

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.

March 2016

Communion with Christ

John Chrysostom
Archbishop in the fourth century AD

And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.

Matthew 14:32

BEFORE THIS THE DISCIPLES HAD SAID, *What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him, (Matthew 8:27) but now it is not so. Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. (Matthew 14:33)* Do you see how by degrees He was leading them all higher and higher? For both by His walking on the sea, and by His commanding another to do so, and preserving him in jeopardy; their faith was great from then on. For then indeed He rebuked the sea, but now He does not rebuke it, in another way signifying His power more abundantly. Wherefore also they said, *Of a truth thou art the Son of God.*

What then? Did He rebuke them on their so speaking? No, quite the contrary, He rather confirmed what they said, with greater authority healing such as approached Him, and not as before. *And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased; And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole. (Matthew 14:34-36)* For neither did they approach Him as before, dragging Him into their houses, and seeking a touch of His hand, and directions from Him in words; but in a far higher strain, and with more of self-denial, and with a more abundant faith did they try to win themselves a cure; for she that had the issue of blood taught them all to be severe in seeking wisdom.

And the evangelist, implying also that at long intervals He visited the several neighborhoods, says, *And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased.* But yet the interval, so far from abolishing their faith, made it even greater, and preserved it in vigor.

Let us also then touch the hem of His garment, or rather, if we be willing, we have Him entire. For indeed His body is set before us now, not His garment only, but even

His body; not for us to touch it only, but also to eat, and be filled. Let us now then draw near with faith, every one that has an infirmity. For if they that touched the hem of His garment drew from Him so much virtue, how much more they that possess Him entire? Now to draw near with faith is not only to receive the offering, but also with a pure heart to touch it; to be so minded, as approaching Christ Himself. For what, if you hear no voice? Yet you see Him laid out; or rather you do also hear His voice, while He is speaking by the evangelists.

Believe, therefore, that even now it is that supper at which He Himself sat down. For this is in no respect different from that. For neither doth man make this and Himself the other; but both this and that are His own work. When therefore you see the priest delivering it unto you, account not that it is the priest that does so, but that it is Christ's hand that is stretched out.

Would you do honor to Christ's body? Do not neglect Him naked; do not honor Him here [in church] with silk garments, but outside neglect Him perishing of cold and nakedness. For He who said, "This is my body," and by His Word confirmed the fact, this same One said, *I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat... and ...Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me (Matthew 25:42, 45).*" For this one indeed needs not coverings, but a pure soul; but that requires much attention.

Let us learn therefore to be strict in life, and to honor Christ as He Himself desires. For to Him who is honored that honor is most pleasing, which it is His own will to have, not that which we account best. Since Peter too thought to honor Him by forbidding Him to wash his feet, but his doing so was not an honor, but the contrary.

Even so, honor Him with this honor, which He ordained, spending your wealth on poor people. For God has no need at all of golden vessels, but of golden souls. ~



Miracles

Charles Korhonen
Tapiola, Michigan

And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him (Gideon), and said unto him, The LORD is with thee, thou mighty man of valour. And Gideon said unto him, Oh my Lord, if the LORD be with us, why then is all this befallen us? and where be all his miracles which our fathers told us of...

Judges 6:12-13

GOD WAS PREPARING Gideon to deliver Israel from the seven-year oppression of Midian, but not until Israel repented of its rejection of Him. The Midianites, Amalekites and the children of the east caused such a famine that there was no sustenance in all of Israel. *And they encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth... and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep, nor ox, nor ass. (Judges 6:4)* This oppression and other trials throughout the Judges approximately three-hundred year period were ordained by God to test Israel, *That through them I may prove Israel, whether they will keep the way of the LORD to walk therein, as their fathers did keep it, or not. (Judges 2:22)* Would they seek the Lord or completely turn their backs on Him? God works in the same manner today: *And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me. (Psalm 50:15)*

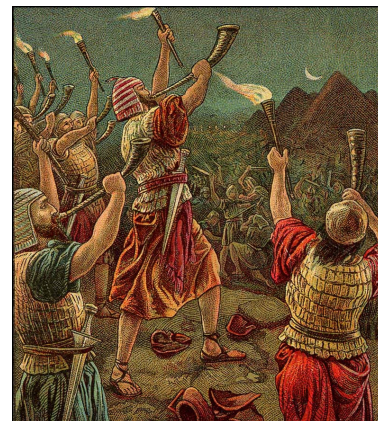
Israel became so distressed in their poverty that they “cried” to the Lord for help. They were more than short of food; they finally realized that they had become spiritually impoverished. As a nation they were awakened to their sinful condition and cried for deliverance. Interestingly, God sent a prophet to preach to them. *The LORD sent a prophet unto the children of Israel, which said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you forth out of the house of bondage; And I delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians, and out of the hand of all that oppressed you, and drave them out from before you, and gave you their land... but ye have not obeyed my voice. (Judges 6:8-10)* This prophet reminded them from what great bondage God had freed them and how they had since denied Him. So, too, with backsliders today, God reminds us of the great bondage of sin from which we were released when we first believed that word of reconciliation: *Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. (Matthew 9:2)* Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven to all believers to proclaim these words of release to a penitent soul shackled in sin. *And I will give unto thee the keys of the*

kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19) And now, He is calling all those in unbelief to return to Him, as He did with the Israelites.

Once Israel had returned to God, then Gideon was asked to defeat the Midianites. His response to the angel was one of astonishment. Where was God in all this national strife and why did God not perform some miracle to free the people? After all, the elders often spoke of great miracles that had occurred; why are there no such miracles now? This same question, couched in different terms, is often asked today. The answer that Gideon received might not seem like an answer at all, but it reveals God’s love for us. *And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee? (Judges 6:14)* Gideon was told two things: your faith is strong enough, “go in thy might”, and God is with you, “have not I sent thee.” When Gideon continued to protest, saying that he had no talent or resources, God

reminds him, *Surely I will be with thee, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man. (Judges 6:16)* God asks us, as He asked Gideon, to trust solely in Him. *It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. (Psalm 118:8)*

So when we wonder where God is and why we seem powerless to effect miracles, remember that God is with all who call and believe upon His name, *For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Romans 10:13)* and *Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe. (Romans 3:22)* Gideon defeated 135,000 men with a mere 300 men using only trumpets, lamps and glass pitchers. Think of this: *What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? (Romans 8:31)* ~



For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

MOST OF US HAVEN'T SERVED in the military, but if we went off to war and the forces and armies that were behind us were the most poorly-trained people to ever walk the face of the earth, and in this day and age were using World War I type of equipment, we would not have much courage, would we? But if we were going into battle and we knew that behind us and with us was the greatest trained force, the most powerful force the earth had ever seen, and we had all the latest and greatest technology and we knew how to use it, we would go forth with a lot more courage, wouldn't we? Think about this: God has given us a great gift, the gift of salvation, and He has not given us a spirit of a coward or of fear, but of power. Who goes before you and me? What force can conquer our Lord and our Redeemer? There is none. He is the One who has told us, “I will go with you even to the end of the world.”

Paul Matson; Battle Ground, Washington



The Fruit of the Spirit

Mark Sunnarborg
Rhineland, Wisconsin

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)

LOVE: unselfish, loyal, benevolent concern for the good of another, as the fatherly concern of God for humankind or brotherly concern for others. There is no greater love than this, that one would lay down his life for another, even his enemy. Love is being able to forgive another because God has forgiven us. *Romans 5:5: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. 1 John 4:10-11: Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. Love is complete and absolute forgiveness.*

JOY: emotion evoked by well-being, success, or good fortune or by the prospect of possessing what one desires, one's delight. This is our joy: *For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement. (Romans 5:10-11)* **Joy is** our close walk with our Lord.

PEACE: a period of time when there is no war or fighting. In Christ Jesus, my warfare is ended for peace and rest is my victory. We have peace with God through the blood of the cross of Christ. *Colossians 1:20: And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. Romans 10:15: 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!* **Peace is** the kingdom of God.

LONGSUFFERING: great patience in forbearing in leading another unto all truth. *Romans 2:4: Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? God has shown great patience in leading us to repentance and faith. Longsuffering is* our patience with our sinning brother as we recognize our own sinfulness.

GENTLENESS: moderate in action; not sharp, spicy, or bitter; having a kind and quiet nature; never harsh or violent. *2 Corinthians 4:2: But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. Let us handle the Word of God in wisdom, speaking truth to all men in love. Gentleness is* the heart of a believer.

GOODNESS: knowing that our goodness comes from God, we are able to be gracious and help others in the eye of life's storm. *Psalm 23:6: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever. Hebrews 4:16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. God has been merciful unto us;*

now with the Gospel that speaks the remission of sins in Jesus' name and shed blood, we are able to help others by sharing this hope that lies within us. **Goodness is** the gracious act toward a brother.

FAITH: complete trust; something that is believed with strong conviction, as one puts their trust in Jesus Christ who died upon the cross of Calvary for the sins of the whole world. All believers have been given faith in this redemptive work of Jesus Christ. *1 Timothy 6:12: Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses. Hebrews 11:1: Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.*

The redeemed Church partakes of the Lord's Supper by faith and we believe that the bread is the body and the wine is the blood of Christ. *1 Corinthians 11:24-25: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. Faith is* the gift of God; the Christian lives in it.

MEEKNESS: with patience and without resentment enduring what another may say or do to hurt/ridicule us as God's children; bearing another's wrath toward us. *Matthew 5:10: Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Meekness is* the strength that one finds in his Lord.

TEMPERANCE: self-control; moderation in action, thought, or feeling; having restraint. God has given us power to overcome anger and bitterness that we may love others in thought, word and deed. *2 Peter 1:5-7: And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. Herein is the love of God revealed to His children! Temperance is* self-control as God's child.

The fruit of the Spirit comes forth from the Spirit of God. If His Spirit is living within us, then this fruit is produced within us. In love there is no shame; therefore, we are never ashamed of the Gospel that opens the kingdom of heaven to a dying world. This is the message we have heard from the beginning: be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee. This Gospel calls all men to repentance and faith. The keys to this kingdom have been given to all who enter through the Gospel, which speaks the remission of sins in Jesus' name and shed blood. This we do also by faith when God permits. The called of God are to use these keys to open heaven to the lost. As Jesus spoke, the lame arose and walked; thus we speak this message in love, without shame.

Father, may this writing bring comfort to Your children. Build up Your children in faith, giving them strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow. Amen! ~

God's Way in Nature

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children, in lands nearby and far away,

No matter where we are, we are still God's children of the universal Church. We need to encourage one another, and we are so fortunate to have so many means by which to do so. Today I want to share some Scripture that speaks about God's way in nature (creation). This psalm speaks of rain. Where I live, we get so much rain in these winter months, but I know when our summer months come, it will be so dry and we will wish for a little rain. I know God is in control of this.

1 Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion: and unto thee shall the vow be performed.

2 O thou that hearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.

3 Iniquities prevail against me: as for our transgressions, thou shalt purge them away.

4 Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts: we shall be satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple.

5 By terrible things in righteousness wilt thou answer us, O God of our salvation; who art the confidence of all the ends of the earth, and of them that are afar off upon the sea:

6 Which by his strength setteth fast the mountains; being girded with power:

7 Which stilleth the noise of the seas, the noise of their waves, and the tumult of the people.

8 They also that dwell in the uttermost parts are afraid at thy tokens: thou makest the outgoings of the morning and evening to rejoice.

9 Thou visitest the earth, and waterest it: thou greatly enrichest it with the river of God, which is full of water: thou preparest them corn, when thou hast so provided for it.

10 Thou waterest the ridges thereof abundantly: thou settlest the furrows thereof: thou makest it soft with showers: thou blessest the springing thereof.

11 Thou crownest the year with thy goodness; and thy paths drop fatness.

12 They drop upon the pastures of the wilderness: and the little hills rejoice on every side.

13 The pastures are clothed with flocks; the valleys also are covered over with corn; they shout for joy, they also sing.

Psalm 65

We can see in this psalm that God's hand is in everything. His people must turn to Him and will (v. 2). He hears our prayers and forgives our sins (v. 3). We do not choose God; He has chosen us, and we are blessed if we are His (v. 4). God will do awesome deeds to put fear into our enemies, but He will make the believers' hearts glad (v. 5).

He has full control of the seas, and of all people (v. 7). He allows the sun to rise and set. Each day this great wonder of nature takes place, and man is in awe. Man is blessed by this and God does not need our help in making it happen (v. 8). He waters the earth so that it can be fruitful in harvest (vv. 9-13).

All this is done purely out of divine goodness and love from our heavenly Father. How good He is to us! It is easy to forget to thank and praise Him for His grace, forgiveness and love.

I pray that you children will be kept by God through this year.

Go to Him in prayer when you have a need. He promises to hear us and give us what is needful and necessary for this body and life. Praise His name today and every day. Thank Him each morning that you rise to meet another day, for when you open your eyes in the morning, know that a great miracle has happened—you. God and Jesus love YOU! ~



Rain Ivan Yendogurov
Wikimedia Commons

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)

WE ENTERED INTO DEATH BY partaking of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We entered into death. There was no ability for the human being to know life, except that God—the One who established all of these things—chose to show forth life, and to give us life, and to call us into life. And this life, John writes by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is the light of humankind. We look sometimes and we're thankful today we saw the Sun and we think how great that light is and how it warms us and it makes us feel good but here is the light of men. That sun is not the light of men. That sun is an orb of burning gases, in reality, that sends forth light as it was ordained to do out of the hand and the mouth of this Creator, and that sun will have an end. But this Son, the Living Son, will have no end because in Him is eternal life.

Pastor Jay Weidner; Laurium, Michigan

The Bible and Its Translations

Pastor Arne Nordahl
Vancouver, Washington

WE WHO READ AND STUDY God's Word would certainly like to read the Bible in the language in which it was written. But we know that this is not feasible as the Bible was not written in Norwegian, Swedish, Finnish, English or the many other languages, but in Hebrew and Greek which most of us do not understand. I am writing this article to explain why the KJV version that we use is the best version that we have in the English language. When I was younger, I did not understand how to judge which Bible translation was the best to use, especially here in the United States where we have so many different Bibles translated from the various manuscripts of both the Old and New Testaments. We have to acknowledge that the very original writings which Moses, the Prophets, the Apostles and others wrote by the command of God and inspiration of the Holy Spirit cannot be found, but only copy after copy carefully copied by knowledgeable people over and over again after the older manuscripts were wearing out.

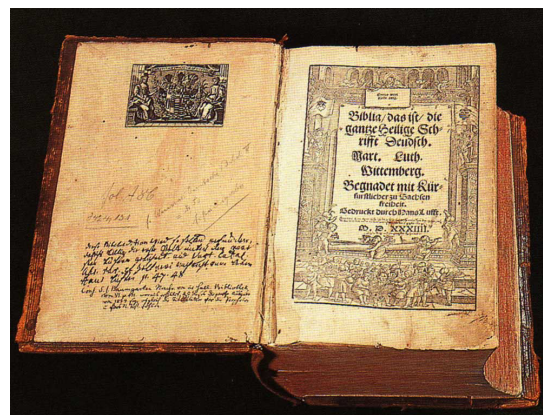


Photo of Martin Luther's 1534 Bible, courtesy of Wikipedia

I have tried to study one thing from the different Bibles and that is the matter of faith. We know how important it is for each person to have a living faith in his/her heart because without living faith a person cannot be saved. In Hebrews it is written: *Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.* (Hebrews 10:38-39) We know that living faith is a gift from God.

When the Apostle Paul was given the grace of repentance, he met Jesus, our Savior, on the road to Damascus, but Jesus didn't give him this living faith while he was there on the road, but rather told him what he ought to do. *And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.* (Acts 9:6) Later, the Lord revealed himself to Ananias and commanded him to go to Paul. *And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.* (Acts 9:17) Through this servant of the Lord, Ananias, God gave Paul living faith, and we can see the fruit of this living faith, *And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.* (Acts 9:20)

It is important to notice that Apostle Paul writes about his conversion to Timothy telling him that it is a pattern for the others that would also come into living faith. *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.* (I Timothy 1:15-16) Paul also writes concerning his living faith, *I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* (Galatians 2:20) These words speak of the kind of faith that Paul had in his heart, and it was the faith of the Son of God. All of the other English Bible translations that I have looked at have translated this very important passage which says "faith of the Son of God" in the KJV to be "faith in (or on) the Son of God". There is a great difference in this translation. A person must first receive the faith **of** the Son of God before he can have faith **in** the Son of God. In other words, a person must first receive from God the faith of Jesus Christ before he can have the right faith in Jesus Christ. Likewise, the children of God must be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ and to have this righteousness, we must be partakers of the faith of the Lord Jesus. There are many kinds of faith out in the world and the Bible says that even the devils believe and tremble (James 2:19). A person who is in self-righteousness also has a type of faith even as Apostle Paul had before he was converted, but not the faith of the Lord Jesus.

There are also many other discrepancies from the KJV in these other Bible translations. One reason for these errors is that they have not used the same manuscripts as the KJV Bible translators used. Another reason may be that the translators have not been faithful to the manuscripts but have let their own understandings come forth.

I find very interesting what Donald R. White has studied and written about the many different copies of the various old manuscripts. This is what he writes:

A Word on Textual Criticism

Due to the fact that the original manuscripts of the books of the New Testament were copied over and over again, and that copies were made from various generations of copies, numerous variant readings appeared in New Testament manuscripts. Some of these were merely variations of spelling. But some were far more serious: (1) additions of words or phrases; (2) omissions of words, phrases, clauses, and whole sentences and paragraphs. These variant readings arose either from the inadvertent errors of copyists, or from the efforts of scholars (whether well-meaning or otherwise) to correct or even to improve the text.

It is the task of textual critics to ascertain just what the original reading was at every point in the New Testament text where there is a variant reading. This they do by carefully sifting through a massive quantity of manuscript evidence. There are different schools

of thought among textual critics, each with its own set of presuppositions and criteria for evaluating the authenticity of a reading and the relative importance of a given manuscript. Before accepting the conclusions of a particular textual critic, one should be acquainted with his theological presuppositions and should evaluate his criteria.

The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament, because of its textual position, is the most important interlinear text in print today. It is based on the Greek Text of Stephens, 1550, which (with the Elzevir Text of 1624) is commonly called the Textus Receptus, or the Received Text, from which the New Testaments of the King James Version, William Tyndale's Bible, Luther's German Bible, Olivetan's French Bible, The Geneva Bible (English), and many other vernacular versions of the Protestant Reformation were translated. It is the "Traditional Text" that has been read and preserved by the Greek Orthodox Church through the centuries. From it came the Peshitta, the Italic, Celtic, Gallic, and Gothic Bibles, the medieval versions of the evangelical Waldenses and Albigenes, and other versions suppressed by Rome during the Middle Ages. Though many copies were ruthlessly hunted down and destroyed, the Received Text has been preserved by an almighty Providence.

This interlinear text maintains the basic integrity of the Received Text (also called the Majority Text, since it is represented by 95 percent of the manuscript evidence). This is in sharp contrast to the Westcott-Hort tradition (which leans heavily on two manuscripts of the unreliable Alexandrian Text type), the shaky foundation of many of today's versions. In the sixteenth century, Erasmus and the Reformers knowingly rejected the Gnostic readings of Codex Vaticanus and other very old uncial (i.e., all capital-letter) manuscripts, whose variant readings they judged to be corrupt. They regarded such dubious "treasures" as the products of scribes who had doctored the text to suit their own private interpretations. They also rejected Jerome's Latin Vulgate as a corrupt version and as an improper basis for vernacular translations.

As you study, giving diligence to present yourself as one approved by God (II Timothy 2:15), may the Spirit of grace and truth take the things pertaining to Christ Jesus and His great salvation and show them to you (John 16:13-15).

Donald R. White, Editor

White D. R. (1991). Preface. In G.R. Berry, *Interlinear Greek-English New Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.

Reviewer Note: The Apostolic Lutheran Church of America believes that the Authorized King James Version is the best translation. That being said, there can be some translation errors in any version because of unique language differences. We uphold, as a Federation, the use of the KJV as the pulpit Bible. ~

Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above

Our Father, Thou in heaven above, Who biddest us to dwell in love,
As brethren of one family, To cry in every need to Thee,
Teach us no thoughtless word to say, But from our inmost heart to pray.

Thy name be hallowed. Help us, Lord, In purity to keep Thy Word,
That to the glory of Thy name We walk before Thee free from blame.
Let no false doctrine us pervert; All poor, deluded souls convert.

Thy kingdom come. Thine let it be In time and in eternity.
Let Thy good Spirit e'er be nigh Our hearts with graces to supply.
Break Satan's power, defeat his rage; Preserve Thy Church from age to age.

Thy gracious will on earth be done As 'tis in heaven before Thy throne;
Obedience in our weal and woe And patience in all grief bestow.
Curb flesh and blood and every ill That sets itself against Thy will.

Give us this day our daily bread And let us all be clothed and fed.
From war and strife be our Defense, From famine and from pestilence,
That we may live in godly peace, Free from all care and avarice.

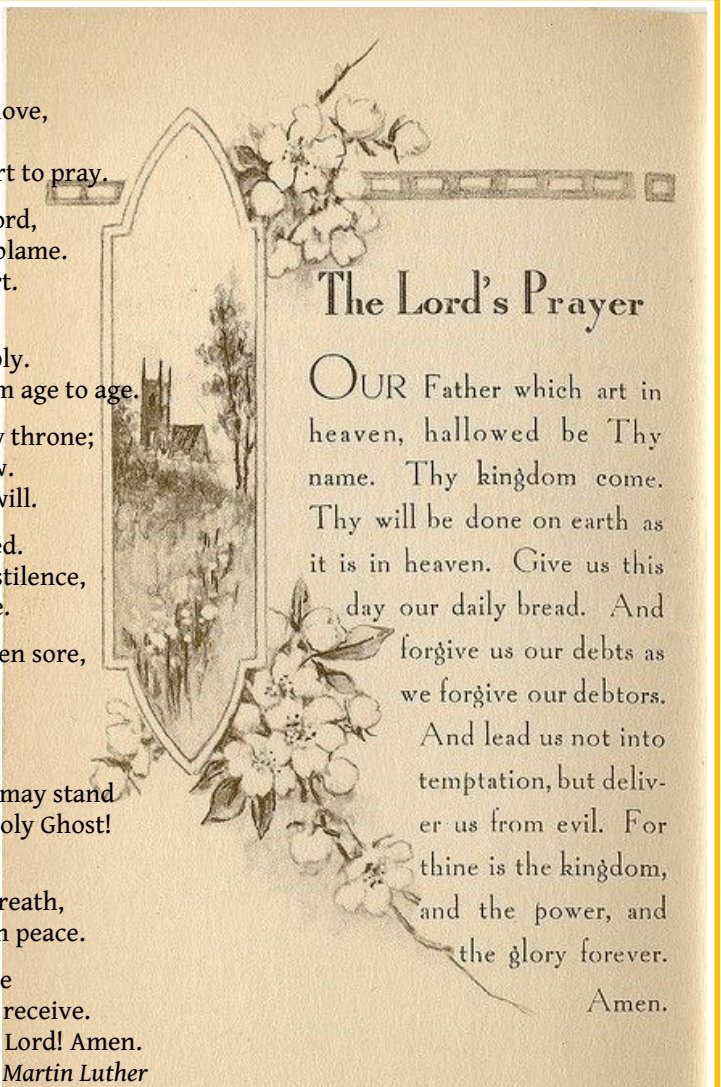
Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore, Remove from us their burden sore,
As we their trespasses forgive Who by offenses us do grieve.
Thus let us dwell in charity And serve our brother willingly.

Into temptation lead us not. When evil foes against us plot
And vex our souls on every hand, Oh, give us strength that we may stand
Firm in the faith, a well-armed host, Through comfort of the Holy Ghost!

From evil, Lord, deliver us; The times and days are perilous.
Redeem us from eternal death, And when we yield our dying breath,
Console us, grant us calm release, And take our souls to Thee in peace.

Amen, that is, So shall it be. Confirm our faith and hope in Thee
That we may doubt not, but believe What here we ask we shall receive.
Thus in Thy name and at Thy word We say: Amen. Oh, hear us, Lord! Amen.

Martin Luther



The Bad News and the Good News

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

“I HAVE GOOD NEWS AND BAD NEWS. WHICH DO YOU WANT FIRST?” This fairly standard opening line by the bearer of news gives us pause for reflection.

Regardless of which we choose to hear first, this question prepares our minds for receiving both the good and the bad. At the moment the question is asked, we know that both types of news exist. We immediately realize there is something good to hear and something bad to hear, and we need only to choose the order in which the details of each will come into our consciousness.

A person's nature, upbringing, and circumstances may determine which he will choose first. Some people will choose the good news first, putting off the moment when the bad comes crashing down. Others will choose the bad first, hoping that the balm of the good news will make the bad a little less painful.

With that being said, I prefer bad news first, followed by good news. No matter how bad the bad is, I know the good is coming next. So here's the bad news.

You are a dirty rotten sinner. You deserve nothing less than eternal death, punishment and separation from the only righteous and holy God. It makes no difference what country you're from or what color your skin is. Rich or poor makes no difference, or whether you are of royal birth or born to a cattle maid. It matters not whether you were raised in a Christian home or where the name of Christ was never heard. It is of no account whether you've tried your whole life to please God or haven't regarded His Law for an instant.

The Apostle Paul says that all people are sinners, that all have fallen short of the glory of God. He says... *we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Romans 3:9-12)*

If you're a son of Adam, you're a sinner. If you're a daughter of Eve, you're a sinner.

And that is Very Bad News, because sin brings death. You're a dead man walking.

But remember, there is Good News. As bad as the bad news is, the Good News is that much better, even beyond your imagination!

The Good News is that your sin debt has been paid. God sent His Son TO the world to pay the bill FOR the world. God loved you so much that He bought you out of slavery to sin and Satan. God's holy and righteous wrath was satisfied when Jesus carried your sin to His cross. Because of the payment of the blood His Son, God will never hold your sin to your account.

The Apostle Paul says you were dead in sins, but God has forgiven you and made you alive with Jesus. *And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross. (Colossians 2:13-14)* God doesn't lie. Believe it. Live in it.

If you're a son of Adam, your debt is paid. If you're a daughter of Eve, your debt is paid.

And that is Very Good News, because the death of Jesus brings life. The life that Jesus brings is FOREVER life, life that survives even physical death.

If you've heard and believed the bad news and the Good News in this life, there is better news. On the Last Day, you will hear your King say: "Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." And you will be forever with the Lord.

If, on the other hand, in this time of grace, you never acknowledge the bad news that you're a sinner, or believe the Good News that Jesus paid for your sin, the Last Day will be nothing but bad and worse news. You will hear from the King's lips: "Depart from me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels." And you will be forever separated from God.

Don't go there. It doesn't have to be, and it certainly isn't the desire of the One who loved you enough to die for you. Hear the bad news and repent; believe the Good News and receive life. ~



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Article XXV: Of Confession

The Augsburg Confession; June 1530 AD

CONFESSION IN THE CHURCHES is not abolished among us; for it is not usual to give the body of the Lord, except to them that have been previously examined and absolved. And the people are most carefully taught concerning faith in the absolution, about which formerly there was profound silence. Our people are taught that they should highly prize the absolution, as being the voice of God, and pronounced by God's command. The power of the Keys is set forth in its beauty and they are reminded what great consolation it brings to anxious consciences, also, that God requires faith to believe such absolution as a voice sounding from heaven, and that such faith in Christ truly obtains and receives the forgiveness of sins. Aforetime satisfactions were immoderately extolled; of faith and the merit of Christ and the righteousness of faith no mention was made; wherefore, on this point, our churches are by no means to be blamed. For this even our adversaries must needs concede to us that the doctrine concerning repentance has been most diligently treated and laid open by our teachers.



Diet of Augsburg Christian Beyer
Wikipedia

But of Confession they teach that an enumeration of sins is not necessary, and that consciences be not burdened with anxiety to enumerate all sins, for it is impossible to recount all sins, as the Psalm 19:13 testifies: Who can understand his errors? Also Jeremiah 17:9: The heart is deceitful; who can know it? But if no sins were forgiven, except those that are recounted, consciences could never find peace; for very many sins they neither see nor can remember. The ancient writers also testify that an enumeration is not necessary. For in the Decrees, Chrysostom is quoted, who says thus: I say not to you that you should disclose yourself in public, nor that you accuse yourself before others, but I would have you obey the prophet who says: "Disclose thy way before God." Therefore confess your sins before God, the true Judge, with prayer. Tell your errors, not with the tongue, but with the memory of your conscience, etc. And the Gloss (Of Repentance, Distinct. V, Cap. Consideret) admits that Confession is of human right only [not commanded by Scripture, but ordained by the Church]. Nevertheless, on account of the great benefit of absolution, and because it is otherwise useful to the conscience, Confession is retained among us. ~

Perfect Rest

IN THE OLD COVENANT, God created the heavens and the earth, and He saw that they were good, and He rested the seventh day. The Hebrew writer tells us *that there remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God*. As Jesus did that which was required of Him, if I would use that terminology, "I come to do the will of the Father," He fulfilled all that He was asked to do, and then we enter into His rest, as we commemorate His resurrection even on that which we call the Lord's Day, the first day of the week, Sunday, and then we enter into HIS rest. And that's a mystery to us, isn't it, when we would enter into the rest of another? Oftentimes, if not most times, we rest because we are weary, because we have done some labor and we need to sit down or lie down and rest.



But this is the Gospel, and it's the other way around. Jesus has labored. He took upon Himself the form of a servant. He was obedient, obedient even unto the death of the cross. And it is because of that labor—that perfect labor—that we now enter into perfect rest. Jesus has made all things new. This Gospel, this wine, this blood of Jesus Christ which has purchased us, redeemed us, lost and condemned creatures, and given us hope, given us the promise. He has cleansed us, He has purified us of all of our sin, and there awaits for us then that crown of life.

Pastor Phil Wilson; Hockinson, Washington