

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 2023

Christ's Ascension into Heaven

Martin Luther

So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God.

Mark 16:19

NOW WE MUST CONSIDER THE ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ. In the first place, it is easily said and understood that the Lord ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of God. But they are dead words to the understanding if they are not grasped with the heart.

We must, therefore, conceive of His ascension and Lordship as something active, energetic and continuous, and must not imagine that He sits above while we hold the reins of government down here. Nay, He ascended up thither for the reason that there He can best do His work and exercise dominion. Had He remained upon earth in visible form, before the people, He could not have wrought so effectually, for all the people could not have been with Him and heard Him. Therefore, He inaugurated an expedient which made it possible for Him to be in touch with all and reign in all, to preach to all and be heard by all, and to be with all. Therefore, beware lest you imagine within yourself that He has gone, and now is, far away from us. The very opposite is true: While He was on earth, He was far away from us; now He is very near.

Reason cannot comprehend how this can be. Therefore it is an article of faith. Here one must close his eyes and not follow his reason, but lay hold of all by faith. For how can reason grasp the thought that there should be a Being like ourselves, who is all-seeing and knows all hearts and gives all men faith and the Spirit; or that He sits above in heaven, and yet is present with us and in us and rules over us? Therefore, strive not to comprehend, but say: This is Scripture and this is God's Word, which is immeasurably higher than all understanding and reason. Cease your reasoning and lay hold of the Scriptures, which testify of this Being — how He ascended to heaven and sits at the right hand of God and exercises dominion. Let us examine some Scripture bearing upon this matter.

In the first place, *Psalm 8:4-6* says of Christ: *What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour. Thou madest him to have*

dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet. Here the prophet speaks to God concerning a Man and marvels that God humbled, for a time, that Man, when He suffered Him to die, humbled Him to the extent that it seemed as if God were not with Him. But after a little while God exalted Him, so that all things must obey Him, both in heaven and on earth. To these words we must hold, to these words we must cling, in these words we must believe; for reason will not submit nor adapt itself to them, but says they are lies. Now, if all things are to be subject to this Being and to fall at His feet, He must sit where He can look into the whole world, into heaven and hell and every heart; where He can see all sin and all righteousness, and can not only see all things, But can rule accordingly.



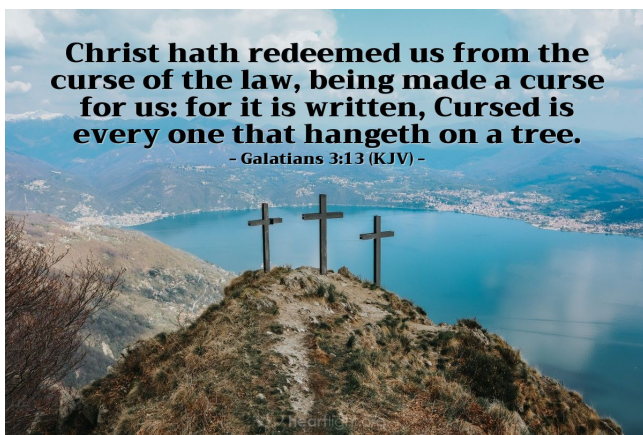
Hence, these are majestic and powerful words. They afford the heart great comfort, so that they who believe this are filled with joy and courage and defiantly say: My Lord Jesus Christ is Lord over death, Satan, sin, righteousness, body, life, foes and friends. What shall I fear? For while my enemies stand before my very door and plan to slay me, my faith reasons thus: Christ is ascended into heaven and become Lord over all creatures, hence my enemies, too, must be subject to Him and thus it is not in their power to do me harm. I

challenge them to raise a finger against me or to injure a hair of my head against the will of my Lord Jesus Christ. When faith grasps and stands upon this article, it stands firm and waxes bold and defiant, so as even to say: If my Lord so wills that they, mine enemies, slay me, blessed am I; I gladly depart. Thus you will see that He is ascended into heaven, not to remain in indifference, but to exercise dominion; and all for our good, to afford us comfort and joy. ~

Christ Has Redeemed Us

Ansten Tretten
September 2017 CM

WE LOOK IN the *third chapter* of the epistle of Paul to the *Galatians*, *verse thirteen*: *Christ hath redeemed us from the curse...* but not just any curse. There are many curses in this life. We know there are those who are practicing witchcraft and who place curses on people, on things, on animals; there is a world that is the demon world, that world that is not seen by the human eye. We know that Christ Jesus has dominion over that world. In many parts of the world this type of practice is performed, and we see in the Scriptures, in the book of Acts, there were men who practiced this demonic form of religion, placing curses on people. Right away the question comes up: Can there be a curse placed on believers? Of course not! Because of Christ Jesus *...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world.* (1 John 4:4) But I will tell you this: that believer who opens himself up to the way of some form of living after the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, the pride of life, who live, as an example, in covetousness, who live after the love of money, they are opening themselves to all forms of Satan's working in their lives. They believe lies! They live after self-centeredness and pride, and they are not led by the Spirit of God. Be careful, dear children of God, to follow Christ Jesus with all of your heart. Recognize the leading of the Spirit of God, and do not follow the way of darkness, of passions, and what you would (and men do) justify as good and right. Dear friends, live as followers of Christ Jesus!



Christ hath redeemed us from the curse... from all curses, but here we see *from the curse of the law* and the curse of the Law is God's Law where God says, *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.* (Galatians 3:10) And what is our response to that statement in Holy Scriptures? I'm guilty; I am cursed apart from Christ Jesus. Friend, apart from Christ you are cursed. You are under the curse. You are not partly there; it's not others who are there. You say, "Oh no... it's those who are living in the

awful sins of adultery and fornication, who live in drugs, alcoholism, who live after covetousness and power, who live after the way of destroying the lives of others, taking advantage of people, taking advantage of the poor. Oh, these will burn in hell!" Dear friend, those who will burn in hell are the ones who reject Christ Jesus. Why do you suppose Jesus Christ came into the world? He came to die, to bear your sin, to die your death, because He does not want anyone to go to hell, to the lake of fire. Don't reject Christ Jesus! Don't judge others by your measurement and determine who is worthy of eternal life and who is not. No one is worthy! Christ Jesus says, "Forgive them, Father, for they know not what they do!" That's how unworthy we are. We are blind to the evil of our ways. And do you know what is the most harmful sin among all of mankind? It's the sin of pride, the sin of self-centeredness, the sin of boasting. Oh, dear friends, come to Christ and ask Him to show you what perfect righteousness is and how you stand before God in what you call your righteousness. Dear friend, Christ Jesus says, "I am come that you might have life! I am come that you might have life and you might have it more abundantly."

The blessing of Abraham comes on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, and by no other means does the blessing of the Holy Spirit, of righteousness, peace and joy come. The blessing of eternal life comes upon all men through the promised Seed of Abraham by faith. We will receive the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith, the fourteenth verse of the third chapter tells us. The Holy Spirit is our guide and leads us in the way where we have eternal life abiding in us. Any other means destroys the knowledge and assurance of eternal life. You add something unto Christ, such as the Law, and you will be separated from eternal life, because, as we see in the fifth chapter: *Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised* (that's a ritual required by the Law in the Old Testament), *Christ [who has fulfilled all laws, the moral law, the ceremonial law, the dietary laws, the laws of the priesthood. Christ has fulfilled them all, so therefore in Christ Jesus we have everything.] shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.* (Galatians 5:2-4)

Is this to be looked at seriously? Is this a warning? Is it really true that those who walk by the Law are fallen from grace? Dear friend, I do not say that you who walk by the Law are going to be lost, but I say you who are walking by the Law have no relationship with Jesus Christ. You are believing in the cross and in the shed blood of Christ, and then you think that the safe way to reach heaven is by a list of rules. Dear friend, the safe way is by being united unto Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

Galatians 3:15-18

Honor Your Father and Mother

The Large Catechism

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Exodus 20:12

TO THIS ESTATE of fatherhood and motherhood God has given the special distinction above all estates that are beneath it that He not simply commands us to love our parents, but to honor them. For with respect to brothers, sisters, and our neighbors in general He commands nothing higher than that we love them, so that He separates and distinguishes father and mother above all other persons upon earth, and places them at His side. For it is a far higher thing to honor than to love one, inasmuch as it comprehends not only love, but also modesty, humility, and deference as to a majesty there hidden, and requires not only that they be addressed kindly and with reverence, but, most of all, that both in heart and with the body we so act as to show that we esteem them very highly, and that, next to God, we regard them as the very highest. For one whom we are to honor from the heart we must truly regard as high and great.

We must, therefore, impress it upon the young that they should regard their parents as in God's stead, and remember that however lowly, poor, frail, and queer they may be, nevertheless they are father and mother given them by God. They are not to be deprived of their honor because of their conduct or their failings. Therefore we are not to regard their persons, how they may be, but the will of God who has thus created and ordained. In other respects we are, indeed, all alike in the eyes of God; but among us there must necessarily be such inequality and ordered difference, and therefore God commands it to be observed, that you obey me as your father, and that I have the supremacy.

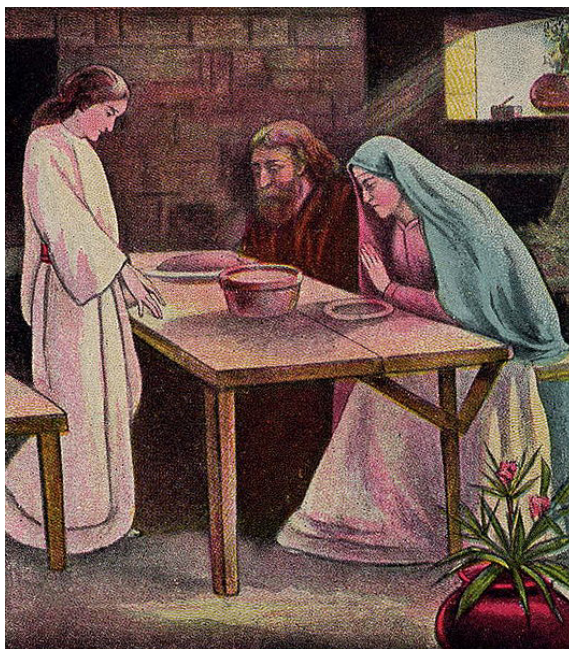
Learn, therefore, first, what is the honor towards parents required by this commandment, to wit; that they be held in distinction and esteem above all things, as the most precious treasure on earth. Furthermore, that also in our words we observe modesty toward them, do not accost them roughly, haughtily, and defiantly, but yield to them and be silent, even though they go too far. Thirdly, that we show them such honor also by works, that is, with our body and possessions, that we serve them, help them, and provide for them when they are old, sick, infirm, or poor, and all that not only gladly, but with humility and reverence, as doing it before God. For he who knows how to regard them in his heart will not allow them to suffer want or hunger, but will place them above him and at his side, and will share with them whatever he has and possesses.

Secondly, notice how great, good, and holy a work is here assigned children, which is, alas! utterly neglected and disregarded, and no one perceives that God has commanded it, or that it is a holy, divine Word and doctrine. For if it had been regarded as such, every one could have inferred that they must be holy men who live according to these words. Thus there would have been no need of inventing monasticism nor spiritual orders, but every child would have abided by this commandment, and could have directed his conscience to God and said: "If I am to do good and holy works, I know of none better than to render all honor and obedience to my parents, because God has Himself commanded it. For what God commands must be much and far nobler than everything that we may devise ourselves; and since there is no higher or better teacher to be found than God, there can be no better doctrine, indeed, than He gives forth. Now, He teaches fully what we should do if we wish to perform truly good works; and by commanding them, He shows that they please Him. If, then, it is God who commands this, and who knows not how to appoint anything better, I will never improve upon it."...

Let us, therefore, learn at last, for God's sake, that, placing all other things out of sight, our youths look first to this commandment, if they wish to serve God with truly good works, that they do what is pleasing to their fathers and mothers, or to those to whom they may be subject in their stead. For every child that knows and does this has, in the first place, this great consolation in his heart, that he can joyfully say and boast (in spite of and against all who are occupied with works of their own choice): "Behold, this work is well pleasing to my God in heaven, that I know for certain." Let them all come together with their many great, distressing, and difficult works and make their boast; we will see whether they can show one that is greater and nobler than obedience to father and mother, to whom God has appointed and commanded obedience next to His own majesty; so that if God's Word and will are in

force and being accomplished, nothing shall be esteemed higher than the will and word of parents; yet so that it, too, is subordinated to obedience toward God and is not opposed to the preceding commandments.

Therefore you should be heartily glad and thank God that He has chosen you and made you worthy to do a work so precious and pleasing to Him. Only see that, although it be regarded as the most humble and despised, you esteem it great and precious, not on account of our worthiness, but because it is comprehended in, and controlled by, the jewel and sanctuary, namely, the Word and commandment of God.



Honor Your Father and Your Mother
Illustration from a Bible card published 1908 by the Providence Lithograph Company. Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Power From on High

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,
God's peace.

As I begin this page, I so often wonder how all of you are doing. I surely do hope that you are doing just fine. If you're having a bad day for whatever reason, I hope that you feel better soon.

The Bible says in *1 Peter 5:7: Casting all your care upon him (JESUS); for he careth (cares) for you.* Jesus wants us to always tell Him our troubles and ask Him to help us through them. Jesus is never too tired to listen. There are times we feel as though He is not listening. He knows we're going have those times.

I want to focus on Pentecost.

YOU CHILDREN HAVE probably read stories or heard at church or home how Jesus died on Good Friday, and arose again three days later, on Easter. After He arose again, He was alive just as He was before. He then spent 40 more days with His disciples, teaching them about God's kingdom and helping them understand the Scriptures.

I can easily imagine how amazed and happy the disciples were to have Jesus with them again. When Jesus died, they felt afraid and helpless. They even stayed behind locked doors because they feared their lives would be over. They were so used to Jesus being there for them and were having a hard time with His absence.

After Jesus' resurrection, He spent time with His disciples over the course of 40 days. As the 40 days came to an end, Jesus led His disciples out as far as Bethany (Luke 24:50) and gave His disciples some last instructions. One of the last is found in *Luke 24:49: And, behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry (stay) ye in Jerusalem, until ye be endued (filled) with power from on high.*

After Jesus had said that, He lifted up His hands and blessed the disciples, and then He was lifted up to heaven.

The disciples then went to Jerusalem filled with joy and they preached about Jesus. They did not know what the power from on high was, but they waited as instructed. We read in *Acts 2:1-4: And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they (the disciples) were all with one accord in one place.*

And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting.

And there appeared unto them cloven tongues (tapering flame) like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them.

And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues (languages), as the Spirit gave them utterance.

That "power from on high" was the Holy Spirit—God's power—given to us by God ONLY. God's Holy Spirit helps each of us to know when we have done wrong. He helps us to be strong when we tell unbelievers about God and Jesus. If we believe on Jesus it's because the Holy Spirit is giving us that power to believe.

Pentecost is the "day" that the disciples received the Holy Spirit. They were given the power to believe on Jesus without Him having to be there, and to go on preaching all they had learned from Jesus.

I pray for all of you to believe on Jesus, knowing that He has a special place prepared for you up in heaven. It's the believers' forever home, one that the unbeliever will not be granted residence.

Jesus loves you dearly. He loves each of us so much that He stretched out His hands on the cross, shed every drop of His blood and died, for you and me and all mankind. What a wonderful Savior and friend we have. May God watch over each of you wherever you are and keep you in His care. ~

Have you ever snuggled under a blanket or comforter when you were cold? It's very warm and soft and comfortable. Jesus called the Holy Spirit a "Comforter" Who will be with us forever.

The Holy Spirit Comforter

AFTER JESUS ROSE again from the dead, He knew that He would be going back to heaven to be with His Father. He promised the disciples that He would ask the Father to send the Holy Spirit to teach them all things, and to remind them of everything that Jesus had said to them.

Ten days after Jesus had gone back to heaven, the disciples were together on a special day called Pentecost. Suddenly the house was filled with the sound of a mighty wind from heaven. Little flickering tongues like fire appeared and rested on each of them. The disciples were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, languages that they didn't even know how to speak! All the people who heard them were so surprised.

The Apostle Peter told the people about Jesus being crucified and how God had raised Him from the dead. He said that Jesus was now lifted up at the right hand of the Father, and had received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit. Peter said the people were seeing and hearing this Holy Spirit being poured out by God. *Three thousand* people received Peter's words and were baptized that day!

The Holy Spirit came to be with us and to comfort us. The Spirit teaches us and reminds us of the promises of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is our Comforter, Who will be with us forever and warm our hearts when they are cold.



CM for Children, Summer 2017

The Priesthood of Believers

Beth Staudinger
Leslieville, Alberta

IN THE OLD TESTAMENT God tells Moses on Mount Sinai to say to the house of Jacob and the children of Israel, *Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar (special) treasure unto me above all people: for the earth is mine. And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. (Exodus 19:5-6)*

The Old Testament priesthood was delegated to the men of only one tribe of the children of Israel, and that was the tribe of Levi. In the New Testament we who are believers in the redemptive work that Christ has done for us and have had our sins washed away in His blood, have become priests, as well. We are priests one to another and also priests to those who are seeking to be saved in that we can preach the Gospel that Christ has commissioned us to preach “repentance and the remission of sins in His name.” (Luke 24:47).

Our hearts have taken the place of the Old Testament temple, as the Bible says, *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? (1 Corinthians 3:16)* Further, the Word of God tells us, *Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 2:5)*

We are also told, *But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar (special) people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:9) ...And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, and the first begotten of the dead, and the prince of the kings of the earth. Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, And hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father; to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen. (Revelation 1:5-6) And they sung a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth. (Revelation 5:9-10)*

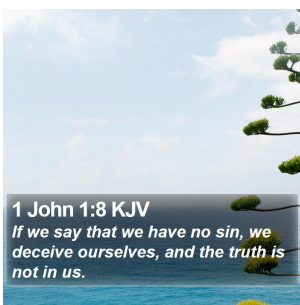
We serve one another as priests, as depicted in the foot washing, which Jesus Himself instituted. As He said, *If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. (John 13:14-15)* Jesus' example seems to be all about cleansing, and cleansing from sin, as we travel along life's road and our feet become dirty. Jesus finished His teaching through this example by saying, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that receiveth whomsoever I send receiveth me; and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. (John 13:20)*

We find also this Scripture, *To whom ye forgive any thing, I forgive also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave it, for your sakes forgave I it in the person of Christ; Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Corinthians 2:10-11)* This is the writing of St. Paul.

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

What a precious gift we have been given, when we can be priests to those who want to enter the Kingdom of God to be saved, and when we can be priests one to another. *Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. (James 5:16)* To the sinner who is sorry for his sins and wants to turn from their sins – by God's love and power we can proclaim the gospel message to them. They can hear with their own ears: “You have the right to believe all your sins forgiven in the name and the blood of Jesus.” This brings peace and joy to the sinner's heart.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (1 John 1:7) ~



1 John 1:8 KJV

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

1 John 1:8-9

A GAIN, TWO DIFFERENT heart conditions. One where we would say that we have no sin. This is a deceived heart. We will clearly find in Scripture that we surely have sin in us, in our members. Our flesh is corrupt and constantly warring against the Spirit of God which dwells in those who are saved. So if we deny that we have sin, we deceive ourselves. But the other must admit that they have much sin. Even Paul said of himself that he was the chief of sinners.

Now we know that this is not speaking of purposely living in sin, serving sin as Scripture calls it. Anyone who excuses his sin, continuing in it, justifying himself, is truly in darkness and is lost. But he who confesses his sin, acknowledging what he is, full of sorrow, shame, and regret for all that he has done, and has not done, needing forgiveness and help and strength continually, is forgiven and cleansed from all sin. They journey day by day under the flowing fountain of the blood. They have a covering of Jesus' blood and righteousness. They press on in a lively hope to the end.

Ah, dear friends, in which of these categories do we fall? Where are our hearts? What is our confession? Do not stand proud in haughtiness, but confident in humility. Confident, I say, because to the humble, the repentant, are given the promises of salvation. To the poor the Gospel is preached. This is amazing grace!

*Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan
Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire*

Stewards of God's Word

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

Colossians 3:1-4

IT WAS AROUND TWENTY YEARS ago that I attended our church's convention when it was hosted here in the Copper Country. I was so moved by one of the messages at that convention that I requested a copy of that sermon, which I still have to this day. The text was the aforementioned passage from the third chapter of the Apostle Paul's letter to the Colossians. The preacher thundered on with such passion that I was not sure whether his voice would hold out. His voice did last, and he continued his enthusiastic preaching, until God called our Brother Ansten Tretten home just a few days ago. We pray that the Lord will bless his wife and family as they grieve, and also as they celebrate Ansten's victory in Christ.

Ansten was a great encouragement to me personally, as well as other young pastors just starting out in ministry. Ansten preached of Jesus Christ and Him crucified passionately, not only because the message was so important to him, but also because he wanted the hearers of that message to hear it and believe it as well. Over and over again, I would hear him use the phrase "by faith" in his preaching. We are justified by faith. We walk by faith. We live by faith. Our works are not sufficient. Only faith in the work of Christ makes us acceptable in the sight of God.

Ansten, along with Brother Orval Wirkkala, was instrumental in starting a lectionary study, whereby several pastors join by a teleconference call to discuss the appointed

readings for the coming Sunday. I have been greatly blessed by these meetings, not only for the discussion of God's Word, but also for the fellowship that we have with one another. We serve side by side in God's Kingdom, sharing the greatest news of all. *We are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God.*

During Holy Week, we remember the great price that was paid for the salvation of mankind. The death of Jesus Christ means that our sins are forgiven and washed away by His precious blood. The Resurrection of Jesus Christ reminds us that death cannot hold Him, and it will not hold us as well. We are delivered from the deadness of our sin and are given new life in Christ. We are risen with Christ indeed! God be praised!

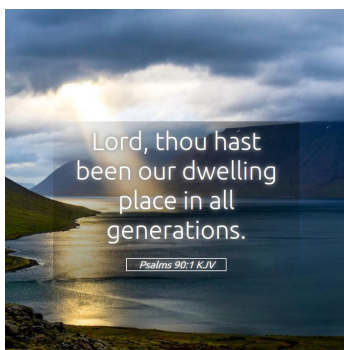
Thanks be to God for the victory we have in His Son, Jesus Christ. And thanks be to God for giving us stewards of His Word, like Brother Ansten, who faithfully proclaim that message to a world that needs to hear it. I am reminded of the words of the Apostle Paul:

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: 8 Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

As always, we thank you for your continuing support of the seminary through your prayers, gifts and words of encouragement. God grant you a blessed Holy Week and Easter celebration.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you... (1 Peter 1:3-4)

Yours in Christ.



Forgetting God

If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god; Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

Psalms 44:20-21

NO MAN CAN BE WITHOUT his god. If he have not the true God to bless and sustain him, he will have some false god to delude and to betray him. The Psalmist knew this, and therefore he joined so closely forgetting the name of our God and holding up our hands to some strange god. For every man has something in which he hopes, on which he leans, to which he retreats and retires, with which he fills up his thoughts in empty spaces of time; when he is alone, when he lies sleepless on his bed, when he is not pressed with other thoughts; to which he betakes himself in sorrow or

trouble, as that from which he shall draw comfort and strength—his fortress, his citadel, his defense; and has not this a good right to be called his god? Man was made to lean on the Creator; but if not on Him, then he leans on the creature in one shape or another. The ivy cannot grow alone; it must twine round some support or other; if not the goodly oak, then the ragged thorn; round any dead stick whatever, rather than have no stay nor support at all. It is even so with the heart and affections of man; if they do not twine around God, they must twine around some meaner thing.

Richard C. Trench

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.

Psalms 90:1-2

Lord, Teach Us to Pray

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, as in heaven, so in earth. Give us day by day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us. And lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil.

Luke 11:1-4

But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him. After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

Matthew 6:7-13

HAVE YOU EVER HEARD THAT praying the Lord's Prayer is "vain repetition" and "empty phrases"? Or that the Lord's Prayer is only a model for prayer?

Evidently John the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray, as mentioned in the gospel of Luke, when an unnamed disciple asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." In Matthew's gospel, Jesus taught the Lord's Prayer in the middle of His Sermon on the Mount, saying that, as children, we are to ask our Father in heaven for the things that we need.

There are seven petitions in the Lord's Prayer. When we pray, we ask that the first three be done among us, as in heaven, so on earth:

- May Your Name be kept holy
- May Your kingdom come
- May Your will be done

The center of the Lord's Prayer, the fourth petition, is: Give us today our daily bread. We remember from the Catechism what is meant by daily bread: "All that belongs to the wants and support of the body, such as meat, drink, clothing, shoes, house, home, land, cattle, money, goods, a pious spouse, pious children, pious servants, pious and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, order, honor, true friends, good neighbors, and the like."

The last three petitions are:

- Forgive us our sins, as we forgive those who sin against us
- Lead us not into temptation
- Deliver us from evil

Recently, while studying the Matthew text, our pastor mentioned something significant about the petitions that I'd like to share with you. How many of our prayers are encompassed in the fourth petition? How many times do we pray for the things in the first and last three petitions? Often our prayers focus on temporal needs more than spiritual ones, but we have a great need to pray for God's name, kingdom and will, and for His forgiveness and protection. Our Lord delights in His prayer, so we can freely pray these words.



Luther writes in the Large Catechism:

"There is no nobler prayer to be found upon earth than the Lord's Prayer which we daily pray, because it has this excellent testimony, that God loves to hear it, which we ought not to surrender for all the riches of the world. And it has been prescribed also for this reason that we should see and consider the distress which ought to urge and compel us to pray without ceasing. For whoever would pray must have something to present, state, and name which he desires; if not, it cannot be called a prayer..."

"But where there is to be a true prayer, there must be earnestness. Men must feel their distress, and such distress as presses them and compels them to call and cry out; then prayer will be made spontaneously, as it ought to be, and men will require no teaching how to prepare for it and to attain to the proper devotion. But the distress which ought to concern us most, both as regards ourselves and every one, you will find abundantly set forth in the Lord's Prayer. Therefore it is to serve also to remind us of the same, that we contemplate it and lay it to heart, lest we become remiss in prayer. For we all have enough that we lack, but the great want is that we do not feel nor see it. Therefore God also requires that you lament and plead such necessities and wants, not because He does not know them, but that you may kindle your heart to stronger and greater desires, and make wide and open your cloak to receive much."

May our heart cry be, "Lord, teach us to pray!" ~

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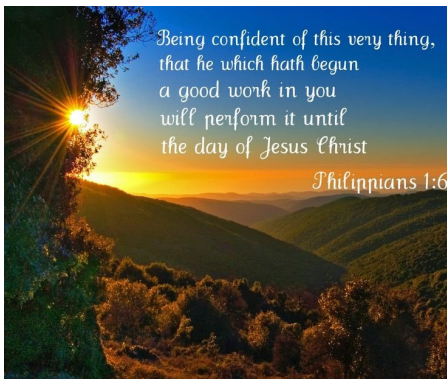
Pastor Jason Salmi
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MANY OF US GREW UP with the idea that we should not be overly confident in our salvation. That this would be prideful or presumptuous. And, after all, the Bible does give clear warnings to believers not to fall away from the faith...which implies that it is possible to fall away from the faith. So, instead there has been a hopeful (sometimes fearful) attitude of “wait and see.” Or, “I’ll know I’ve made it after I’ve made it. There’ll be time for celebration then, but I don’t want to count my chickens before they’ve hatched.”

It is absolutely true that the Bible warns believers to hold fast to the faith. Among many other places we could point to, *Colossians 1:22-23* contains a conditional statement: *And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprieveable in his sight: If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven...*

So then we can ask the question: is it possible (or even right) to have absolute and complete confidence in our salvation without falling into pride or presumption?

In his letter to the church in Philippi, Paul shows us how this is possible. *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ* (*Philippians 1:3-6*) You see, your salvation is not your own work. You did not begin the work of salvation in yourself, God did. And you would be helpless to bring it to completion on the day when you stand before the Judge of the living and the dead. God does that part also. We only pay lip service to Paul’s declaration that our faith is not our own, but is a gift which has been given to us by God (*Ephesians 2:8*), if we view it as a gift which has been freely given to us, but which is then somehow within our ability to retain. If God did not begin the good work (faith) in us, we would not be saved. But also, if God did not maintain that good work in us, we would not be saved.



Being confident of this very thing,
that he which hath begun
a good work in you
will perform it until
the day of Jesus Christ
Philippians 1:6

It is because he knew this to be true that, as he was very near to the end of his life, Paul was able to write these words to Timothy: *For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* (*2 Timothy 4:6-8*) He is not speaking with pride or presumption when he says, “I have fought... I have finished...” because he knows that he has only done these things because God, in Christ, has been holding him the whole time. With that, he is able to declare, not only the certainty that he will receive a crown of righteousness, but that everyone who believes in Jesus will also receive one. And that, dear Believer, includes you. May the Lord our God grant you joy and peace as you look forward with anticipation to the eternal reward that Jesus has prepared for you. ~

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Romans 8:38-39

WE DON'T NEED a Savior to save us only from death—we need a Savior who will save us from *life*. We have such a Savior. We have such a Lord, who saves from both death and life. Having done so, He makes us certain and sure. He *persuades* us. For without that persuasion we have sad recourse only to the ancient whisperer and deceiver. The evil one's lies are without substance, however, in the Christ who died for all the world. The devil cannot overcome that light. Let us walk in the light, therefore, as He is in the light.

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