

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.

May 2017



Be Still, My Soul

Pastor Jason Salmi
Vancouver, Washington

THE MOMENT THAT ADAM TASTED THE FRUIT, he knew that eating it had been a mistake. He had always known what “good” was. He had only to look around him to see that everything that God had created was perfect; and God Himself had declared that it was all very good. But the sweet fruit became like bile in his mouth, because for the first time, he also knew evil. And that evil was not outside of him, but was in his own heart. Why had he listened to the serpent and doubted God? For the first time, he felt guilt and he wished he could go back. But it was done now and he could not undo it.

When he and Eve heard God walking in the garden, they hid from Him out of shame and fear. God had told them that they would die if they ate the fruit. And they did die. Before, time had had no effect on them; from that day forward they were destined to return to the earth. Where once the earth had readily produced food, it began to produce thorns and they would now toil for the things they needed to live. Where their bodies had known only comfort, they now would be subject to a thousand diseases and pains. Where only the peace of God had been, mankind was thrust into turmoil, strife and death. But God would not allow death to reign forever over His creation. Though man had failed and fallen, God would prove Himself faithful and raise him up again.

“Be still, my soul! The Lord is on thy side; bear patiently the cross of grief or pain. Leave to thy God to order and provide; in every change, He faithful will remain. Be still, my soul! Thy best, thy heavenly Friend through thorny ways leads to a joyful end.”

“Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?” cried Jesus’ disciples. They knew that storms could rise suddenly on the Sea of Galilee, but this one caught them by surprise. Those among them who were fishermen by trade knew the signs and would usually be alert to impending changes in the weather, but they had failed to see this storm coming.

Now the waves were crashing over the sides of the boat and they were certain they would soon drown. They rushed about frantically, trying to save themselves. But they were shocked when they noticed that, amid the fury of the storm, Jesus was asleep in the stern! How could He sleep at a time like this? As they roused Him, He looked out over the unruly

sea and commanded, “Peace! Be still!” and immediately the wind and waves subsided. Dumbfounded, His disciples looked at one another and said, “Who is this, that even the wind and waves obey Him?”

“Be still, my soul! Thy God doth undertake to guide the future as He has the past. Thy hope, thy confidence let nothing shake; all now mysterious shall be bright at last. Be still, my soul! The waves and winds still know His voice who ruled them while He dwelt below.”

He had been hanging on the cross for hours now. Grief, confusion, anger, guilt... all these feelings mixed and washed over His disciples who were forced to watch helplessly as agony wracked Jesus’ body and His strength began to fade. When He allowed Himself to sag down, He couldn’t catch His breath. When He pulled Himself up to breathe, His wrists and feet exploded in pain at the pressure of the long spikes driven through them.

As the crowd looked on, some weeping and others scoffing and sneering at Him, only Jesus knew that His work was done. He had accomplished the mission for which He had been sent. And with a loud voice, they heard Him cry, “It is finished!” And at last His writhing body relaxed as He gave Himself to death.

“Be still, my soul! The hour is hastening on when we shall be forever with the Lord; when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone, sorrow forgot, love’s purest joys restored. Be still, my soul! When change and tears are past, all safe and blessed we shall meet at last.”

The hymn “Be Still, My Soul” by Katharina von Schlegel, has been playing through my mind lately. In these words, we reflect on the fact that God will remain faithful to His promises. That even in our doubt, He holds us safely in His hands. That a blessed day is coming when we will forget all sorrow and be with Him forever.

What a treasure we have in the Church’s hymns that take the truth of God’s Word and put it into song. There is something about the way God has designed us that music can move us beyond our circumstances. So wherever you may find yourself today, rejoice in the truth of God’s faithfulness and love for you and let your heart sing: *“Be still, my soul! The Lord is on thy side...”* ~

Two Covenants

Juuso Runtti; August 1950 CM, excerpts
Submitted by Dave Impola; Everett, Washington

Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.

Jeremiah 31:31-34

IN OUR TEXT THE LORD SPEAKS of two covenants. The first is the covenant of the law, “that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake.” In the latter, the covenant of grace, which God made with fallen man in His Son Jesus Christ, the Lord promises to “forgive their iniquity” and “remember their sin no more.”

There are many to whom nothing is more difficult to comprehend than the difference between the covenant of grace and the covenant of the law. It has been said there is no difference between the law of Moses and the law of Christ as both say “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” and “Thou shalt not steal,” and “Thou shalt not covet.” No matter what place in the Ten Commandments we look, there is a corresponding content also in the law of Christ. Where is the difference between them? The Lord makes known that the old and the new covenant differ one from the other in two points.

Here is the first point wherein they differ: always and wherever the Law is, it will judge the transgressors of the Law and curse them without grace unto condemnation. The Lord says of His covenant of grace, “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” In Hebrews 8:12 the Lord says, “For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” The foundation and the fundament of the new covenant are grace and the forgiveness of sins.



What a glorious find it was when man being under the curse of the Law heard the Gospel based on the sacrifice of Jesus, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.”

The other point wherein these two covenants differ is this: the law of Sinai has never effected love to God in the heart of anyone. If anyone asserts that he in the covenant of the law has been able to love God, he shows thereby that he has not yet truly known the effect of the Law. A person awakened by the Law becomes terrified at the very thought that he at last shall appear before the righteous God. One who is under the Law and is confronted with death has not the longing of love to appear before the throne of God. It is only hypocrisy to speak of love in the school of the Law of God.

When the Law has revealed in fallen man his enmity against God, the soul trembles at the thought of meeting God. In the new covenant, however, grace and the forgiveness of sins create love to God. In the new covenant God makes Himself so well known that the children of the covenant of grace are sighing and longing, “Alas, when shall I behold the countenance of God?” When the law of Sinai sets its demands before man from without and preaches condemnation because man has not been able to fulfill its demands, then the law of the new covenant makes God known in Christ as a dear Father in glorifying His Fatherly love. God has not changed His judgment, “Thou shalt die.” Heaven itself echoes eternal thanks unto God because His judgments are true.

The Word of God, however, speaks of a descendant of Adam who once stood under the judgment and prepared according to the Law blessing for thousands of children. The evangelist Luke shows that our Lord Jesus was a descendant of Adam. He was not a transgressor of the Law. After the love of God and His decision of grace, He stepped forth under the condemnation of the Law in our stead that we should become partakers of grace. Jesus, the eternal Word of God in which God promised redemption and salvation from the injury of the fall, clothed Himself in the flesh and blood of the fallen. We see in Him the One who fulfilled the severe demands of the Law unto the last jot and tittle. We behold Him as the One who carried the condemnation and the curse of the Law upon the tree. Paul testifies, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.” (Galatians 3:13) Thus Christ was according to the Law cursed for our sakes, we miserable transgressors of the Law. On the cross on Calvary He was under the judgment of God as God had judged when He said, “Thou shalt surely die.” The death of our Lord Jesus was not only bodily death, which surely was terrible and bloody, but He suffered death as the judgment of God upon the fallen, as separation from God. Thus we see the curse of the Law upon Him. He carried it and took it away from us.

Therefore, saith the Lord, “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.” Upon this foundation the voice of the blood of atonement which comes from the throne of God speaks unto us in the land of the shadow of death: thy sins are forgiven, the debt is blotted out with blood. What a glorious find it was when man being under the curse of the Law heard the Gospel based on the sacrifice of Jesus, “Thy sins are forgiven thee.” When we with the heart believed this glorious message, God became unto us the most precious of all—God before whom our awakened consciences under the curse of the Law had feared and trembled. When the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins became faith, God wrote His burning love in our hearts. You remember, brother and sister, how you time and again swore, “Unto Thee, my Lord and God, I will show obedience because Thou hast saved and redeemed me from the Law of condemnation.” Thus God made Himself known.

The will of God is not written in the believer like the law of Sinai on tables of stone, but the law of Christ is written inwardly. Paul speaks of it in *2 Corinthians 5:14*, “*For the love of Christ constraineth us...*” No one comes to know the God of love until the from-the-dead-risen Savior comes and opens the eyes of our understanding when He opens the Scriptures to us. In this new covenant wherein God pours out His Spirit in the believing heart cleansed by the blood, the child of God is not any more under the Law as Paul testified, “*But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.*” (*Galatians 5:18*) However, if the children of the new covenant think that it does not matter how they live—they will nevertheless be saved in this covenant of grace—then this proves that the Spirit of Christ is not ruling in such a heart. The grace of God teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and to live godly in this world. We do not receive the power to walk in new obedience from anything else but from Jesus. As a lasting and ever-existing fountain of life and strength the child of God hath in Jesus “*redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.*” (*Colossians 1:14*)

Do you know the difference between these two covenants? They are built on different foundations. The law of the covenant of Sinai says, “This do and thou shalt live.” The law of the covenant of Christ says, “I will forgive their iniquity and I will remember their sin no more.” May the Lord of grace always give us fortunate poverty that we never should have anything else to depend upon but that we are bought with blood.

Let us give honor to the slain Lamb of God who now is before the throne of God as a gracious and faithful High Priest. Then we have no desire to walk after the fashion of the world and we do not need the severe rebuke of Moses. God has not intended that the law of Sinai should be the

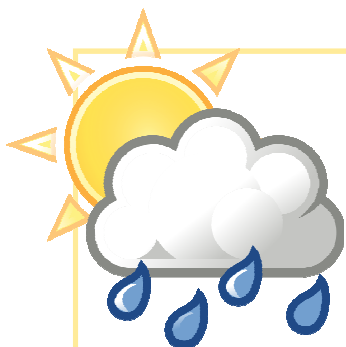
teacher to the children of the covenant of grace. Their teacher and guide is the Holy Spirit, which is shed abroad in their hearts.

Paul shows that those who are washed in blood are become dead to the law of Moses (Romans 7). This he explains in a parable of a woman in marriage. If she is married to another man while her husband lives, she is an adulteress. But if her husband is dead and she marries another, she is no adulteress before God or man. “*Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God.*” (*Romans 7:4*)

Only as covenant comrades of the risen Lord Jesus can we bring forth fruit unto God. “*For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God.*” (*Galatians 2:19*) After the reasoning of man it would be better thus: when we live for the Law, we also live for God. The Word of God, however, asserts that only when we become dead to the Law can we live for God. The Law did not die, but we became dead to it. The Law remained unchanged and not even one jot or tittle of its severe demands was changed, but we died to it. However, when we by the power of the resurrection of Jesus received the grace in faith to arise to the newness of life, this Law did not arise with us, but God shed abroad the law of His Spirit in our hearts.

Let us hold precious that covenant of love which we have sworn to Christ. The Lord Jesus stretches forth His pierced hands to receive us in the evening of life. Then we shall, together with all who are bought from the earth, sing the eternal hymn of victory: amen and alleluia unto God and the Lamb!

The peace of God dwell in the hearts of all the children of the covenant of grace. ~



The Sun of Righteousness

the late Fred Johnson
March 1990 CM

For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.

Isaiah 55:10-11

AS THE CHILDREN OF GOD journey through this hollow world, they are accompanied by the three-fold enemy whose evil forces are marshaled against them. It is good to know that our faith has found its anchorage upon the deep and sound Rock, Jesus Christ. You have many times raised your Ebenezer (stone of help) in your conflict against the forces of evil. The devil baits his hooks with all kinds of garbage as he fishes for the souls of men. Amid these conflicts the traveler experiences weariness, and doubts even occupy the heart. Nevertheless, how fortunate and blessed are God's children that He promises rain and snow from above to moisten the parched soil of the heart. The gentle rain causes the crushed plants to regain their upward posture when the Gospel message has renewed their strength by turning their countenance toward the Sun of Righteousness that has risen with healing in His wings.

Without the sun, all life would perish. What measure of mist does one sunbeam disperse? I do not know, but let faith's eye turn one silent gaze upon the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings, and its virtuous powers penetrating your soul will dispel the mist of sin and the gloom of darkness. Surely, dear traveler to the homeland, you want to expose your parched heart beneath this overpowering influence. This life-giving moisture, as it has come down the corridors of time, has not returned void, but it is equally effectual today to give bread to the eater. This hollow world is filled with darkness, but the Sun still shines in the land of Goshen. This heaven-sent moisture has renewed seed for every succeeding generation and will continue to do so until the end of time. *Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.* (*Matthew 24:35*)

Jesus Does Miracles

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to each of you. I do pray you are off to a good start today.

A very good way to start one's day is by listening to or reading the Word. Even a little goes a long way. It really helps our minds stay focused and thinking in the right direction. Jesus is always the best source to turn to every day. He is the miracle worker and still does miracles every day.

If you are reading this, you can know that a miracle happened this morning – you! God allowed you to wake up to serve Him yet another day. I need to be more diligent about thanking God for each day.



In the Gospel of John we read that Jesus changed water into wine.
In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, Jesus did healing of all kinds.
He healed ten lepers, and only one of them said thanks;
And the centurion's palsied son who was tormented at length.
Jesus went to Peter's home, where his wife's mother lay with fever;
Jesus only touched her hand and then the fever left her.
On this day when evening came, they brought many possessed with devils;
He cast the spirits out with His Word; restored were the disheveled.
Jesus and His disciples were out upon the sea,
A wind made waves splash o'er the boat, in which Jesus was asleep.
The frightened disciples woke Him, "Lord save us, lest we die!"
Jesus awoke, to the wind He spoke, quiet the sea did lie.

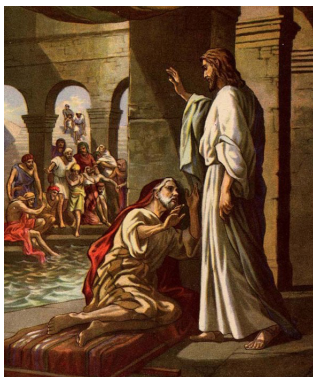
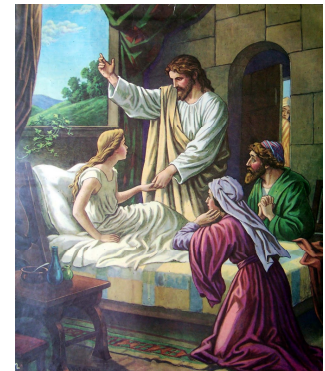
A woman touched His garments, and her long issue with bleeding ceased.

Then Jesus went to Jairus' house where his daughter lay deceased.
Jesus took the damsel by the hand and said, "I say unto thee, arise."
She opened her eyes and sat right up, to everyone's surprise.

After Jesus left this house, two blind men followed hard,
Crying, "Son of David, have mercy. You can heal, You are the Lord."
Jesus touched their eyes, and by faith they now could see.
He told them not to tell anyone, but this was not to be.

He healed a man with a withered hand; He fed five thousand men
With just five loaves and two small fish, and twelve baskets did remain.

Jesus walked on water; He fed four thousand more.
He called His disciples to Him, for a meal of fish upon the shore.



He healed an epileptic boy, and blind Bartimaeus made to see.
The disciples caught a draught of fishes, one hundred fifty-three.
He raised a widow's son from death and healed Malchus' ear.
He also healed a nobleman's son, even when he was nowhere near.

He healed a crippled man who was this way from his birth,
As he waited by the pool of Bethesda for the waters to be stirred.
He raised Lazarus from his tomb, while his sisters looked on with woe;
Jesus said, "Loose his grave clothes and let him go."

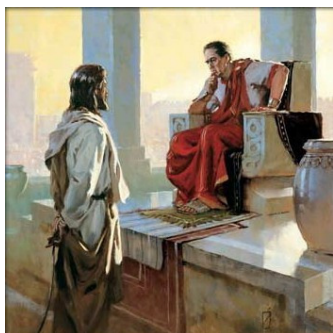
Jesus did many miracles that no book has record of.
But we know that He is a Shepherd whose heart is full of love.
He loves us though we're sinners and will 'til life does end.
He works miracles with His own each day; He's our forever friend.

When He wakes you every morning and makes your eyes to see,
And helps you to be clothed and fed, it's a miracle, you see!
Thank You, Jesus, for Your love, thanks to God for His dear Son.
Thank You, Jesus, for giving Your life, so we can have an eternal one.

GW

I want to encourage you to look for miracles that Jesus does in your life each day. With the eyes of faith we will see miracles big or small that happen daily.

God's peace.



The Innocence of the Christ

Martin Luther

Pilate saith unto [Jesus], What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all... Pilate therefore went forth again, and saith unto them, Behold, I bring

him forth to you, that ye may know that I find no fault in him... Pilate saith unto them, Take ye him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him. (John 18:38, 19:4, 6)

Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it. (Matthew 27:22-24)

PILATE AND OTHERS FREQUENTLY TESTIFY to the innocence of our dear Lord Jesus. With reference to [this] point, you must have noticed throughout that Pilate always insists upon it that he finds no cause of death in Christ. His wife also sent unto him, telling him to have nothing to do with that just and innocent man. Pilate moreover discovers, from all the actions of the Jews and by diligent investigation, that the chief priests and elders were moved against Christ by nothing but malice and envy.

Similar testimony, but in greater measure and more powerful, was borne after the death of Christ. Great and glorious miracles then were wrought. The sun lost his luster and deep darkness reigned, the veil of the temple was rent in twain, the earth did quake, the rocks rent, the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints arose. Then the centurion openly confessed: "Certainly this was a righteous man." And all the people present, beholding and taking to heart the things which were done, smote their breasts, to signify that the rash execution of the dear, innocent Lord gave them pain.

But of what use is this testimony? Why do the Evangelists so carefully relate it?

Without a doubt, their only object is to point us to the counsel and will of God, and to admonish us to consider why the Lord, being innocent and just, had to suffer so. In other words, they wish, in view of the abundant proof that Christ was innocent and did not deserve to die, to make us firmer in our faith. They desire to convince us that whatever our blessed Lord Jesus suffered, He suffered for us; and that God laid these afflictions upon Him, and, although He was innocent, would not remove them, so that, by His bearing them, sin might be removed from us and we might be reconciled again to God.

Whenever, therefore, we read in any part of the Passion history how unjustly the Jews and Gentiles treated the Lord Jesus, how they smote Him before the high priest, set Him at naught before Herod, and mocked and scourged Him in the judgment hall,—whenever, I say, we hear of such treatment, no matter where it is recorded, our thoughts must run thus: Behold, He is innocent; He does not bear this for Himself; He

has not merited this. But I and you and all of us have deserved this suffering; death and every misfortune did rest upon us because of sin; but here the innocent and holy Son of God appears, takes upon Himself my debts, thy debts, and the debts of all of us, and discharges them, so we might be free. When these are our thoughts we shall have such comfort that our hearts cannot despair on account of their sin, and that we shall not flee from God as though He were a tyrant or an executioner; but that we shall turn unto Him with heartfelt confidence and praise and glorify His mercy, which, as Paul says in the fifth chapter of Romans, He commendeth toward us in that He delivered His only begotten Son, our Lord and Saviour, unto death, to die for us sinners.

Who could or would doubt that God's intentions toward us are good and altogether gracious? Sin had subjected all of us to the wrath of God and to death, and had transferred us into Satan's kingdom; eternal life was lost, and in its place had been inherited every calamity for time and for eternity. But our Father, merciful and gracious, comes to our relief, and, rather than permit us to remain in such misery, sends His only begotten Son, born of a virgin and made under the law, so that the law, although flesh and blood were unable to do God's will, might not have been given in vain, but might be fulfilled by this Man for all other men. And finally God suffers Him to die upon the cross, by His innocent death to atone for our sins, so that we, being released from eternal death and from the kingdom of Satan, might receive eternal life and be the children of God. Believing that this was done on thy account and for thy welfare, take it as thine own and let it comfort thee. And well may we do this; for here we hear not once, not twice, but many times, that all that Jesus suffers He suffers innocently.

But why does God tolerate this, yea, why does He ordain and bring it about? Simply that thou mightest be comforted in Christ. He does not suffer for Himself, but for thee and for all mankind, even as John says: "He is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world." For this reason John the Baptist calls Him "The Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world," that is, a divinely appointed Sacrifice, who takes the sin of all the world upon Himself, so that this sin may rest upon the world no longer. This accounts for the seeming inconsistency. He is the Son of God, perfectly holy and altogether without sin, and therefore it were but just that He should not be subject to the curse and to death. We are sinners and under the curse and wrath of God, and therefore it were but just that we should suffer death and damnation. But God has reversed this relation; He who knows no sin, who is altogether merciful, and in whom, as John says, dwells the fullness of God's grace, was made a curse for us and had to bear sin's punishment, while we, through Him, have obtained mercy and have become the children of God.

We should, therefore, cling to this consolation and take special delight in such testimony for Christ's innocence. For what Christ innocently suffered was caused by our sins. Therefore His innocence comforts us against all sin and suffering; for His innocence is a sure and lasting evidence that His passion is for our benefit, and that our dear Lord and merciful Redeemer has suffered for us and paid our debts. ~



A Lesson in Humility

Paul Kretzmann

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy

right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory. But Jesus said unto them, Ye know not what ye ask: can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? And they said unto him, We can. And Jesus said unto them, Ye shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of; and with the baptism that I am baptized withal shall ye be baptized: But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.

And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John. But Jesus called them to him, and saith unto them, Ye know that they which are accounted to rule over the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and their great ones exercise authority upon them. But so shall it not be among you: but whosoever will be great among you, shall be your minister: And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:35-45

THE OTHER TEN APOSTLES HAD witnessed the entire incident with jealous apprehension and growing indignation. Not that they did not have the same aspirations, but that others had voiced them first and

probably been near accomplishing their design. Jesus believed the time appropriate to repeat the lesson of a short time ago. He called the Twelve to Him, apart from the rest of the disciples that were with them. He then placed a contrast before them. Those who pass for, and are esteemed as, rulers by the Gentiles lord it over them, and the great ones of the world exercise dominion, use their power as they see fit, chiefly to enlarge their power. That is the case in earthly matters. But within the kingdom of Christ things are, or at least ought to be, far different. There greatness is measured, not by the amount of authority exercised, but by the amount of service rendered. The greater the service that is rendered, in unselfish humility, the higher will be the standing of a person in God's kingdom. The more thorough the self-abasement in the interest of one's neighbor and for love of Christ, the greater it will be accounted on God's credit slip. And in this the apostles and all Christians have the most glorious example before their eyes always: He, the great Lord of heaven, who came to earth as the Son of Man, who might have demanded and enforced the service of all creation, did not demand and accept this service, but Himself became the lowest servant of all. That was one object of His coming. And the other is closely connected with this. He freely gave His life as a ransom, as the price of redemption. His life, His blood, was given to pay the guilt of the whole world, and though there is a large number that reject His redemption, there are also, by His grace, many that believe on Him and are saved by such faith.

"Mark especially the verse where Christ says: The Son of Man is come to give His life as a ransom for many. For this verse teaches.... of the forgiveness of sins, and how we may obtain it. With our works and merit we are lost; for we owe God such a great sum that it is impossible for us to pay it. How may we then become rid of the guilt? In no other way but that our dear Lord Jesus Christ accepts our guilt and takes our sins from us and lays them on His back and suffers death, which we had earned by our sins, in order that we might be free and liberated from death." (Martin Luther) ~

For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Mark 10:45

CHRIST DECLARES THAT HE GAVE HIMSELF as a ransom for many; He was set forth as a propitiation for sins; He offered Himself as a sacrifice unto God. It is through the merit of His righteousness and death that men are saved. All these representations which pervade the Scriptures necessarily assume that the faith which secures salvation must have special reference to Him. If He is our Redeemer, we must receive and trust Him as such. If He is a propitiation for sins, it is through faith in His blood that we are reconciled to God. The whole plan of salvation, as set forth in the Gospel, supposes that Christ in His person and work is the object of faith and the ground of confidence.

Charles Hodge

WHAT NOW IS THE TREASURE wherewith ye are ransomed? Not corruptible gold or silver, but the precious blood of Christ the Son of God: the treasure is so costly and noble, that no human sense or reason can conceive it, insomuch that only one drop of this innocent blood were more than enough for the sin of all the world: yet has the Father been willing to dispense his grace so richly upon us, and denied Himself so much as to suffer Christ His Son to shed all His blood for us, and has bestowed upon us the whole treasure. Therefore He would not have us disregard such great grace, and count it as a small matter, but continue on our guard, so as to live in fear, that this treasure be not taken away from us.

Martin Luther

The Ransom for Sin

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

ransom:

A sum of money or other payment demanded or paid for the release of a prisoner

LONG AGO, THERE WAS AN INFAMOUS KIDNAPPING. In the Garden of Eden, Satan deceived Adam and Eve and they disobeyed God's single command. After the fall, Adam and Eve were subject to sin and death, snatched from perfection by Satan's treachery.

Since that time, every person born into the world is a captive of the evil one. Because of original sin, inherited from our first parents, humans are under the power of death, held by Satan, in need of rescue from his wicked enslavement. We are enthralled by sin, born into bondage, captives of death.

What is the ransom for sin? What will satisfy the demands of a righteous and holy God? Money is not an acceptable form of payment. Power, political or otherwise, does nothing to settle the sin debt. Good deeds will never satisfy the ransom requirement. Church attendance will not suffice. Living an ascetic life in a monastery won't win justification. Doing one's best isn't nearly good enough. Things look grim for the human race.

The payment for sin requires death, the very blood of the prisoners. Death is the promised punishment, but this is not a desirable solution. The prisoners would be dead rather than rescued! Helpless in the grip of their abductor, the captives cannot free themselves. None can pay the ransom and survive. Only blood can pay the ransom for sin.

In Old Testament times, millions of animals were sacrificed to atone for the sins of the people of Israel, but the blood of animals could not deliver from the bondage of sin. The requirement is the death of the person who sinned, unless.... unless... someone ELSE gave their life, someone ELSE gave their blood.

I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death:

O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction. (Hosea 13:14)



God came to Earth in the form of a human. Jesus—God Himself—was born as a baby and lived on this planet for over thirty years. Because Jesus was fully man, He walked and talked, ate and cried. Because Jesus was fully God, He healed the sick, made the blind to see and the lame to walk, and raised the dead. He made

friends and He made enemies.

Eventually, His friends deserted Him and His enemies put Him to death.

But, in reality, people didn't put Jesus to death. Jesus gave Himself as a ransom for sin. He paid the blood sacrifice and rescued us from the power of Satan. Through His innocent death, Jesus overcame the power of death. In His glorious resurrection, we are justified and given a new forever life.

Come, Thou precious Ransom, come, Only Hope for sinful mortals!
Come, O Savior of the world! Open are to Thee all portals.
Come, Thy beauty let us see; Anxiously we wait for Thee.

Enter now my waiting heart, Glorious King and Lord most holy.
Dwell in me and ne'er depart, Though I am but poor and lowly.
Ah, what riches will be mine When Thou art my Guest Divine!

My hosannas and my palms Graciously receive, I pray Thee;
Evermore, as best I can, Savior, I will homage pay Thee,
And in faith I will embrace, Lord, Thy merit through Thy grace.

Hail, hosanna, David's Son! Help, Lord, hear our supplication!
Let Thy kingdom, scepter, crown, Bring us blessing and salvation,
That forever we may sing: Hail, hosanna! to our King.

Johann G. Olearius, first published in 1699

The Good News is that our sin debt is paid in full. The blood of the Lamb, the perfect ransom, is acceptable to our Father in heaven. He does not look upon our sin, but through faith, it is washed clean, whiter than snow. Repent and believe the Gospel!

For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus; Who gave himself a ransom for all.
1 Timothy 2:5-6

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The Apostle's Creed: Article III

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

THIS ARTICLE (AS I HAVE SAID)* I cannot relate better than to Sanctification, that through the same the Holy Ghost, with His office, is declared and depicted, namely, that He makes holy. Therefore we must take our stand upon the word Holy Ghost, because it is so precise and comprehensive that we cannot find another. For there are, besides, many kinds of spirits mentioned in the Holy Scriptures, as, the spirit of man, heavenly spirits, and evil spirits. But the Spirit of God alone is called Holy Ghost, that is, He who has sanctified and still sanctifies us. For as the Father is called Creator, the Son Redeemer, so the Holy Ghost, from His work, must be called Sanctifier, or One that makes holy. But how is such sanctifying done? Answer: Just as the Son obtains dominion, whereby He wins us, through His birth, death, resurrection, etc., so also the Holy Ghost effects our sanctification by the following parts, namely, by the communion of saints or the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting; that is, He first leads us into His holy congregation, and places us in the bosom of the Church, whereby He preaches to us and brings us to Christ.

For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel. The work is done and accomplished; for Christ has acquired and gained the treasure for us by His suffering, death, resurrection, etc. But if the work remained concealed so that no one knew of it, then it would be in vain and lost. That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring this treasure home and appropriate it to us. Therefore sanctifying is nothing else than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves.

Learn, then, to understand this article most clearly. If you are asked: What do you mean by the words: I believe in the Holy Ghost? you can answer: I believe that the Holy Ghost makes me holy, as His name implies. But whereby does He accomplish this, or what are His method and means to this end? Answer: By the Christian Church, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. For, in the first place, He has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which He reveals and preaches, [and through which] He illumines and enkindles hearts, that they understand, accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.

For where He does not cause it to be preached and made alive in the heart, so that it is understood, it is lost, as was the case under the Papacy, where faith was entirely put under the bench, and no one recognized Christ as his Lord or the Holy Ghost as his Sanctifier, that is, no one believed that Christ is our Lord in the sense that He has acquired this treasure for us, without our works and merit, and made us acceptable to the Father. What, then, was lacking? This, that the Holy Ghost was not there to reveal it and cause it to be preached; but men and evil spirits were there, who taught us to obtain grace and be saved by our works. Therefore it is not a Christian Church either; for where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Ghost who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord. Let this suffice concerning the sum of this article...

Martin Luther, The Large Catechism

**Parentheses and brackets are included in the original*

The Power of the Divine Word

FOR THE MODERN CHRISTIAN, as for the world outside of the church, preaching God's Word and administering the Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper are distasteful to the point of being offensive. The modern Christian knows no more what the church's real responsibilities are than what they really mean. The world makes fun of the church because its only task is preaching. To this we answer that the world does not know the power of the divine Word. It does not recognize that behind the feeble words of human beings is the almighty Word of the Almighty God, which "is like a fire," the "living and active" Word, which "is sharper than any two-edged sword," which "pierces through to the division of the soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and is the judge of thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). How could the world have known, how can it know, that God created and still maintains the world through this Word? Quite literally all mankind lives because of this Word!

Hermann Sasse