

# 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.**

September 2020

## Why Are You Worried?

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

*And he said unto his disciples, Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on. The life is more than meat, and the body is more than raiment. Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? And which of you with taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? If ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? And seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you. Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not, where no thief approacheth, neither moth corrupteth. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

**Luke 12:22-34**

SOME TIME AGO, THERE WAS a song that seemed to play nonstop on the radio. The refrain that came again and again was, "Don't worry; be happy." I suspect that its popularity was due to the fact that it deals with something common to all of us; fear, anxiety, worry. These words are not ones that we like. They describe feelings which leave us unsettled, and we long for them to pass. Or, more accurately, we long for the circumstances which have inspired them to pass.

Insofar as that song goes, it's fine at expressing what we all desire. Where it falls unfortunately short is offering any sort of a reason or a hope which helps in any way. Many options are offered to us to deal with these negative feelings. In general,

they can be lumped into three categories: things that numb us, things that distract us, or things that claim to offer a solution. While we can attain some temporary relief from our troubles by turning to things that distract or numb us, most of us recognize that, far from doing any actual good, those typically come with their own problems.

Besides, they do nothing whatsoever to actually help us. When they've run their course and are past, our circumstances are no better.

So our best option is to try and find an actual solution. Once more, we quickly find out that there is no shortage of possibilities which are touted as the cure for what ails us. Some will say that we should look inward and find the solutions to our problems there. But most of us are well aware that we are woefully inadequate to deal with life's big problems. Often, we are a big part of the problem. Others will prescribe trust in government, science, medicine... and the list goes on. But, while all of these have some benefit, each runs up against its own limitations. The government cannot in the end really take care of you. Science gives great knowledge, but that knowledge is limited. And medicine is very helpful, but in the end it cannot truly save you.

Jesus also addressed this topic of worry. In Luke 12:22-34 He begins by saying, *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat; neither for the body, what ye shall put on.* But He doesn't stop at just telling us not to worry. He goes on to give us the reason why we can set worry aside. He tells us that God looks at us. That He knows us. That He loves us. This is no small or passing comfort. If the God who created all things loves you, then you can be sure that He will take care of you.

If you are looking around at your circumstances and are filled with anxiety, then listen to what Jesus promises to all who believe in Him: *Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.* All who love Jesus have an eternal inheritance waiting for them. When all is said and done, nothing in the world can truly hurt you, because nothing in the world can take that away from you. Have faith in God. And don't worry. He will never let you down. May God grant you His Peace. ~



# The Armor of God

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

*Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.*

*Ephesians 6:10-20)*

**P**AUL WROTE THE LETTER TO the Ephesians while he was imprisoned in Rome. This congregation knew him well since he was the one who started it. When he left them the final time he called the elders to him and left them with these words: *Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also, of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. (Acts 20:28-30)* You can read more about it in chapters 18-20 of the book of Acts.

Notice that when Paul left, he called the Ephesians to be ready, to be on their guard against false teachers. The language is very similar to what we find in the above portion of his epistle to the Ephesians. Remember, when Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesian people he was literally a prisoner. He was under guard by Roman soldiers, which will help you understand what type of armor he had in mind when he penned these words.

Paul is telling the church that God has not left them defenseless in this war against the devil and his false teachers. He has prepared them armor for the fight! He says this fight is not against flesh and blood but it is against *principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)* The armor does not protect against physical assaults but spiritual ones.

**The Belt of Truth:** The belt is what held everything together. This armor is held together by the truth. We are to be rooted and grounded in the truth. That is to say, rooted and grounded in Jesus who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

**The Breastplate of Righteousness:** The breastplate protected the vital organs such as the heart, lungs, and liver. God equips us with a breastplate of righteousness that covers our life. We have to remember that the righteousness with which we are covered is not our own. It is Jesus!

**Footwear of the Preparation of the Gospel of Peace:** God gives us His peace. Paul says that it covers our feet and the Christian is to walk in the Gospel. As the warfare drags on, we certainly get tired. But it is God’s peace that covers our comings and goings, so we can continue to put one foot in front of the other. As we do that, the Gospel gets proclaimed to the world.

**The Shield of Faith:** Paul says that God has given us a shield of faith that will enable us to withstand the fiery darts of the devil. The shield was very important in the way that the Romans fought. Not only did it protect you but in the battle line your shield also covered the flank of the person next to you. Oftentimes shields were made in such a way that they could interlock to withstand a charge.

The most interesting thing about this shield is that, before the armies went into battle, if the commander was expecting the enemy to use fire arrows he would order the soldiers to soak their shields in water overnight so that they would become waterlogged. This allowed the shield to be able to defend against the fiery arrows.

Do you see the parallel? Your Commander has done the same thing! He knows the devil’s plan is to shoot fiery arrows at you so He has soaked your shield of faith! As Christians, we have been baptized into Christ.

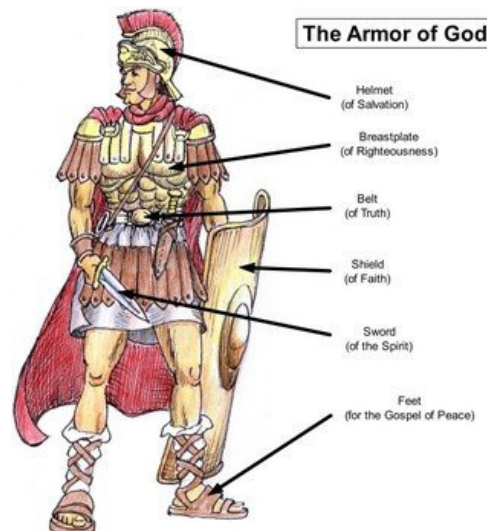
“Satan, hear this proclamation: I am baptized into Christ! Drop your ugly accusation; I am not so soon enticed. Now that to the font I’ve traveled, All your might has come unraveled, And, against your tyranny, God, my Lord, unites with me!”

—*God’s Own Child I Gladly Say It*, by Edmann Neumeister

**The Helmet of Salvation:** Nowadays, the helmets that our soldiers wear are camouflaged to make them harder to see. In those days, they used to decorate their helmets in

such a way as to strike fear in the hearts of their enemies. This is what our salvation looks like to the devil and his minions. It strikes fear in their hearts because they know they cannot have us.

**The Sword of the Spirit:** You notice that up until this point, Paul has described defensive armor. But here he reminds us that we have a weapon in this fight. We have a sword! The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit. Do you remember when Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness? How did He defeat him? With His Word. We are armed with this very same Word. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that it is a two-edged sword.





Lutherans see the two edges as being the law and the gospel. The law which slices open our defenses and lays us bare before a righteous and holy God. And the gospel which cuts away the rot of sin and gives us new life.

You see friends, this armor is something that you have in Christ. When the devil attacks us, God has commanded us to stand firm, to stand our ground! Not to give an inch. He has equipped us with the necessary armor for the job. When false teachers come among you and assault you, not only are you called to withstand the assault but you are to fight back with the Sword of the Spirit! You see, in Jesus we have all we need. He has won the victory for us.

Remember, Paul says to be strong in the LORD and in the power of HIS might. You are not alone. You might think you are too great a sinner to wage this warfare, too big of a failure to fight this fight, but understand this, you are not alone. You are equipped with this armor of God. His truth roots and grounds you. His righteousness covers your heart! His gospel of peace covers your feet. He has given you faith to protect you. Remember your baptism. His salvation covers your head. And nothing is a match for His Word! The Lord is there for you. In the Name of Jesus, Amen.

God's peace.

## By the Mercies of God

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God. For I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think; but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good.*

Romans 12:1-9

**I**N THE LATTER PORTION OF HIS LETTER to the Romans, the Apostle Paul gives a significant challenge to the church. He calls Christians to a radical life of service. Paul beckons us away from the world, so that we might live lives in accordance with the will of God. But how can we do this? No matter how hard we try to be faithful to our calling, we slip and fall. In the weakness of our flesh, we find ourselves to be like the Apostle Paul: *For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I.* (Romans 7:15) This statement from Paul is not some sort of false modesty, but rather a declaration about the truth of the human condition. Because of sin, we cannot follow the commands of God by our own efforts.

The key to understanding Romans 12 can be found in the first half of verse one, *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God...* What are these mercies of God? They are the mercies that Paul describes in chapters one through eleven. Paul tells us that no one can save himself and that everyone is a sinner (Romans 1-2). He then tells us that it is faith in Christ Jesus that justifies us in God's sight, not the works of the Law (Romans 3-4). Paul then instructs us that God's gift of grace in Christ is far greater than the power of sin and death (Romans 5). Now, through the death and resurrection of Christ we are united with Him (Romans 6). We still struggle with sin (Romans 7), but we are not condemned by God or the Law, because we walk by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8). God's mercy is given to everyone, both Jew and Gentile (Romans 9-11).

So then, Paul tells us that because of all of these mercies of God, we are now able to serve Him. Our efforts gain us nothing, while God's effort gives us everything. Because of God's mercy we have been forgiven, justified and restored. We live this new life of servanthood because of who we now are in Christ Jesus. May God grant us grace to always abide in His mercies.

*Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits. Recompense to no man evil for evil. Provide things honest in the sight of all men. If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.*

Romans 12:10-21



# Cast All Your Care Upon Him

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to each of you. I pray you are all doing well and that you are doing okay with the strange things that have come over the world over with the Covid virus. That has been a bother for us and so many.

I have been listening to a book written by a Christian man. It is all about being anxious and having fear instead of having peace knowing that God is taking care of all things.

**G**OD SEES ALL THINGS THAT are happening here on earth. Right now it is a very unrestful time all around the world. There have been awful things happening with the people being angry over many things here in America and across the land.

So many do not believe in God or Jesus His Son and only live for themselves and only serve themselves. They do not have love for their neighbor, nor do they have any respect for the rulers or anyone who is in a position of authority. They have no care or respect even for things that have been markers throughout the ages that tell of history past.

God sees everything and He does not want His children to be fearful. It is easy to look around us and see things that maybe are somewhat scary or make us feel afraid, but we must do our best to give these fears to God and ask Him for peace in doing the right thing.

Here are some verses that can help with that fear and help one's mind to think on what God says.

- *Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

*Philippians 4:6-7*

- *Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while,*

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

*make you perfect, stablish (make you stable and firm in Him), strengthen, settle you.*

*1 Peter 5:6-10*

- *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (For after all these things do the Gentiles (this is us—we are Gentiles!) seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.*

*Matthew 6:25, 32*

- *I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye. Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about.*

*Psalms 32:8-10*

- *Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.*

*John 14:27*

- *But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.*

*Isaiah 43:1*

That last verse can be speaking personally to each of us. It isn't only talking to Jacob. Our Father in heaven cares so much for each of us and He cares very deeply. He knows each of our names.

Fear is not of God and when we feel fearful it is the enemy wanting to take our eyes off of Jesus. We cannot let Him have His way but must order Him to flee and ask God to come to the rescue. He is ever ready to hear you and lead you in the way of peace, life, and truth.

Children, keep looking to God and Jesus for all your needs. Give all your cares—big or small—to Him who cares more than anyone on this earth. I strongly encourage each of you to keep pressing on to that hope of living with Jesus forever. Ask God to lead you in His perfect way. He waits to hear from you. He LOVES you SO much. Believe it.

I pray for God's blessing on each of you.

God's peace.



# Assurance

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

**W**E LIVE IN A WORLD of uncertainty as is plainly seen. One only needs to read or watch the news and we are inundated with news of weather related events, accidents, politics, wars, rumors, protests, etc.... In a world where change is certain and the assurance of future prosperity is uncertain, we need something that is sure. Paul, in writing to the Thessalonians says that assurance is found in the Gospel. When everything looks dark and one wonders where to turn, the Gospel like a lighthouse on the shores of a stormy sea shines its assuring light into our hearts and lives. We need its comfort and message of grace and so does our world. When Paul along with Silvanus and Timothy writes to the church in Thessalonica, he speaks to them of this assurance that came to them through the Gospel.

**Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak anything. For they themselves show of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.**

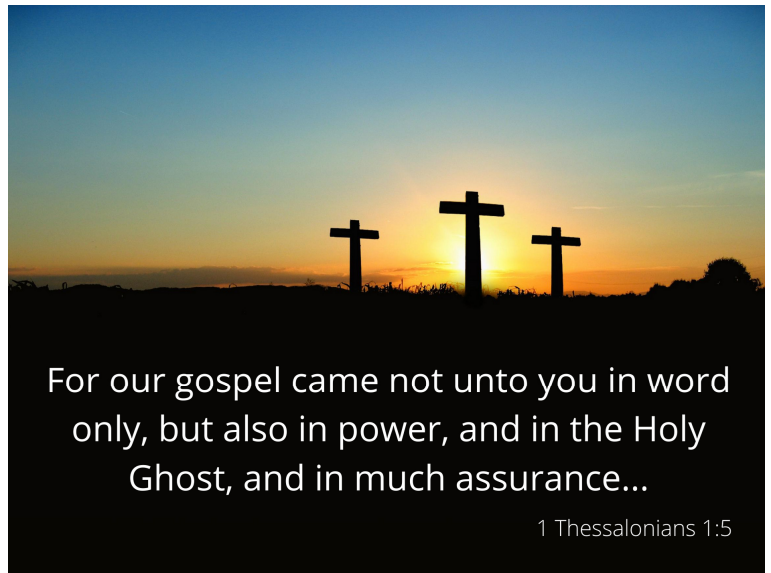
**1 Thessalonians 1:1-10**

This church in Macedonia was established on the finished work of Christ. They were as Paul writes “in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ.” This identifying statement is of great importance because there is only one way we can have full assurance in this world and that is to be found “in Christ.” To be in Christ means to have assurance that no matter what this world throws at us everything is going to be okay because we have been granted life through Him. God in His great grace has elected to save us through the Gospel. Therefore it is the Gospel, the good news about Jesus that brings to us the greatest assurance.

It is the assured believer that makes the greatest impact on his world. The Thessalonians observed not only the message of Paul and the others but their confidence in the Gospel’s message as they endured persecution for it (see Acts 16 and 17). The Thessalonians endured afflictions as well as they received the Word with happiness of the Holy Spirit, which was a testimony to the other believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Their example didn’t just impact the people in

Thessalonica but the whole Greek Peninsula which includes places like Berea, Corinth, Athens, and Philippi. The message of the Gospel impacted them and they repented, turning from the worship of idols to serve the living and true God.

We need to be confident and assured of our standing with our God and then we can truly be His ambassadors to this world. We who were dead have been made alive and now in Christ are new creations, “old things are passed away; behold all things are become new.” We have been turned to a new and living way by the work of the Jesus on the cross and through His powerful resurrection. We are of all people most blessed! I encourage you this day be assured again of the power of the Gospel and its message of forgiveness, life, and salvation. It is this assurance that will speak volumes to the people you encounter in your life as we live in full confidence of Christ in us the hope of glory.



Paul writes beautifully in Romans of the assurance we have in Christ: **What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. 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 8:31-39**

Our assurance is in Christ Jesus our Lord! Amen and Amen!

God's peace.





# Teaching Our Children

*Henriikka Spets; Translated from Rauhan Sana, July–August 2001, by Martha Kulla  
Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire*

Kiruna, Sweden

Dear brothers and sisters in the Lord,

I feel a strong prompting of the Spirit to take my pen and begin to write thoughts which have been brought to my heart.

We must be awake in this last time so that we will not be found sleeping when the last day arrives and the Bridegroom comes to receive His bride. We especially need

to examine our heart so that we will not be walking “as believers” while the heart is full of the love of this world: the eyes watching the honor of this world, its sports, and rejoicing in the success of the lords of the world in the sports arenas. Is it important for us to follow how they are succeeding so that the heart is full of those things, the most precious time of grace being spent in watching the screen? From that source all the ways of the world come before us, adultery, lust, deceit, fighting, killing and all ungodliness which television brings into the home—where with our children we have our family time.

Neither can we underestimate the danger and insidiousness of the Internet, and all the computer games where you try to win by killing and destroying. Are these our home teachers and guideposts? Oh, awaken to see what you are teaching your children and where you are bringing them: to games and learning of the miserable family relations of this world by the way of films, and all the deceit which the enemy, the devil is bringing forth.

I hope that we will have strength to be diligent to bring our children to the worship services of God’s children to hear God’s Word at those oases where we all can be revived and receive guidance toward our heavenly home.

Dear friend, parent of children, remember that we must come to reckoning before a fiery-eyed Judge one day. He knows all our thoughts and deepest intentions. At that examination one cannot hide, and that day is near.

Hasten to the fount of grace on footsteps of repentance for it is yet a time of grace and a day of salvation. The open bleeding wounds of Jesus flow for our sins and transgressions to correct and to heal. Where there are feelings and sin-wounds, there is possibility to be healed and become well. Our Lord desires to offer forgiveness and grace even to the very weakest traveler. You, the weakest home teacher, strive to bring your children to where God’s Word is preached. There is enough manna for all the children of Israel yet today, for the entire flock of God. Do not be nervous about your children’s activity and crying at services; just bring them, for it will be hard to do so when they are older. Do we not give food to our children from the time that they are little? Then why not also heavenly manna?

On the golden streets of Jerusalem there is room for the children to play, for they would be lifeless without the sound of the joy and rejoicing of the children. The children are God’s gift to us, thus let us with thanksgiving bring them to God’s care and the blessing bosom of Jesus.

I myself am troubled about these things and I want to encourage others. Let us look to the recompense of the reward, leaning on the traveling staff of forgiveness for the day will not be long.

I leave myself with my family in the shelter of your prayers, and I wish you all God’s peace.

## The Christian’s Paradox

I’m the poorest, yet richest; I’m both hungry and full.  
Though filled with sickness I’m perfectly whole.  
I’m a great sinner, Yet perfectly righteous;  
Within me, summer and winter, Both darkness and brightness.

Tumultuous peace While waiting I go;  
Both pain and release Reside in my soul.  
In weakness lies my strength, From fear comes my courage;  
My comfort comes from great pain, From brokenness all my endurance.

Cast out and rejected, Yet fully accepted;  
Dead yet alive, Failing, I strive.  
Ashamed and reproached, Yet able to boast;  
Falling and lifted, Gold from dung sifted.

Priceless and unworthy, Stumbling and sturdy,  
What more is left to say? In my night shines the day.  
“How can this be?” one might ask. Well, it’s impossible and simple,  
For though I can’t do the first task As I am weak, poor and sinful.

I rely on One who created it all, Who died by the hands of all men,  
Yet by this saved men from the fall. Before Him in this life I bend.  
All power had He to destroy me, Yet instead died alone on Calvary.  
He struggled and warred, His own blood He poured.

Pierced through by my sins, No peace left for Him.  
Loved me in His death, Gave me His last breath.  
Started and ended my lost war; Before God, He settled my score.  
He paid off my debt; I need not fret.

He arose from the grave, Proving me saved,  
And ascended to heaven, Pleads for I and my brethren.  
Willing and able to answer my prayers From the least to the greatest;  
He yet loves when not another cares, With me both early and latest.

He shall at last overcome And take me to my home,  
When trials are done I’ll never again roam.  
I may rest now, and war In Jesus’ name, Amen.

*Brent Talo  
Campobello, South Carolina*

# Snakebite!

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**H**AVE YOU EVER SEEN A snakebite? Two small puncture wounds indicate where the serpent's venomous fangs have pierced the skin of its victim. Soon, the area around the bite will swell and become red, with a painful, burning sensation. As time passes, there might be vomiting, fever, blurry vision, and fainting. The antidote for snakebite is antivenom; if left untreated, snakebite can lead to loss of a limb, coma, or even death.



And [the children of Israel] journeyed from mount Hor by the way of the Red sea, to compass the land of Edom: and the soul of the people was much discouraged because of the way. And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord, and against thee; pray unto the Lord, that he take away the serpents from us. And Moses prayed for the people. And the Lord said unto Moses, **Make thee a fiery serpent, and set it upon a pole: and it shall come to pass, that every one that is bitten, when he looketh upon it, shall live. And Moses made a serpent of brass, and put it upon a pole, and it came to pass, that if a serpent had bitten any man, when he beheld the serpent of brass, he lived.** (Numbers 21:4-9)

Jesus said: **As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.** 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 3:14-17)

The children of Israel complained against God and Moses, asking, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There's no food and water, and we hate this boring manna." The people despised the providence and protection of God, and God was angry with them. He sent fiery serpents with a fatal bite into the camp of Israel. When the people repented, God commanded Moses to build a brass snake and put it on a pole, and whoever looked at the snake on the pole would live.

Jesus referenced Moses lifting this brass serpent in the wilderness, saying that He—the Son of Man—would be lifted up on a pole just like the snake. Whoever looks on, trusts in, believes in Him will not die, but have eternal life.

We have all been snake bit! The venom of the serpent's lies pierced the eardrums of our first parents, and they broke the One Commandment given by the Creator: *Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.* (Genesis 2:16-17) Since the fall of Adam, every human born has inherited that genetic code of original sin. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned...* (Romans 5:12) Before treatment, we wander around feeling faint and sick, with a burning sensation in our consciences. If our coma of sin-sickness is left untreated, it most certainly will lead to death.

But our gracious God has given us the antidote for the venom of sin, the precious blood of Jesus. Faith in Jesus' shed blood heals the bite of the serpent, bringing health and peace and LIFE! And our gracious God has given us the task of administering the antidote, the blessed Gospel.

Everywhere you go, you carry the antidote with you. Look around you; see the people who have not heard the Good News. Speak the blessed Words of Life to the ones who are faint and sick, who have burning consciences, who lay in the coma of trespasses and sins.

Jesus continued: *He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.* (John 3:18-21) ~

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## The Gospel Is Always a Surprise

*Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller*

The preaching of the Law is expected. It is no surprise that we are poor, miserable sinners. We live in the midst of our poor, miserable sinfulness. It is no surprise, therefore, when we hear the condemnation of the Law. "Because you are a sinner, you deserve God's wrath." "Yes, this is true." The condemnation of the Law might be terrifying, but it is not surprising.

Why? The judgment of the Law is not surprising because it is what we have earned and deserved. "The wages of sin is death." (Romans 6:23) What worker is surprised when they get their paycheck and see that they are being paid their proper wages?

On the other hand, the Gospel is always a surprise, it is always unexpected, always astonishing. Why? Because it is never earned or deserved. "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 6:23) A gift is never earned or deserved. If it were, it wouldn't be a gift. So it is with the gift of the forgiveness of our sins, because it is a gift, it is free. Because it is a gift, is it unexpected. No matter how many times we hear it, because it is a gift, the Gospel is always a surprise.

The Lord speaks to us, "I forgive you all of your sins."

We respond, with surprise and delight, "Me! My sins? You are forgiving me?"

"Yes, you. All of your sins are forgiven through the death of My Son for you."

"For me?" The surprise and delight goes on. "How can that be? I don't deserve that."

"This is true, you don't deserve it. It's My free gift to you."

"For me? Oh, thank You, Lord, for Your great love and mercy!" The good news is so great that it is never expected. Every time we hear the Gospel it is new, unexpected, a surprise.

May God grant us His Holy Spirit, that the preaching of His Gospel would always come to us as a delightful, astonishing, unexpected surprise.

*The Lord's blessings in Christ.*

## Jesus, the Very Thought of Thee

Jesus, the very thought of Thee with sweetness fills the breast;  
but sweeter far Thy face to see, and in Thy presence rest.

No voice can sing, no heart can frame, Nor can the memory find  
A sweeter sound than Jesus' name, The Savior of mankind.

O hope of every contrite heart! O joy of all the meek,  
to those who fall, how kind thou art! How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah, this! Nor tongue nor pen can show;  
the love of Jesus, what it is, none but His loved ones know.

Jesus, our only joy be Thou, as Thou our prize wilt be;  
Jesus, be Thou our glory now, and through eternity.

*Bernard of Clairvaux*

Bernard of Clairvaux (1091-1153) was an eminent monk, theologian, scholar, preacher, and poet in France. Being naturally fond of seclusion, meditation, and study, and living in the twelfth century, it is not surprising that one so piously inclined as he soon sought a home in the cloister. He founded and made famous the monastery of Clairvaux, where by fasting and self-mortification he became an emaciated monk, yet he was one of the most conspicuous and influential characters in Europe. Kings and popes sought his advice. His enthusiasm and impassioned eloquence were all but irresistible. His life was pure, his faith strong, his love ardent, his courage unflinching, his piety unquestioned. Luther greatly admired him and thought him "the greatest monk that ever lived." Christ crucified was the theme of his preaching and of his song. He also authored "Jesus, Thou Joy of Loving Hearts" and "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded."

