

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 2021

Lift Up the Hands that Hang Down

Hans Lampinen
Snohomish, Washington

Then came Amalek, and fought with Israel in Rephidim. And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand. So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill. And it came to pass, when Moses held up his hand, that Israel prevailed: and when he let down his hand, Amalek prevailed. But Moses' hands were heavy; and they took a stone, and put it under him, and he sat thereon; and Aaron and Hur stayed up his hands, the one on the one side, and the other on the other side; and his hands were steady until the going down of the sun. And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword. And the Lord said unto Moses, Write this for a memorial in a book, and rehearse it in the ears of Joshua: for I will utterly put out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven. And Moses built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovah-nissi: For he said, Because then LORD hath sworn that the LORD will have war with Amalek from generation to generation. ...

Exodus 17:8-16



A HALLWAY IN THE SCHOOL that I am working in is covered in handprints. Every year since 2003 the school has had their graduates apply their handprints to sheets of plywood and sign their names. There are literally thousands of prints along this long hallway, and I slowed down one day and really looked at them. I put my hand against many of them and wondered who that person was, and what they might be doing now.

Each handprint is unique. We might have similar hand sizes, but it is certain we have different fingerprints. We might have different scars or lines, or even hair or skin spots. It is often said that our hands with their opposable thumbs separate us from the rest of the creatures. Obviously, there is more to it than that. We have been given by our Creator an eternal soul and also were created in His image. When He did so, He was satisfied with us.

How useful our hands are for interacting with the world. We feel and touch with them. We carry things and manipulate objects with them. We use them to talk and describe, even showing emotion with them in front of us while fearful or balled up when angry. An empty hand extended shows peace and greeting, whereas hands at our sides show indifference. We also use our hands to show appreciation by clapping, or by putting a hand on another's shoulder in support.

The Bible uses the term "to lay hands on." Depending on the context this can mean different things. Usually when men lay hands on, it was meant as grabbing hold of to detain, but when Jesus lay hands on, it was usually in the form of blessing or healing. Quite the contrast. When Jesus was on earth, His healing power was displayed, for example, in Luke 4:40: *Now when the sun was setting, all they that had any sick with divers diseases brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.*

While Jesus came with healing hands, we have used ours to the opposite effect. When Jesus was in the Garden, both Matthew and Mark tell us that a multitude came with swords and staves and laid hands on Him. I picture this as a rough grabbing and pushing. During His trial, Jesus was beaten and scourged. His face was covered, He was struck and mocked, and asked if He could tell who hit Him. Even the governor Pontus Pilate washed his hands as a sign that he didn't want Jesus' blood on his hands. Jesus came with open hands and we pushed Him away with ours.

Our text tells us that Moses' hands grew heavy. We can all imagine that feeling. Our shoulders start to ache and our brain is telling us to lower our hands so that the blood can flow back into the arms and revitalize them. Isaiah 35:3 says, *Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees.*

We see in other instances that God strengthened someone's hands to perform a task. We daily need our hands strengthened to face each challenge in this life. When our hands are strong, we feel ready to take on whatever comes our way, but more importantly, God has given us the strength to take hold of His outstretched hand. His hand is always strong and always reaching out for us. The words of that Lenten song we sing are a reminder of the strength of God:

*There is an Eye that never sleeps
Beneath the wing of night;
There is an Ear that never shuts
When sink the beams of light.*

*There is an Arm that never tires
When human strength gives way;
There is a Love that never fails
When earthly loves decay.*

*But there's a power which man can wield
When mortal aid is vain,
That Eye, that Arm, that Love to reach,
That listening Ear to gain.*

*That power is prayer, which soars on high,
Through Jesus, to the throne,
And moves the Hand which moves the world,
To bring salvation down!*

James Cowden Wallace

When Moses' hands grew weary, he had assistance to lift them so that the children of Israel could prevail. It is important that family and friends do what Aaron and Hur did for Moses, to come alongside and support one another. I so enjoy our weekly Bible studies and services, where we come together as sinners in need of God's grace, and we hear those precious words of life. We also can't underestimate the

fellowship time we spend prior to a service or after. These are special times where we can let others know that we are there for one another. I can't tell you the number of times, in the middle of a stressful week and not wanting to do anything other than sit in my comfortable chair and not think about anything, that when I have come into the fellowship, even the outstretched hand of a brother or sister in Christ with that familiar greeting of "God's Peace" has caused the cares of this world to melt away. My hands have been strengthened to hear the Gospel spoken from others who are having the same experiences, and I can lift my hands and praise God from whom all blessings flow.

Hands were lifted up in our behalf so that the battle would be won. Those hands didn't need assistance, although they would be pinned in place by your sins and mine. Those hands that were formed with the express purpose of being nailed to the cross have been raised since the foundation of the world. They never tire and are always outstretched for us. Even after all the suffering He took in our behalf, He still had the strength to say on the cross: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He has taken those evil things we do with our hands and hearts, and He's washed the blood from them and made us pure and spotless lambs. We, too, can come under His arms, not as Aaron and Hur did to support Moses, but rather to abide safely as one songwriter says "under His wings."

It is Christ's desire to gather us to Himself that we would remain close to Him. How often I have walked with my small children with their little hand grasping two of my fingers, and when they have slipped, I have been there to catch them and raise them back up to solid footing. We might feel like we walk today on slippery ground, but when our hands are held firmly in the scarred hands of our Savior, then He places our feet securely on the Rock. Let us thank and praise God for His wonderful work of redemption and praise Him for His mercy and grace. ~

I've Set Sail to that Eternal Land

Gordon Kuusisto
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

I'm on a long, long voyage;
I lean against the rail,
I'm aboard a big old ship
That I must learn to sail.

I have with me a compass
Gripped in my right hand,
With just a single needle
Pointing to the Promised Land.

With me I have a Book
That tells me of the way;
It won't be very easy,
From side to side I'll sway.

I hear another gale crashing
Against the hull of my boat;
I hear the ropes creaking,
I hope it stays afloat.

I hear the storm begin to tear,
But to my compass I hold strong
As I'm tossed about again;
The storm has gone so long.

When I sail for myself
My mark drifts away;
When I sail to the cross
I grow closer every day.

I pull the rudder once again
Toward that eastern sky,
And I dream of the day
That to the golden dock I'll tie. ~



They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the Lord, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the Lord in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

Psalm 107:23-30

Here I Raise My Ebenezer

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

THE HYMN “COME, THOU FOUNT” has in its second stanza an interesting line that reads as follows: “Here I raise mine Ebenezer; Hither by Thy help I’m come.”

This language is taken from 1 Samuel 7:12: *Then Samuel took a stone, and set it between Mizpeh and Shen, and called the name of it Ebenezer, saying, Hitherto hath the LORD helped us.* Samuel set up this stone after the Lord had helped the Israelites defeat the Philistines in battle.

The hymn was written in 1758 by Robert Robinson, who was converted to the Christian faith after listening to George Whitefield preach. He was 17 years old when he and his friends went to the meeting to mock “the poor deluded Methodists” and instead he was so moved by the message that Whitefield preached that he was converted to Christ. Robinson became a pastor and hymn-writer and penned this hymn when he was 23 years old. The Ebenezer stone was raised by Samuel as a memorial for the ancient Israelites, so that every time they would see the stone they would recall how God has helped them in their time of need. This same stone became a symbolic reminder for Robert Robinson of how God had intervened in his life through the message of His Word.

The rest of the second stanza reads: “And I hope, by Thy good pleasure, safely to arrive at home. Jesus sought me when a stranger, wandering from the fold of God; He, to rescue me from danger, Interposed His precious blood.”

Robinson makes a very important statement in his hymn: that the blood of Jesus is the thing that has rescued us from danger. To interpose is to intervene and Christ intervened on our behalf by shedding His blood as the atoning sacrifice for our sins. To interpose is also to intercede and Christ intercedes on our behalf before the Father. *Hebrews 7:25: Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Hebrews 9:24: For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

When we sing of raising our Ebenezer, we are in reality singing of the work of our God carried out through His Son Jesus Christ. The Christ event—His death and resurrection—becomes our Ebenezer stone. It is this work carried out for us that rescues us from our greatest dangers, sin and unbelief, and leaves us indebted to His grace. “Oh, to grace how great a debtor daily I’m constrained to be! Let Thy goodness like a fetter, Bind my wandering heart to Thee: Prone to wander, Lord, I feel it, Prone to leave the God I love; Here’s my heart, O take and seal it; Seal it for Thy courts above. Amen.”



As I considered this hymn my thoughts went to Memorial Day and graduation. Every year we celebrate Memorial Day in the United States. People go to the graveyards and lay flowers on the graves of fallen soldiers. When I was a boy growing up in Rindge NH, we would attend the parade that was held in the center of our town. The parade would wind its way down to a cemetery where someone would play the taps and then the gun

salute would take place, much to our delight. We would march to various memorials in town, where this was repeated in remembrance of the fallen soldiers. In essence we would visit Ebenezer stones and there remember what a great sacrifice these people had made for their country. What a marvelous gift these fallen soldiers have given us, to lay their lives down so that we can live in freedom today. We raise up these Ebenezer stones (memorials) so that we will never forget them and their sacrifice.

Graduation is of course an annual event in our country as well. Students finish their education and collect their diplomas. It is a pivotal moment in their lives as they consider their future. What are they going to do now? What does the future hold for them? The high school student may be considering a higher education or going off to work. The college student perhaps looks forward to beginning the career for which they have been training. They are setting up their Ebenezer stones and, with one foot planted in their past, they move into the future. They move into their future with all the influence of their past marking their lives.

It seems we all can look at our past and recognize something or someone who has influenced us in some way or another. We pray, as our nation moves further into the 21st century, that we would never forget the sacrifice of our soldiers who stained the battlefields of this world with their blood to give us the freedom we enjoy today. We pray that our students would have success where ever their future leads them. We pray that we all would be reminded daily of the One Ebenezer Stone that transcends all others, the moment in history that forever changed the course of this world, the death and resurrection of our Lord. Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

God's peace.



For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

John 3:16

LOOK AT THE WORDS, I beseech you, to determine how and of whom He is speaking... No one is here excluded. God's Son was given for *all*. *All* should believe, and *all* who do believe should not perish, etc. Take hold of your own nose, I beseech you, to determine whether you are not a human being (that is, part of the world) and, like any other man, you belong to the number of those comprised in the word “all.”

Martin Luther

Saint John's Day

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Good morning to you all. I do hope this finds you well and having a good day. It is a nice spring day here where I live, and God in His goodness is giving us the freshness of spring once again. Spring is my favorite season.

On the thought of spring/summer and the kingdom of God coming, Jesus uses a parable to tell His disciples that a day would come when not one stone would be left upon another, and the disciples asked when this would be. Jesus tells us in *St. Luke 21:29-33: Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.* I think of these verses each time spring arrives. I pray we all stay watchful and ready for our Savior's return.



June 24th is St. John's Day. This day celebrates the birth of John the Baptist. He was Jesus' cousin. We celebrate December 25th as Jesus' birthday and John was born six months before, putting the date as June 24.

I went online and found these countries also observe this day of June, a time also known and celebrated as Midsummer: Estonia, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Venezuela, Denmark, Latvia, Sweden, Norway, Finland, and Lithuania.

John was son to Zacharias and Elizabeth. She bore John in her old age. They had never had a child until John. John was called the baptizer. He was the first to begin this. John spent most of his growing up in the deserts and wore camel skin clothing and ate locusts and wild honey.

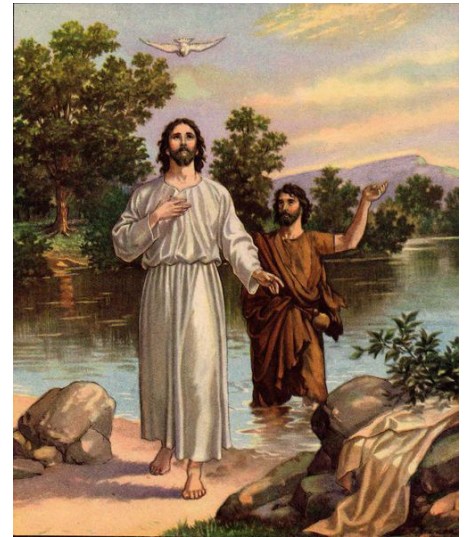
St. Luke 3:3-6: And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled (the humble will be lifted up and shown grace), and every mountain and hill shall be brought low (the proud will be humbled); and the crooked shall be made straight (God will with grace repair what sin has damaged), and the rough ways shall be made smooth (God will remove those things that hinder our walk); And all flesh shall see the salvation of God. This way to God will not only be for the Jew, but for the Gentile also. Ultimately, this WAY is found in Jesus Christ.

John lived in the wilderness and deserts until this time when he was about the age of 30, and the word of God came to him there sending him to the people to begin his ministry. John was being sent to prepare the people to receive Jesus

who was soon to make His appearance and become known. I'm sure you remember that Jesus was this same age when He became known and began His ministry also.

Something was just about to happen to Jesus on a particular day and time while John was baptizing. John had baptized many and told them: *I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet (strap for tightening a sandal) of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire. (St. Luke 3:16)*

Just after John said that to the people, Jesus came through the crowd and asked John to baptize Him. He was this One who was mightier. We remember how John told Jesus, "No, I need to be baptized of you." Jesus then told John, "No, you need to baptize me to fulfill Scripture," and it was done. We also remember after Jesus was baptized how the Spirit of God came down in the form of a dove and rested on Jesus. Then a voice from heaven said, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (St. Matthew 3:17)*



John was given wisdom and strength to preach strongly to the people. He like so many others was not well-liked, and he suffered much.

John never lost faith in his Redeemer and died as a martyr. Jesus said of John that he was the greatest prophet.

I pray that we all will keep Jesus in our hearts and serve Him, but also read about and take to heart all those like John who have served on this way of faith and won the victory.

God bless you today. I pray each day will be a blessing to you. God gives us natural life and, most importantly, spiritual life in our hearts through Jesus who gave His life for all mankind. He wants us to live with Him FOREVER. That's a long time.

I do want to wish all dads a HAPPY FATHER'S DAY! God bless you all.

God's peace.



And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life. (John 3:14-15)

Whoever believes in the Son of God, be it with a strong or with a weak faith, may have eternal life (John 3:15). Worthiness does not depend on the greatness or smallness, the weakness or strength of faith. Instead, it depends on Christ's merit, which the distressed father of little faith (Mark 9:24) enjoyed as well as Abraham, Paul, and others who have a joyful and strong faith.

Formula of Concord

The Seventh Commandment

Excerpts, The Large Catechism

Thou shalt not steal.

After your person and spouse temporal property comes next. That also God wishes to have protected, and He has commanded that no one shall subtract from, or curtail, his neighbor's possessions.

For to steal is nothing else than to get possession of another's property wrongfully, which briefly comprehends all kinds of advantage in all sorts of trade to the disadvantage of our neighbor. Now, this is indeed quite a wide-spread and common vice, but so little regarded and observed that it exceeds all measure, so that if all who are thieves, and yet do not wish to be called such, were to be hanged on gallows, the world would soon be devastated, and there would be a lack both of executioners and gallows. For, as we have just said, to steal is to signify not only to empty our neighbor's coffer and pockets, but to be grasping in the market, in all stores, booths, wine- and beer-cellars, workshops, and, in short, wherever there is trading or taking and giving of money for merchandise or labor.

As, for instance, to explain this somewhat grossly for the common people, that it may be seen how godly we are: When a manservant or maid-servant does not serve faithfully in the house, and does damage, or allows it to be done when it could be prevented, or otherwise ruins and neglects the goods entrusted to him, from indolence, idleness, or malice, to the spite and vexation of master and mistress, and in whatever way this can be done purposely (for I do not speak of what happens from oversight and against one's will), you can in a year abscond thirty, forty florins, which if another had taken secretly or carried away, he would be hanged with the rope. But here you, while conscious of such a great theft, may even bid defiance and become insolent, and no one dare call you a thief.

The same I say also of mechanics, workmen, and day-laborers, who all follow their wanton notions, and never know enough ways to overcharge people, while they are lazy and unfaithful in their work. All these are far worse than sneak-thieves, against whom we can guard with locks and bolts, or who, if apprehended, are treated in such a manner that they will not do the same again. But against these no one can guard, no one dare even look awry at them or accuse them of theft, so that one would ten times rather lose from his purse. For here are my neighbors, good friends, my own servants, from whom I expect every faithful and diligent service, who defraud me first of all.

Furthermore, in the market and in common trade likewise, this practise is in full swing and force to the greatest extent, where one openly defrauds another with bad merchandise, false measures, weights, coins, and by nimbleness and queer finances or dexterous tricks takes advantage of him; likewise, when one overcharges a person in a trade and wantonly drives a hard bargain, skins and distresses him. And who can recount or think of all these things?

To sum up, this is the commonest craft and the largest guild on earth, and if we regard the world throughout all conditions of life, it is nothing else than a vast, wide stall, full of great thieves...

Therefore let every one know that it is his duty, at the risk of God's displeasure, not only to do no injury to his neighbor, nor to deprive him of gain, nor to perpetrate any act of unfaithfulness or malice in any bargain or trade, but faithfully to preserve his property for him, to secure and promote his advantage, especially when one accepts money, wages, and one's livelihood for such service.

He now who wantonly despises this may indeed pass along and escape the hangman, but he shall not escape the wrath and punishment of God; and when he has long practised his defiance and arrogance, he shall yet remain a tramp and beggar, and, in addition, have all plagues and misfortune...

We will indeed look on and let these people skin, pinch, and hoard, but we will trust in God, who will, however, do this of His own accord, that, after you have been skinning and scraping for a long time, He will pronounce such a blessing on your gains that your grain in the garner, your beer in the cellar, your cattle in the stalls shall perish; yea, where you have cheated and overcharged any one to the amount of a florin, your entire pile shall be consumed with rust, so that you shall never enjoy it.

And indeed, we see and experience this being fulfilled daily before our eyes, that no stolen or dishonestly acquired possession thrives. How many there are who rake and scrape day and night, and yet grow not a farthing richer! And though they gather much, they must suffer so many plagues and misfortunes that they cannot relish it with cheerfulness nor transmit it to their children.

But as no one minds it, and we go on as though it did not concern us, God must visit us in a different way and teach us manners by imposing one taxation after another, or billeting a troop of soldiers upon us, who in one hour empty our coffers and purses, and do not quit as long as we have a farthing left, and in addition, by way of thanks, burn and devastate house and home, and outrage and kill wife and children.

And, in short, if you steal much, depend upon it that again as much will be stolen from you; and lie who robs and acquires with violence and wrong will submit to one who shall deal after the same fashion with him. For God is master of this art, that since every one robs and steals from the other, He punishes one thief by means of another. Else where should we find enough gallows and ropes? Now, whoever is willing to be instructed, let him know that this is the commandment of God, and that it must not be treated as a jest. For although you despise us, defraud, steal, and rob, we will indeed manage to endure your haughtiness, suffer, and, according to the Lord's Prayer, forgive and show pity; for we know that the godly shall nevertheless have enough, and you injure yourself more than another.

But beware of this: When the poor man comes to you (of whom there are so many now) who must buy with the penny

VII

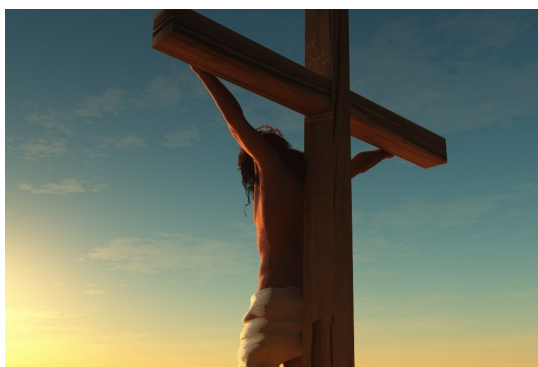
of his daily wages and live upon it, and you are harsh to him, as though every one lived by your favor, and you skin and scrape to the bone, and, besides, with pride and haughtiness turn him off to whom you ought to give for nothing, he will go away wretched and sorrowful, and since he can complain to no one, he will cry and call to heaven, then beware (I say again) as of the devil himself. For such groaning and calling will be no jest, but will have a weight that will prove too heavy for you and all the world. For it will reach Him who takes care of the poor sorrowful hearts, and will not allow

them to go unavenged. But if you despise this and become defiant, see whom you have brought upon you: if you succeed and prosper, you may before all the world call God and me a liar.

We have exhorted, warned, and protested enough; he who will not heed or believe it may go on until he learns this by experience. Yet it must be impressed upon the young that they may be careful not to follow the old lawless crowd, but keep their eyes fixed upon God's commandment, lest His wrath and punishment come upon them too. ~

It Is Finished

Ken Matson
High Point, North Carolina



John 19:30: When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, *It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.*

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO US when we hear Jesus say, "It is finished"? We know that Jesus' life on this earth was finished. It is true that He died to this life; His life here was done. Jesus says in

John 17:4: I have glorified thee (God) on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. In this verse, Jesus is saying that His work on this earth was finished. He had healed the sick and the lame, brought people who had died back to life, and comforted the sorrowful. He rebuked those who exalted themselves, taught that we should be as He is, and though He was master of all, He became a servant to all. But oh, His death meant much more than just His life being finished here on earth. The week of the greatest work ever performed on earth was just beginning!

Jesus's work here on earth was done to please the Father in heaven by providing a way in which His fallen children could be reconciled to Him. That is, we need a way to get rid of our sin so that we can stand rightly before God and be acceptable to Him. God knew that because of our fall and sin in the Garden of Eden, we would never be able to rightly stand before Him. He knew that the only remedy for sin was death. And if we die with our sins, we will go to hell because sinners are not allowed into heaven. So, our Father in heaven had to come up with a way that our sins could be forgiven. That way could not have anything to do with man's ability to perform the Father's will.

Once Jesus was finished with His work on earth, He knew that He had to finish the Father's will, which was to take away the sins of the world. My sins alone would have been enough burden and pain to cause the death of Jesus, and rightfully so as the wages of sin is death. But as He hung on the cross, He could feel the weight of not only my sin, but yours, along with sins of the whole world.

Remember when Jesus began to tell His disciples what was coming in the days ahead, and how He was going to suffer and die. Peter said told Jesus that he wouldn't leave His side. **Mark 14:27-31: And Jesus saith unto them, All ye (that includes me and you) shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered. But after that I am risen, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I. And Jesus saith unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this day, even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice. But he (Peter) spake the more vehemently, If I should die with thee, I will not deny thee in any wise.** (Then hear what it says:) **Likewise also said they all.**

Jesus was beginning to feel the weight and the pain of our sins. In one place it says He began to sweat blood. The suffering was so great that Jesus asked the Father if there could be another way to redeem us. **Mark 14:36: And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.** Think about how our Father in heaven must have been feeling, knowing that there no other way to save man. We can understand why God in heaven could not bear to look at His Son and looked away from Him. JESUS BORE IT ALL ALONE. **Mark 15:34 reads: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?** Here is where the verse we started with comes into play. **John 19:28-30: After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.** (When my wife and I were in Israel, our guide told us that the sponge that they used was from a pail of dirty sponges that were used for wiping after using the toilet.) **When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.**

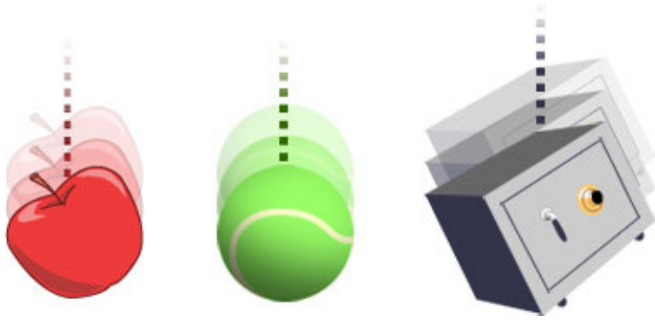
It is FINISHED, it is FINISHED! Sin had had its say. It should have been my burden, but Jesus bore it all the way to the cross. The cross was the place where criminals were executed for their sins. Oh, that we would come to the end of ourselves in trying to please our God with our own righteousness, give up, and say, "I am finished." Oh, that we would give up this life of ours and by faith believe that which our Savior FINISHED on the cross. And our life is now hid in Christ the Lord. Praise the Lord that the grave couldn't hold Him and that He arose and conquered SIN!!!

God's peace.

Surer than Gravity

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

TRY THIS EXPERIMENT: Stand and hold a book at arm's length. Let go of the book. What happens? The book falls to the floor. Gravity is the "pulling" force that the earth exerts on every object near it. Gravity is constant. When you let go of the book, you didn't wonder if—just this time—it would float up in the air and hit the ceiling or fly out to the side and hit the wall. You knew that the book would fall when you let go of it.



You TRUST gravity. It always does its job, pulling down toward the earth. You don't wonder if your feet will stay on the floor when you jump out of bed in the morning. You don't fear floating right out of our atmosphere. You know that gravity will keep you grounded.

God is even more constant than gravity.

You can trust God more than gravity. He is unchanging and eternal. His promises are sure and His Word is true. The LORD's faithfulness is to every generation. He has established His faithfulness in the very heavens and He cannot lie. He is merciful to you daily and His compassion does not fail. You can TRUST Him even more than you trust gravity.

It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever: with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever: thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my servant, Thy seed will I establish for ever, and build up thy throne to all generations. Selah.

And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord: thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. For who in the

heaven can be compared unto the Lord? who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord? God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him.

O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces, as one that is slain; thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. The north and the south thou hast created them: Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name. Thou hast a mighty arm: strong is thy hand, and high is thy right hand. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.

Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day: and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. For thou art the glory of their strength: and in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. For the Lord is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. (Psalm 89:1-18)

We can sing of the mercies of the Lord forever, and make known His faithfulness. He has made a covenant with us, sealed with the blood of His Son, that our sins have been taken away farther than the east is from the west. As high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is His mercy those who fear Him, from everlasting to everlasting.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust. As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more. But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children; To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. (Psalm 103:8-18)

Thanks be to God for His abundant faithfulness! It is more sure than gravity, more certain than the ground under our feet, more constant than the air we breathe. ~

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No Condemnation

Pastor Jason Salmi
Vancouver, Washington

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who _____.”

FOR ANYONE WHO IS FAMILIAR with the Bible, the next words in that sentence may immediately spring to mind. But let’s see if we can forget, at least for a few moments, what we know comes next. Instead, let’s try to look at that unfinished sentence and really try to put in there what we think comes next, based on our understanding of the whole Bible. You see, how you would complete that sentence makes all the difference in the world.

To begin with, we need to consider exactly what is meant by “condemnation.” It’s a simple enough word that we use in a couple of ways. The way that is probably the most common is when someone says that they believe something to be wrong; they “condemn” it.

But here the Bible is actually using the other meaning of the word. This is the one that we all know from its use regarding the law. When someone is condemned, it means that they have been found guilty of a capital crime, and have been sentenced to death.

And the Bible gives us two pieces of bad news. First, we are told that, “all have sinned.” (Rom. 3:23) And also that, “the wages of sin is death.” (Rom. 6:23) When you put those two things together, then it quickly becomes clear that all people are condemned to death. We are all under condemnation, since all are guilty of a capital crime... sin.

So let’s go back to our incomplete sentence, and consider what possible endings there might be, which would lead to this verdict of “no condemnation.” Without doing it in so many words, people fill in that blank in many different ways. Most of them can be boiled down to “live a good life.” “Do good and don’t do bad.” But unfortunately that doesn’t do anything to resolve our problem of already being under the condemnation of death because of sin.

Besides, when you get right down to it, no one lives a truly good life. They may think that they do, and they might even be able to show convincing evidence of it. But that can only ever be true when people come up with their own definitions of what it means to be “good.” This is where God’s Law comes in and tells us what true goodness is. In short, according to Jesus, we are only good if we “...love the Lord [our] God with all [our] heart and with all [our] soul and with all [our] mind,” and if we “love [our] neighbor as [ourselves].” In the face of the Law, all of our evidence for our own goodness becomes a lot less convincing.

And every other attempt to complete that sentence according to the ways that the world works, ends up falling just as short. Each finds itself coming to a sign that says, “No entry.” “Road closed.” “Bridge out.”

You see, though there are many wrong ways to finish that sentence, there is only one right way. “There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.” While every attempt of ours to avoid condemnation falls eternally short, God has made a way for us. “He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn. 3:16)

So rejoice! Rejoice and be glad, and believe that God has shown you mercy through Jesus Christ. He has removed your sentence of condemnation, and it is gone from you as far as the east is from the west. If you are in Christ Jesus, you are truly free.

May God bless and keep you.



**There is therefore now
no condemnation...**

Romans 8:1

For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Saviour; Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time. 1 Timothy 2:3-6

And so the power is conquered in the name of Him who assumed human nature and whose life was without sin, so that in Him, who was both priest and sacrifice, remission of sins might be effected, that is, through the ‘mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus’, through whom we are purified from our sins and reconciled to God. For it is only sins that separate men from God; and in this life purification from sins is not effected by our merit, but by the compassion of God, through His indulgence, not through our power; for even that poor little virtue which we call ours has itself been granted to us by His bounty.

St. Augustine