use God's name in vain, and you will get angry at them. But we must not treat them the same way. We should pray for them.

Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (verses 23-24) Finally, we should all ask God to show us if there be any bad ways or thoughts that we may have, and ask Him to help us to repent of those things. We ask that He would continue to lead us in the way everlasting.

God knows everything about you, and He knows you better than you know yourself. He loves you more than you love yourself.

God's peace.

Preach the Word

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll
New York Mills, Minnesota

But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done, added yet this above all, that he shut up John in prison.

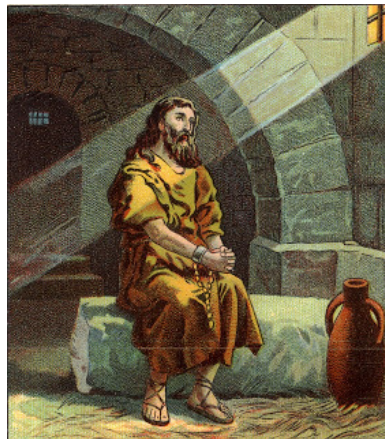
Luke 3:19-20

THE ABOVE HAPPENED SHORTLY AFTER Jesus' ministry began. John was arrested for preaching the truth of God's Word. He dared to speak out against Herod and suffered the consequences. From Mark's gospel we see that the consequences didn't end with time in jail: *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 6:19-29)

John's suffering and death was the direct result of his faithfulness. With boldness he called Herod to repentance, for which he paid the ultimate price. The point is that John was faithful. He didn't mince words to appease the powerful; he didn't tell Herod what he wanted to hear. Rather, he spoke the truth. This is how those who endeavor to bring the Word to God's people have to act. Paul warns us in his second epistle to Timothy saying, *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)

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, and his preaching resulted in his death. 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 look around us and see so much evil, so much despair, so much sin. Jesus Christ suffered all of the above, and in doing so He overcame the world. In believing in His finished work we have eternal life. So we can go forth with boldness, not fearing the consequences, and preach the Gospel to a world that so desperately needs to hear it. *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?*

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Esaias saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:13-17)

God's peace.

My Lord, My Love

My Lord, my Love, was crucified,
He all the pains did bear;
But in the sweetness of His rest
He makes His servants share.

His blood was shed instead of ours,
His soul our hell did bear:
He took our sin, gave us Himself;
What an exchange is here!

His flesh is heavenly food indeed,
His blood is drink divine,
His mouth most sweet my pardon seals,
He tells me He is mine.

If now these feasts of Christ are sweet,
And heaven on earth they prove"
Oh what must full communion be
With the whole church above.

John Mason

The Complaint of Isaiah

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

Oh that thou wouldst rend the heavens, that thou wouldst come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence.

Isaiah 64:1

THE PASSAGE ABOVE FROM ISAIAH is always striking to me. God gave these words to Isaiah between one hundred and two hundred years before the events he was to describe would take place. God Himself anticipated the complaints that would come from the people and placed those words in the mouth of the prophet so that He could answer them. God knew the people would complain as their enemies would grow strong around them and press them, so He had Isaiah fulfill the role of those that would question what God was doing and why He didn't come down and help them as He had in the past.

The beautiful verse above is actually that complaint summarized in poetic form in the KJV. What God really has Isaiah say is "Why don't You come down off Your throne and come help us?" God knew that the people wouldn't understand that what they were going through was the consequence of their own action. They had been disobedient and would wind up going into exile. God would summon them to repentance but they wouldn't listen to Him. God wasn't coming down to help them because He was the one sending them to exile. However God was going to come help them. He was going to come down off that throne and do something amazing: He was going to send His Son as a man to save His people once and for all. He would send Immanuel, God With Us, and would indeed dwell with us restoring us from fallenness.

Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all. And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Judah an inheritor of my mountains: and mine elect shall inherit it, and my servants shall

dwell there. And Sharon shall be a fold of flocks, and the valley of Achor a place for the herds to lie down in, for my people that have sought me. (Isaiah 65:8-10)

God was demonstrating through His dialogue with Isaiah that He always knows what He's doing. Sometimes in the circumstances we face in this world we may question if God knows what He's doing. We may even turn to the point of thinking that we are being punished by God. It's in those times that we must turn from our own thoughts and give ear to the Word of God, to listen to Him speak to us of Jesus, the precious Lamb of God, who has taken away the sin of the world on the cross at Calvary. This is a true repentance, a real change of mind about God in which we see God not according to our mind but in the mind of Christ. Then we can see the fullness of the gospel, Jesus took our sin once and for all and gave us God's righteousness. *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)*

God always knows what He's doing. Even more important, He knows what He's done. Isaiah could only see and know in part but we see and know the fullness of Jesus Christ fulfilled and guaranteed through the Holy Spirit. God is with us. Thanks be to God. This is the message we are given by God to deliver to the world, God is reconciled to us and wants us to be reconciled to Him. *God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:19-20)* This is the substance of all we teach: the finished work of Jesus Christ, and we thank you for support by which you make what we do possible. Thanks be to God for the unspeakable gift of His grace in Jesus Christ. Blessings upon all of you.

God's peace.

God Is Love

In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)

SOMETIMES WE ARE CONFRONTED WITH the question, how can a loving God let people go to hell? Because an act of love would be letting us go to heaven. And it would seem like an act of hatred would be letting someone go to hell. But that's a misunderstanding. Because humans in and of themselves are one hundred percent sin and unrighteousness. And as the Word tells us, our hearts are desperately wicked, meaning our hearts without Christ are frantically looking to grasp onto any evil or sin in the same way someone does when they are sliding down a cliff face. They are (desperately) reaching out and clawing to find a hand hold.

God is truly righteous and He can't allow even a fraction of a proton's worth of unrighteousness into heaven, so in an act of love He has given us His son Jesus Christ to believe on, to renounce ourselves and ask God to look to His only begotten Son's life, death and resurrection instead of our sin, mistakes, regrets and filthy flesh. And we ask Him to wash us with the pure healing and cleansing blood.

In conclusion, yes, we can say with confidence that He is a God of Love. He is Love, the only true definition of love. But He is also a righteous God. He is righteousness, the only true definition of righteous. And Christ crucified is the only answer that allows both of those attributes to exist in harmony.

So, yes, God is one hundred percent love and God is one hundred percent righteous. And that was proven on the hill of Golgotha so many hundreds of years ago. And is still proven today by the empty tomb.

Gordon Kuusisto; New Ipswich, New Hampshire

Fear of the Dark

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

ONE OF THE EARLY FEARS in childhood, and that often continues into adulthood, is the fear of the dark. We can't SEE in the dark, and so we think that whatever is hiding there in the dark will get us. It's not so much the darkness itself that scares us, it's what lives there in the dark. A little night light can often alleviate that fear of the dark (and the monsters) for a child.

Psalms 119:105 says that the Word of God is a lamp for our feet and a light for our path. As Christians, our night light is the Word of God. The Word alleviates our fear of the darkness (and the monsters) and assures us of the promises of God.

The prophet Isaiah wrote: **The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.** (Isaiah 9:2) Matthew wrote that Jesus was the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. **The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.** (Matthew 4:12-16)

Who doesn't naturally fear when living in "the land of the shadow of death"? Death surrounds us, and we humans know from a very young age that death is coming for us. Death is a really big, really scary monster hiding in the dark, ready to pounce on us at any moment. No wonder we're scared of the dark.

Nevertheless, the Psalmist knows that night and day are no different to God. *If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.* (Psalm 139:11-12) David wrote: **The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?** (Psalm 27:1)

If the Lord is the essence of Light then the darkness is nothing. To the Lord, night shines as bright as the day. His vision isn't impaired, He is our Light and our Salvation, and He overcomes our fear.

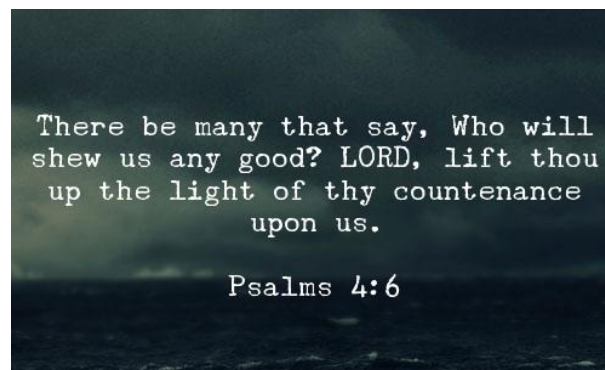
The apostle John wrote in his gospel that Jesus—the true Light which lights every human—came into the world. *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The*

same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. (John 1:1-9)

John also wrote: *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.* (1 John 1:5-7)

The Light of Jesus shines in the darkness, and the darkness is overcome by that Light. This is our hope and our security, that the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin.

Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer. O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? how long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah. But know that the Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the Lord will hear when I call unto him. Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah. Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the Lord. There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? **LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.** Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased. **I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, Lord, only makest me dwell in safety.** (Psalm 4)



In the promises of God we can rest. We can lay down in peace and sleep, for the Lord Himself keeps us, and He doesn't slumber or sleep. He lifts the light of His face to us, and gives us His peace. We need not fear the darkness or the monsters. They are overcome by the blood of the Lamb. ~

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Send articles for publication to:
Lois Matson, Editor
Email: cm@apostoliclutheran.org
Phone: (360) 904-6951
Postal Mail to:
CHRISTIAN MONTHLY
PO Box 2126
Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA

Address subscriptions, payments,
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Anders & Clara Sundqvist, Managers
THE BOOK CONCERN
PO Box 2126
Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA
Phone: (360) 896-7344
Email: books@apostoliclutheran.org

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org

Eastern Mission: eastern@apostoliclutheran.org

Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

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The Trial of Our Faith

Pastor Ivan Seppala; Clayton, California

April 1991 CM

The Apostle Peter wrote that we are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:5-7)

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1 Peter 1:7

AS WE JUST READ, we are kept by the power of God through faith unto our salvation. Today we face all manner of adversity. Our natural instinct is to question why we face these things rather than recognize that God wants us to direct our faith toward Him.

When a trial makes our future uncertain, we are tempted to look for some way to avoid enduring it. Then our faith would not be tested as to whether we're trusting in the flesh or in the Spirit.

It is when we look inward that our trials become temptations. Care and anxiety come from within us. They are not from God.

Jesus said, *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?* (Matthew 6:25-26)

My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; Knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. (James 1:2-3) How difficult it is to wait on the Lord, but there is a blessing in being patient.

During your times of trial, remember that we are kept by the power of God. We have this assurance in His Word: *There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* (1 Corinthians 10:13) ~

A Letter to a Beloved Friend

Written to George Spenliem. April 7, 1516.

I should be very glad to know what is the state of your soul Is it not tired of its own righteousness? Does it not breathe freely at last, and does it not confide in the righteousness of Christ?

In our days, pride seduces many and especially those who labor with all their might to become righteous. Not understanding the righteousness of God that is given to us freely in Christ Jesus, they wish to stand before Him on their own merits, but that cannot be.

When you were living with me, you were in that error, and so was I. I am yet struggling unceasingly against it, and I have not yet entirely triumphed over it.

Oh, my dear brother, learn to know Christ and Him crucified. Learn to sing unto Him a new song, to despair of yourself, and to say to Him, "Thou, Lord Jesus Christ, art my righteousness, and I am Thy sin. Thou hast taken what was mine, and hast given me what was thine. What Thou wast not, Thou didst become, in order that I might become what I was not."

Beware, my dear George, of pretending to such purity as no longer to confess yourself a sinner, for Christ dwells only with sinners. He came down from heaven, where He was living among the righteous, in order to live also among sinners. Meditate carefully upon this love of Christ, and you will taste all its unspeakable consolation.

If our labors and afflictions could give peace to the conscience, why should Christ have died? You will not find peace save in Him, by despairing of yourself and of your works, and in learning with what love He opens His arms to you, taking all your sins upon Himself, and giving thee all His righteousness.

Martin Luther; D'Aubigne's History of the Reformation

