

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.**

November 2012

Abounding in Thanksgiving

Pastor Jay Weidner
Painesdale, Michigan

For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh; That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. And this I say, lest any man should beguile you with enticing words. For though I be absent in the flesh, yet am I with you in the spirit, joying and beholding your order, and the stedfastness of your faith in Christ. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not

after Christ. For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.

Colossians 2:1-10

Thanksgiving! What a wonderful time of the year. Yet it is strange to think that we only have one day of thanksgiving when thanksgiving is the single appropriate disposition of the Christian life. Paul indicates this very clearly as he says that, being in Christ, we should abound in thanksgiving at all times. We should acknowledge the gift of God in Christ and, being found in Him, walk in newness of life with thanksgiving. Our lives are full with the fullness of being in Christ. What else can we be but thankful?

Yet the fallen human being always pushes for more. Never satisfied with the work of God in Christ, it is driven into false holinesses and phony pieties of

human tradition and empty deceit. How sad it is if these things are substituted for the completion of all things found in Christ. It is this falseness that the sixteenth century reformers sought to correct by restoring the New Testament teaching of justification by grace through faith alone. Only when we recover and understand this can we properly assign the completion of God's work to Christ alone and give Him the glory due Him through the kindness of His Father and ours.

As we approach Thanksgiving may these words be in our hearts and minds: *For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power.* Complete in Him. Thank you, Lord. May the blessing of Christ keep us all in daily thanksgiving and bless you and yours in the days to come. ~



We give Thee thanks, Holy Father, for Thy holy name, which Thou hast made to tabernacle in our hearts, and for the knowledge and faith and immortality, which Thou hast made known unto us through Thy Son Jesus; Thine is the glory for ever and ever.

Thou, Almighty Master, didst create all things for Thy name's sake, and didst give food and drink unto men for enjoyment, that they might render thanks to Thee; but didst bestow upon us spiritual food and drink and eternal life through Thy Son. Before all things we give Thee thanks that Thou art powerful; Thine is the glory for ever and ever.

Remember, Lord, Thy Church to deliver it from all evil and to perfect it in Thy love; and gather it together from the four winds—even the Church which has been sanctified—into Thy kingdom which Thou hast prepared for it; for Thine is the power and the glory for ever and ever.

Didache



Thank You, Lord

Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan

**I was glad when they said unto me,
Let us go into the house of the LORD.**

Psalm 122:1

Have you ever given serious thought to what a blessing it is to go into our own church or meeting place to hear God's Word read and preached? Are we sometimes guilty of taking these opportunities for granted? What if some day suddenly the opportunity was taken away because of debilitating illness, accident, governmental decree, terrorism or some other circumstance? Would we miss gathering in worship as we do today and reflect with longing hearts for the return of these blessed times of refreshing?

Everything as we know it today can change so quickly and with such devastating results. The one thing that will never change, however, is God's Word. It will remain the same forever. For this we give thanks.

Today, let us stop and consider the reality of life's uncertainties and examine our own hearts in the light of those truths. Can we honestly say, with David, that we are glad when we can go into the house of the Lord, or do we find that sometimes we treat this God-given privilege with indifference, or even as something being imposed upon us? Do we find ourselves grudgingly attending the worship of God out of concern for what others might think of our absence? Do we seek excuses for not attending? Such excuses as: nobody cares for me anyway; I'm tired; I have a headache; I couldn't wake up on time; I don't get anything out of the sermon; I can't afford to support the Lord's work; there's no love there. The list of excuses seems endless, but let us recognize they all originate from one source: the devil, who feverishly wants to destroy the living faith from our hearts. He knows that the Scriptures

teach ...*faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)* Let us not be deceived, dear friend. Our feeble excuses do not impress God nor are they valid in His sight. They only serve to provide inroads for Satan to accomplish his evil work.

May we then, as God's children, pray to God for faithful hearts, that He would stir within all of us a true hungering and thirsting for His Word and a fervent desire to always be gathered in the assembly of His children. With faithful obedience, let us apply His Word to our own hearts as we are instructed: *Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)*

With humbled hearts may we thank God for His goodness and mercy which endures forever. Let us earnestly pray that He would show us even more clearly the many blessings He has given us, among them the great blessing of having the opportunity to gather in His house to study the Scriptures together and to worship Him with prayer, praise and thanksgiving. Pray, dear friend, that within all our hearts we could truly say with David: *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.* Here in the house of the Lord the children of His kingdom gather; here in His kingdom the precious blood of Jesus speaks grace and forgiveness for all our sin. Oh, let our hearts rejoice and our prayers of thanks be unending for *Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high. (Psalm 113:5) ~*

Praise ye the LORD.

Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

Blessed be the name of the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.

From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised.

The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.

Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth on high, Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!

Psalm 113:1-6

Did You Know?

Did you know that the Mission Hospital located in India, and associated with the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America, has been responsible for saving thousands of lives since June 1998? Some of the major illnesses treated: TB, malaria, HIV/AIDS, fevers and various cancers. From themissionsite.com, this quote explains:

There is no system of medical care in India for the poor and destitute people. Hospitalization and medical benefits are unheard of for these people. The government and private hospitals are out of reach to them because they cannot afford the cost involved. Thus, the poor have nowhere to turn for help except to organizations like our Mission Hospital.



Photos of hospital and patients courtesy of themissionsite.com.

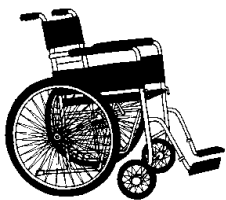
What We Believe

Edith Bisila
Circle Pines, Minnesota

Someone who is not familiar with the Apostolic Lutheran faith may ask how we differ from other denominations, especially other Lutheran churches. We have similar beliefs in many areas with certain other faiths. We also have differences. If there were no differences, it would be an easy choice to belong to any church. I will not discuss differences here, but perhaps it would be profitable to tell those who inquire what, as a Christian in the Apostolic Lutheran faith, has been revealed to me. It is not my intention to judge others who confess to be believers. We have One Who is all-knowing and in a position to do so without error.

- The Bible is the holy and inspired Word of God. 2 Timothy 3:16: *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.* See also 2 Peter 1:19-21.
- I believe in the triune Godhead: God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Jesus said: *I and my Father are one.* (John 10:30) He (Jesus) *breathed on them* (His disciples), *and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost.* (John 20:22) He also gives us His Spirit. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.* (Romans 8:9)
- I believe in the need for the preaching of repentance from unbelief and consequent sin, and in redemption by faith in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.* (Romans 10:17) *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.* (Romans 3:23) Jesus said: *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.* (Mark 1:15) *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one.* (Romans 3:10) See also Luke 13:3-5; Ecclesiastes 7:20; Jeremiah 17:9.
- Unbelief and resulting sin separate us from God but He has provided a remedy in Christ. *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.* (John 3:16-17)
- The shed blood of Christ is the only means of redemption and reconciliation with God. *In whom (Christ) we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.* (Ephesians 1:7) See also Acts 4:12; John 14:6.
- The office of the laying on of hands for the forgiveness of sins in the name and atoning blood of Jesus was given to the Church. The Holy Spirit is given to us and dwells within us. *Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost.* (Acts 8:14-17) *Then said Jesus to them (His disciples) again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* (John 20:21-23) See also Luke 24: 47-48; Acts 13:37-39.
- Apostle Paul exhorts Timothy: *Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine. Neglect not the gift that is in thee, which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery. Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all. Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.* (1 Timothy 4:13-16) See also 2 Corinthians 5:17-20
- By the indwelling Spirit the believer has a desire to seek to do the will of God and live a life separate from the world. 1 John 2:15-17 says: *Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.* See also Matthew 6:19-21; Romans 14:7-8. Our dear elder pastor said in a sermon that the kingdom of God is a hospital for sinners, not a playground for Christians.
- I acknowledge that I am a sinner, mercifully redeemed by grace in the name of Christ and washed in His precious atoning blood. Therein is the reason for my peace with God. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* (Philippians 4:7)

God's peace.



There are some who are kept back from serving by the thought of their lack of ability, and do not remember that My strength gives power in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). They are like invalids who, though they have recovered from their disease and are taking nourishing food, yet remain weak because they do no work and take no proper exercise. What such believers need is that they should put their trust in Me and set out to save sinners from destruction.

Sadhu Sundar Singh, Indian Christian missionary

Do You Hear What I Hear? Part II

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

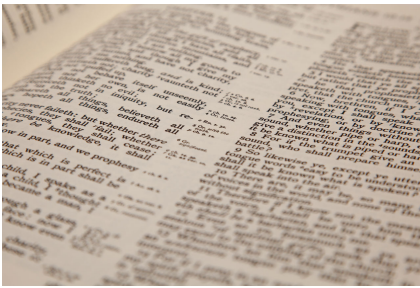
Hello Children,

I pray you are well today!
Before we continue where we left off last time, I want to back up a little. Let's listen to some important things in the Old Testament about people in the family line of the Savior: Abraham and Isaac and Jacob.



- Do you hear God telling Abram (later called Abraham) to leave the land he is in to go to the land of Canaan?
- Do you hear Abram asking God who will be his heir, as he and his wife are old and childless? Do you hear God telling Abraham to go out of his tent and count the stars, and that his family tree will be without number?
- Do you hear the aged Abraham and Sarah's joy when she brings forth Isaac, the son God had promised them?
- Do you hear Rebekah saying she will go with Abraham's servant to be a wife for Isaac?
- Do you hear Isaac and Rebekah's joy as the twins Esau and Jacob are born?
- Do you hear Jacob's anger when he finds his father-in-law tricked him into marrying Leah instead of Rachel, whom he loved and had worked 7 years to marry?
- Do you hear Jacob's joy when he has worked another 7 years and finally marries Rachel?
- Do you hear Jacob and Rachel's joy as their son Joseph is born? Do you hear, a few years later, Jacob's sadness when Rachel dies after their son Benjamin is born?
- Do you hear the young man Joseph's brothers laughing after they have thrown him into a deep pit because they are jealous of him?
- Do you hear his brothers selling Joseph into slavery for 20 pieces of silver?
- Do you hear Joseph serving king Pharaoh in Egypt where he is in charge of all the king's lands and goods?
- Do you hear Joseph accusing his brothers (who have come to buy food) of stealing from him?
- Do you hear Joseph weeping when he finally sees his little brother Benjamin after 13 years? Do you hear him weep for joy seeing his brothers together and his father again? Do you hear him forgive his brothers for what they did to him?
- Do you hear the mother and father who have a baby son making a plan to hide him from Pharaoh's men in a little floating basket in the river?
- Do you hear the king's daughter send her servant to get the floating basket she sees? Do you hear the baby crying? Do you hear the king's daughter saying she will keep this Hebrew boy and name him Moses?
- Do you hear the cries of God's people in slavery in Egypt under the Pharaoh?
- Do you hear God calling Moses from the burning bush?
- Do you hear Moses tell the Pharaoh, "Thus says the Lord: let My people go"?
- Do you hear Moses leading the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt to a new land God has for them?
- Do you hear Moses pleading with God over and over again not to destroy the children of Israel, although they sin again and again?
- Do you hear God telling Moses, "You will not bring the Israelites into the promised land because you disobeyed Me and struck a rock to get water instead of speaking to it as you were instructed"?
- Do you hear Joshua leading the Israelites in the destruction of Jericho and his men rescuing Rahab and her family?
- Do you hear Samuel anointing David to be the next king over Israel when he is grown?
- Do you hear David playing his harp for King Saul and singing psalms when watching his father's sheep?
- Do you hear Esther as she pleads with her husband the king to save her people, the Jews, from destruction?
- Do you hear Job as he laments losing all his children and everything he owned? Do you hear him say to the Lord in the end, *I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee (Job 42:2)?* Do you hear Job continue to serve God and be given much again?
- Do you hear Daniel pray to God even though there are those who do not like him to?
- Do you hear the prophet Jonah grumbling because the Lord wants to save the city of Nineveh?
- Do you hear the prophet Micah warning God's people that the Lord will come and punish those who transgress against Him?
- **Do you hear** the Deliverer being promised: *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he (Jesus) come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2)?*
- **Do you hear** the prophet Isaiah say, *The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light... For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:2, 6)?*

Do you hear what I hear? I hope that most of these things are familiar to you. God's Word has so much in it and it is all good. Soon it will be time to hear about the birth of Jesus, so listen for that. ~



Refuge in the Word

Pastor Ansten Tretten
Lake Worth, Florida

Jesus is a
pattern for us
in everything.

We learn about
Him in the natural
and spiritual things

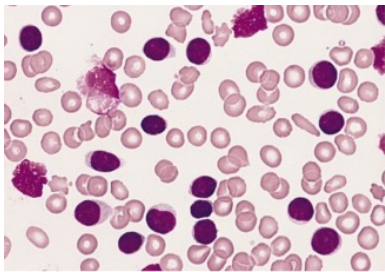
of life. After Jesus was baptized in the Jordan River, He immediately came up out of the water, and heaven opened to Him and the Spirit of God descended like a dove and rested on Him. The voice of God came from heaven saying, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." This voice is the Holy Spirit that lives within us. "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" is our spiritual foundation for both this life and for eternity, and was the introduction to what the Spirit was going to do next in Jesus' life.

After He was baptized, the Spirit led Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. The Spirit of God may also lead us into a lifeless, barren and empty wilderness. In *Matthew 4:2* we read: *And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.* Jesus spent this time thinking prayerfully about the meaning of the foundational words, "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." God is able to reveal the meaning of those words. In fact, all Scripture is revealed in that statement. It is the great grace of God and the Holy Scripture that reveals why

we are beloved and why He is well pleased with us. As we are strengthened in the knowledge and understanding of those words, we become better prepared to meet the tempter (devil) when he comes against us.

Like he did with Jesus in the wilderness, first he tempts us with bread (earthly things), saying, "Eat, and you will become fulfilled and satisfied." We know things won't satisfy. Jesus directed Satan to the Living God, and Satan immediately gave up. Next, Satan brought Jesus to the pinnacle of the temple and stated, "If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down and the angels will come to Your aid." Again Jesus said, "It is written, thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Finally the devil offered Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would bow down and worship him. Jesus again directed Satan to God's Word: "It is written, thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." Satan fled from the Word of God.

You and I take refuge in the revealed Word of God. Our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is strengthened when we spend time in prayer and meditate on the Word of God. While preparing for service in the kingdom of God, we must first learn to live in the Lord Jesus Christ. Let us grow in faith by learning more about the Living Lord Jesus. Then He will be best able to use us in the service of His kingdom. May the Lord bless you, my dear brothers and sisters in Christ. ~



Cancer of Sin

Amy Storm
Battle Ground, Washington

What is cancer? We hear so much about it these days. It seems someone close to us is suffering from cancer, or we have heard of someone, or perhaps we have lost a family member to cancer. Cancer is "a malignant and invasive growth or tumor." There is also another definition of the word cancer: "any evil condition or thing that spreads destructively; blight."

How many of us have "cancer" in the form of sin? Are we troubled by things in our lives? Is there an evil condition spreading destructively in us? Is the cancer of sin going to overcome our souls, as sometimes bodily cancer can overcome our physical selves?

Dear Christian friends, don't let sin destroy us. Don't bury it within thinking that it will just go away. It is true that Christ paid for it on Calvary, but can we believe that? Sometimes sin overcomes us and it is hard to freely believe. As it is with this earthly cancer, where the doctor gives medicine to "clean out" the cancer and rid the body of it, so we can with our sin. Have we forgotten there is a way to wash or "clean out" the cancer of sin? We can be washed in the blood of the Lamb, our garments made white as snow. We can once again freely believe. The burdens have been lifted! Like the song writer writes, "Lay aside the garments that are stained with sin and be washed in the blood of the Lamb; there's a fountain flowing for the soul unclean, O be washed in the blood of the Lamb." (Elisha A. Hoffman) This is a beautiful reminder for us all. God's mercy and grace are everlasting; such a loving Father we have.

Many of us have trials along this journey. We are not alone on the way; thanks be to God that He has provided His Church here on earth in our Christian brothers and sisters. We can lean on one another and share our burdens. We can be reassured of the Gospel. "Amazing love, how can it be that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?" (Charles Wesley)

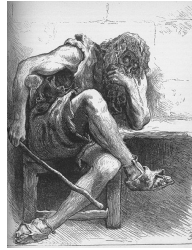
God help us all on this journey toward our heavenly home. ~

The Heavy-Hearted

Pastor Nathan Juntunen
Esco, Minnesota

As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather,
and as vinegar upon nitre,
so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart.

Proverbs 25:20



"Giant Despair" from John
Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*

Notice, we need not rescue the heavy-hearted. We need not soften his sorrow with empty words or songs. We need not excuse ourselves, find comfort in the absence of such a "downer." We simply need to weep with him. If we will not, then we prove ourselves as most certainly loveless.

The heavy-hearted need no songs meant to berate their sorrow and tease them out of their despondency. Our ruthless inclination is to imitate the sentiments of the popular phrase: "Laugh and the whole world laughs with you; weep and you weep alone." We think, often, that the heavy-hearted have no right to their heaviness and must be compelled and shamed into cheerful optimism. We can have no room for sour-pusses...

The Lord would have us exercise a bit of restraint, however, before we would unclot our poor, cold neighbor. Singing songs to the heavy-hearted is equated with tearing off his clothes on a winter's night, leaving him to the icy chill that already threatens his heart. Cheerily carrying on in the presence of his great need is likened to the caustic chemical reaction of vinegar on soda, whose bitter reaction tears away at even the strongest material substance.

Certainly the pen-man of this curious proverb knew also the benefit of hymn and the power of praise. But he also knew the times in which those elements might have just the opposite effect of that which is desired.

What then, is the proper response in the presence of the heavy-hearted? Wedge him out of his brooding pit with a delirious melody? Drown him with a torrent of advice? Spurn his useless soul and favor the company of the giddy? The Apostle Paul had a different answer: ...*weep with them that weep.* (Romans 12:15)

My brother's sorrow is not an occasion for me to celebrate my own good fortune in contrast to his obvious poor fortune. My brother's test is no occasion for me to gloat over my own success in what may be a similar field of debate. My brother's sorrow is an occasion for me to get down and get heavy with him; indeed, to *share* his heaviness as Christ bore the burdens of men.

Christ, as our brother, is a great respecter of human need. As such, His tears are always ready for the oppressed. We cannot imagine Jesus whistling at the bedside of the dying, nor detaching Himself from the unworthy heavies about Him. He would rather His *own* body be stripped and subjected to the caustic scorn of the world, bear His own cross to the place of the skull for a world that went on laughing in derision. He took the scorn of the universe on that dreadful day, and the empty, babbling songs of the careless went down with Him. He now abides faithfully with all those who call upon His name and take up the cross in their own turn. That cross has, to be sure, the shape of sorrow and torture, but carries with it the only relief for the heavy-hearted. This is the song which our tears now sing for them, and the song which clothes our neighbor and mends his pain. ~

Lord, behold our family here assembled.
We thank Thee for this place in which we dwell;
for the love that unites us;
for the peace accorded us this day;
for the hope with which we expect the morrow;
for the health, the work, the food, and the bright skies, that make our lives delightful;
for our friends in all parts of the earth.
Let peace abound in our small company.
Purge out of every heart the lurking grudge.
Give us grace and strength to forbear and to persevere.
Offenders, give us the grace to accept and to forgive offenders.
Forgetful ourselves, help us to bear cheerfully the forgetfulness of others.
Give us courage and gaiety and the quiet mind.
Spare to us our friends, soften to us our enemies.
Bless us, if it may be, in all our innocent endeavours.
If it may not, give us the strength to encounter that which is to come, that we be brave in peril, constant in tribulation, temperate in wrath and in all changes of fortune, and, down to the gates of death, loyal and loving one to another.
As the clay to the potter, as the windmill to the wind, as children of their sire, we beseech of Thee this help and mercy for Christ's sake.

We Thank Thee



Robert Louis Stevenson

What Hope?

Stuart McAllister

Submitted by Alvar Helmes; Battle Ground, Washington

Hope is the heart's deepest longing," says David Aikman. The notion of hope, like many words today, requires clarification. The word is often spoken of as if synonymous with wishing. We use the term to denote a vague longing for something that we want but find unlikely to happen. We hope our problems disappear, our bank accounts multiply, and our children turn out perfect.

Yet hope as it is defined in the Christian worldview is more robust than a wish, more fixed and sure than a vague longing. It carries the idea of delayed but guaranteed fulfillment. It is the kind of assurance that something set in motion will, in due time, come to fruition. The farmer sows in hope that the seed, though buried, will produce a sure crop. Similarly, the Scriptures ground the concept of hope in the nature of who God is, what God has done, what God has promised.

In the cultural milieu of the New Testament times, the Gospel dawned with a power and force that challenged the prevailing worldviews and burst in with a vision of life that transformed the world: if the Gospel is anything, it is a message and way of hope. It is therefore imperative that Christian hope be distinguished from wishful thinking, power mongering, or pipe dreams.

The apostle Paul and many other New Testament writers describe God as the "God of hope." The word "hope" itself is used 85 times in the New Testament alone, and throughout the Scriptures it is stressed repeatedly that relationship to and with God is the ultimate ground of hope. To the Roman church Paul declared, "For in this hope we were saved... And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose." The apostle anchors believers in the certainty of hope and in the need to wait. The end will come, and

until then we trust in God and lean on the Holy Spirit and His promises.

The effects of modernity and secularization are seen most clearly in our inability to see beyond the present, to think outside of our own circumstances, or to believe God for sustenance or change. This life, this world—the now and the immediate—come to shape and control our focus, our wishes, and our concerns. But here, Paul sets our earthbound lives beside the eternal purpose that can inform all we are and do. Becoming a people of hope means cultivating an eternal perspective, the ability to see God in the midst of trials, to persevere in the face of despair and pressure.

The point is not to undervalue life in this world, but to set it all in context. Afflictions must be weighed in the light of eternity. Our hopes and expectations are anchored in a greater and ultimate reality that is both certain and transforming. Afflictions do not become less real, nor are they unimportant or less painful, but they are limited in their reach and possibilities by the knowledge that they, too, shall pass.

The three prongs of Christian life are faith, hope, and love. It is easy to emphasize faith and love whilst ignoring or neglecting hope. Yet hope is essential and unyielding. As the writer of Hebrews proclaimed, "We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain, where Jesus, who went before us, has entered on our behalf." Christian hope is infectious; it is real, it is secure, and it is a valuable signal to a world full of shallow hopes or no hope.

*"What Hope?" by Stuart McAllister, A Slice of Infinity, originally printed 08 August 2011 (www.rzim.org).
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The Gospel is the fulfillment of every hope, the perfection of all philosophy, the interpreter of every revolution, the key to all the seeming contradictions in the physical and moral world: it is life and immortality. Since I have known the Savior, every thing is clear to my eyes: with Him, there is no difficulty I cannot solve.

John Muller

I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning. Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

Psalms 130:5-8

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Teach Us to Number Our Days

the late Alvin Holmgren

Time is of the essence. Everything we do in this life is geared to the clock and the calendar. We constantly deal with the element of time and the restrictions and limitations it imposes upon us. One of the most common complaints of our day is that there is never enough time: too much to do and too little time in which to do it. We seem to be caught up in a whirlwind of activity. The pace begins to quicken already in youth, and many who are in retirement years say that life for them is busier than ever.

With the advent of today's countless labor-saving devices, it would seem that we should have more free time at our disposal. The opposite is true. Haste is the by-word of these twenty-first century days. What does all of this haste cost? Where does it lead?

In counting the cost, I am not referring to that measured in dollars and cents. The cost can be much greater. It costs each one of us personally because it can adversely affect our physical, emotional and spiritual health. The cost extends beyond the individual or personal level. It can have a detrimental effect on our families, our churches, our nation, and the world society as a whole. I base this statement on the fact that the material pursuits are often given greater precedence than the things of eternal value. The area where the effect can be most catastrophic is in the spiritual realm. It is human nature to follow priorities that are in reverse of those the Lord established. Jesus said: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)* In our human thinking, we are inclined to be concerned about temporal affairs first, and then devote any leftover time to the soul and to its needs.

At the day of creation, God ended His work on the sixth day and rested on the seventh day. He rested and blessed that day and sanctified it because in it He had rested from all His work (Genesis 2:2-3). In the giving of His law at Mt. Sinai, God reminded His people to keep the Sabbath day holy (Exodus 20:8). Jesus also observed this commandment—not just in the letter, but in the spirit that God had intended. In the Lord's ministry, He taught that it was lawful to do good on the Sabbath Day. The Lord's Day is a special gift to His

people. It is a time of rest for physical renewal. It is a time of worship for spiritual renewal. It is a time for sowing the good seed of the Word so that the unsaved might hear the Word and thereby be renewed in the image of Christ. Now I do not mean to say that the Lord's Day is the only day for these ministries. Even in the midst of the pressures of every day life, we must not forget about our heavenly Father's business.



There is reason today to pause and consider the worth of the soul. The Holy Scripture likens our earthly tenure to grass. *In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up; in the evening it is cut down, and withereth... We spend our years as a tale that is told. (Psalm 90:6, 9)*

Lord, inspire us to praise You as Your servant Moses did when he said: *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. (Psalm 90:1-2)* And hear us when we pray with Moses: *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)* ~

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