

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.

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Do You Feel the Heat?

Pastor Jason Salmi
Vancouver, Washington

AN OPEN LETTER to Christians:
Do you feel the heat yet? If you don't you will soon. As I write, the Pacific Northwest is experiencing unseasonably high temperatures. But I'm not interested in the thermometer. I'm referring to the heat that Christians experience as they do nothing more than try to remain faithful to Jesus Christ. Depending on where you live, this may vary to some degree. But, especially with the advent of social media and a nonstop news cycle, the temperature is rising everywhere... including where you live.

There are symptoms of feeling this heat. Perhaps the most obvious is the hesitation that we feel as we are about to say (or post) something that we know to be true, but isn't popular. We have an instinctive understanding that there will be those who not only disagree with us, will not only argue with us, but (even more frightening than that) will think that we are foolish or backwards or unloving, etc. Or, and this is a far more subtle symptom, we begin to change our views. Not quickly or noticeably. Instead, slowly, but surely. We experience the heat and dislike it, so we begin to move away from it. Our stances and views begin an inexorable surrender to those positions which are far more comfortable. Those which don't elicit other peoples' scorn, but instead win their approval.

As you experience these symptoms of the rising temperature, keep in mind that this is nothing new to Christians. In fact, Jesus told us to expect it. In John 15:18 He said, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." The heat that we feel as we try to live faithfully before our God is merely a symptom. The root cause is people's rejection of God, and most specifically, their rejection of Jesus Christ as the Savior of the world. So instead of causing us concern (though it is very concerning), the resistance that we experience is on account of the One who has saved us. The One in whom we have believed, and through this faith in Him, has forgiven our sins and given us eternal life.



So, dear Christian, don't shy away from the heat. Don't give in to the pressure. Don't value the praise of mankind over the praise of God. Find ways to lovingly share the truths which God has revealed to us in the Bible. The world needs this truth, whether or not they will listen to us. Tell people that there is a God who has created them. That they are not a random and meaningless assembly of molecules which are destined for nothingness. Expose the lie that is the false theory of evolution. Tell them how God is so infinitely powerful that He created everything in the universe in six days, and then rested on the seventh day, just as He said. Tell them that God is the One who instituted the holy union of marriage. It is not the invention of society and is not able to be changed by governments. Tell them that God is the one

who created sex and sexual pleasure, and He intended that it be enjoyed within the specific context for which He intended it. Anything sexual (and I mean anything) that is outside of the marital union of a man and a woman goes against His will.

Tell them that God notices and loves everyone, and that includes the poor and the oppressed and the downtrodden, the abused and the forsaken. He loves them and wants us to love them too... not just emotionally, but in our words and actions. Tell them that God, having created the world for us to use

and enjoy, has handed it over to us as His stewards. We are to both use it for our own good and enjoyment, and also look after it as those to whom it has been entrusted. Tell them that every single human is created in God's own image, and that every life is therefore sacred. And every human life is to be cherished and protected from the point of conception to the point of natural (or unavoidable) death. Tell them how much God cares for them as individuals that He has created. It was Him that assigned them their body (either male or female), and He did so for His own loving purposes. Let them know that opposing His design for them may feel good in certain ways, but inevitably causes them harm. And teach your kids these truths as well, so that they have the antidote to the lies that come their way from every direction.



Most importantly, tell them the Gospel. Tell them that everything that is wrong in the world (including what they see wrong in themselves) is the result of mankind's rebellion against, and rejection of God. But in His love for us, God sent His Son, Jesus, to come and save the world. Jesus died on a cross in order to reconcile mankind to God. And He rose from the dead three days later, because death could not hold Him. He ascended into heaven, and will one day return to bring judgment to the world. Every knee will bow, and every tongue will that day confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. Those who continue to reject Him will tremble at His voice, as their

condemnation is proclaimed. But for everyone who believes in Him, there will be nothing but joy. Eternal joy.

The forecast tells us that the heat is only going to increase. Sure, it may let up for a time and in certain areas. But it is overall going to increase. And God has placed you in the world, right where you are, for such a time as this. Don't shy away from the heat. Don't give in to the pressure. Go to a biblically faithful church and study the Bible so that you yourself are grounded in the truth. And pray to God for the wisdom, strength, and love to share it with those He puts before you. No matter what happens, remember that He has promised never to leave you or forsake you. ~



Called to Worship

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

O come, let us sing unto the LORD: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. In his hand are the deep places of the earth: the strength of the hills is his also. The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our

maker. For he is our God; and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.

Psalm 95

THE PSALMIST CALLED THE PEOPLE of his day to worship. The call still goes out today: Come and worship the Lord of the universe, Come and worship your Maker and your Redeemer. The Christian life is indeed a life of worship.

The meaning of worship is quite readily lost in our day and age. We often see worship as the thing we do on Sunday mornings in our churches. Although this is true—we do call them worship services after all—worship is not simply going to church and singing a few hymns and listening to a sermon. To worship means to ascribe worth to something. In our time spent at the church this is what we are doing, or at least should be doing: ascribing worth to God. The church service is all about God and His righteousness, it is about recalling His marvelous works, His creation, His salvation, His awesome power to sustain us throughout our lives. In short it is about the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The worship service is not so much about our service to God, but rather it is about His service to us. The service rendered to us through the finished work of Jesus the Christ. When we gather together on Sunday morning or whenever we gather in our churches let us remember why we are there. We are there because we have a gracious God who has redeemed us. We are there because we need His service which is given unto us through His Word and through His Sacraments. Our worship is simply the response that we offer as through these means we receive by faith the gifts of God; namely, the forgiveness of our sins, salvation, and eternal life. God is the great giver and we are the ones who by faith receive His blessings. So our worship is always Christ-centered, not self-centered, for it is because of His work that we are now the children of God. He is our God and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand. *O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.*

The Apostle Paul often expressed worship in the form of a doxology in his letters as he was writing to the various churches in Asia Minor. It seems as if Paul would be writing and then suddenly be overcome with his God. For example, in *Ephesians 3:20-21: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

The Apostle John in the book of Revelation witnessed the majesty of God in the various visions that were shown unto him. The one vision that was perhaps the most stunning was in chapter five when he saw the Lamb of God standing in the center of the throne room of heaven and heard the adoration and the worship rendered unto Him. *Revelation 5:11-14: And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels round about the throne and the beasts and the elders: and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; Saying with a loud voice, Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.*

We are called to worship Jesus the Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. He is worthy to receive all our praise. He is the first and the last, He is the living one. He is the one who died and is alive forevermore. O, come let us fall down and worship Him. Amen.

God's peace.

The Ministry of the Gospel

Paul Kretzmann

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ... Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.

Ephesians 3:8-9, 20-21

IT WAS THE THOUGHT of the supreme dignity of the office which he had received at the cost of such boundless grace which could not fail to evoke Paul's sense of his own utter unworthiness. That fact, that he was to preach the Gospel to the Gentiles, that he was to proclaim to them the unsearchable riches of Christ, overwhelmed him as an evidence of God's unmerited grace. Unsearchable, incomprehensible riches he calls them, such as are unfathomable, past finding out, to which no footsteps lead that might enable men to find out the fullness of the divine salvation for themselves, to understand the spiritual, heavenly blessings in Christ by their own power of comprehension.

There is also another purpose connected with the ministry: And to enlighten all men as to what is the administration of the mystery which from all ages has been hidden in God, who creates all things. All men by nature are in the dark concerning the Gospel and its wonderful message of free grace. Therefore it is necessary that they be enlightened, that they be shown, that they be turned from darkness to light (2 Cor. 4:4, 2 Pet. 1:19, Acts 26:18). They must be told that the mystery concerning the salvation of all men, including the Gentiles, is now openly proclaimed and applied to all men. This news was hidden since the world began; no man can conceive of it, can grasp it by nature. But now it has been revealed and realized in God, the Creator of all things. As such the almighty Lord creates and arranges the ages of the world; He puts into execution at His time what He has long kept hidden. Thus the Church of Christ owes her existence to the creative power of God. The Church is a new creation in that very form that it consists of Gentiles as well as Jews. So the greatness of the gift of grace entrusted to Paul, the beauty and power of the Gospel-ministry, is again brought out; for the Christian Church, which is thereby perfected, is, in its ultimate form, the spiritual part of mankind, whose principal thought is to give all honor to Him that created all things.

Since, moreover, the call of Paul made him a minister of the Gospel to the Gentiles, the aim of his work was: in order that there might be made known now unto the principalities

and powers in the heavenly places, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God. The purpose of Paul's preaching was the gathering of the Church, which is synonymous with the revelation or administration of the mystery which had been hidden in God. Through the Church, therefore, according to God's intention, even the principalities and powers of heaven should be acquainted with the many-sided wisdom of God, with the wisdom which has so many different forms, which manifests itself in so many different ways. The angels of God, who have a decided interest in the redemption of mankind (1 Pet. 1:22), are eager to learn ever more of the wisdom of the almighty Lord, who makes use of so many different ways and means to build His Church and thus to realize the purpose of creation. Through the Church, in the Church, the interest of the angels is satisfied; they receive an insight into its workings, into the gracious purposes of God, into the splendid results which are bound to attend His efforts; and they raise their voices in songs of praise and adoration to Him whose wisdom and mercy are from everlasting...

The apostle closes this section of his letter with a doxology. He addresses himself to God, who is able to do beyond all, exceeding abundantly above what we ask or think. The program which Paul has outlined is of a nature to make the average Christian hesitate, so much does it embrace. But his reference to the almighty power of the gracious God quiets all doubts. He is able, according to the power which is active in us, of whose greatness we have indisputable evidence, to do and perform in our behalf far more than we can even think of asking for, far more than our feeble understanding can grasp. *I can do all things through Christ, which strengtheneth me. (Phil. 4:13)*. The miracles which we have experienced in our own hearts and lives in our state of being Christians, since our conversion, are a guarantee to us that God will be able to carry out all His plans and intentions with regard to our salvation and sanctification. The apostle's prayer will therefore surely not be in vain. And so we join with him in saying: Unto Him be the glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus to all generations of the eternity of eternities. In the Church His glory shall be proclaimed; the entire Church should confess that the praise is not due to men, neither to the apostles and preachers nor to the individual members, but to God alone; therefore His glory shall be forever extolled. And our prayer of thanksgiving rises to the throne of God in Christ Jesus, our Redeemer and Mediator, forever and ever. Here we make but a feeble beginning with our psalms and hymns of praise; the real chorus will sound forth in a mighty, never-ending anthem when we shall join the choirs of the blessed angels and sing His praises, world without end. Amen, that is, yea, yea, it shall be so. ~

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

Ephesians 1:3-6

The Lord Will Guide You

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to all of you. I pray you are well. It seems as though I just wrote a page, as the months go by so fast.

It is summertime and where I live it is very hot. Many people have been spending their time at places of water just to stay cool. I think about all the children who are enjoying their summer days, their break from school, but I'm sure when you read this school will be back in session.

I want to share a portion of *Psalm 145:14-21*. I hope this encourages you.

Many of you are in grade school, junior high, or high school, or maybe you have hopes and dreams of going to college. No matter what stage you are in or looking forward to, as Christians you are called to serve the Lord. And how are we to do that?

A certain lawyer asked Jesus a question, tempting him. *Matthew 22:36-38: Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him (but it's for us all), Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.*

That little word – all – may be small, but in that instruction from Jesus, it doesn't leave us much room to be lazy or slack in seeking God and His will and way for our life. It's so easy to lose the importance of doing ALL, all the way we should. We tend to want to do things our way.

I'm thankful God is so patient because I will be honest in saying I don't always put all into serving as I should. God knows that my heart wants to serve Him with my life and He knows each of your hearts and is very forgiving toward us. I pray you always will desire to serve Him and wait on Him to lead you.

God will give in HIS time. One of the key words of that verse is WAIT. Don't rush headlong into things before giving it to God and giving it time.

Vs. 16: *Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.*

Here you can see how the Lord is so willing to give you what you desire. He will open His hand and let it flow out to you. The Lord will not give us those things that we may want, but He knows best whether those things are good for us. He wants His children to pray to Him and ask for His leading.

Vs. 17: *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.*

The Lord can do no wrong. In everything He does, HE IS HOLY and HE IS RIGHT. We have no reason to think He can't help us.

Vs. 18: *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him in truth.*

In this verse we should clearly see that our Lord is ever close to us and ever so ready to come to our aid. He is ever ready to give us the desires of our heart, BUT we must call on Him in truth. We must not ask anything of Him to tempt Him or with a false heart. Of course, He knows the hearts and He will answer as He sees fit.

Vs. 19: *He will fulfil the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and will save them.*

To fear the Lord does not mean to cower in fear, but rather it is a reverent fear and high respect for all He is: the great I AM. In this verse He again promises to give in full those honest desires, to hear the pleas of the God-fearing heart, and in completion, He will save them. It's all so comforting and beautiful that our God cares SO much.

Vs. 20: *The Lord preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he destroy.*

To whom does the Lord show His mercy and His great love? To those who love him. We cannot of ourselves say we love the Lord or serve Him, but only this, that the Lord has put His Holy Spirit within us and planted the seed of faith. The wicked are those who deny the calling of God and have no intention of serving Him. These have a sorry end. The Lord is no respecter of persons. He has the power to do as He chooses.

Vs. 21: *My mouth shall speak the praise of the Lord: and let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.*

This verse makes for a happy ending. When God does His work in the hearts, the seed takes root. These hearts reach down deep into the well of God's Word and wisdom, and seek after knowledge and understanding. Then the believer grows, and from the abundance of blessings the heart and mind and mouth can't help but speak the praise of the Lord. Oh, that all flesh would be drawn into being content to serve our great God and bless His holy name FOREVER.

I pray that you and I and all believers will seek God with all our hearts and one day be honored to bless His name in eternity for ever and ever. That's such a long time of "ever" that we cannot put an ending on it.

I also pray as you children begin another year of your education that you will have a safe and blessed year.

God's peace.



The Pharisees Question Jesus James Tissot
Wikimedia Commons

Psalm 145:14: *The Lord upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down* (those who are carrying burdens too heavy to bear).

Vs. 15: *The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat* (all one needs for this life: food, shelter, clothes, job, etc.) ***in due season.***

The Spirit of Truth

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan



“What is truth?” Christ and Pilate
Nikolai Ge
Wikimedia Commons

Pilate therefore said unto him, Art thou a king then? Jesus answered, Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice. Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? ...

John 18:37-38

PONTIUS PILATE ASKS JESUS a question that certainly resonates with us today. In an age where there is great mistrust in the common sources of information,

such as the media, government and the academy, we are quite interested in hearing the answer that Jesus might give. While Jesus does not respond to Pilate’s question during that interrogation, we can hear His answer throughout the Gospel of John. There are, in fact twenty-two references to the word “truth” in John’s Gospel.

Jesus Christ is not merely interested in the truth. He is the embodiment of truth.

And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth... For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.

John 1:14, 17

Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 14:6

As Christ prepares His disciples for His departure, He promises to send the “Spirit of truth” to guide them. The Spirit will do so by directing them to Christ.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you

from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me...

John 15:26

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come.

John 16:13

To come to a proper and truthful understanding about ourselves, the world around us and even God Himself, we must hearken unto the voice of the Spirit of truth as He reveals Christ through the Holy Scriptures. Jesus Christ is the prism through which we can more fully see and engage the world. The author Paul Little writes:

Throughout the ages, and perhaps especially today, it has been a great test of faith to believe that God is good. There is so much which suggests the contrary. Helmut Thielicke points out that fabric viewed through a magnifying glass is clear in the middle and blurred at the edges. But we know that the edges are clear because of what we see in the center. Life, he says, is like the fabric. There are many blurred edges which we do not understand, but they are to be interpreted by the clarity we see in the centre—the cross of Christ.

It is the Cross that speaks to us of the truth of God’s forgiveness, life and salvation.

May God grant us grace to continue to fix our eyes and hearts on the center of the fabric of our existence, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed.

John 8:31-36

Yours in Christ.



TOO OFTEN, CHURCH IS MARKETED as “us serving God.” When it becomes about “Let’s all serve the Lord,” then it becomes about *us*, ironically. It becomes a burden, a drag. You can never measure up. People get disillusioned when they see others who are so “full of the Lord” and they’re not.

Luckily, church is totally not about us serving God. It’s about God serving us! He reminds us of His glory, His grace, His justice, and delivers all of those things to us. He serves us forgiveness, salvation, faith, comfort, all the good things. All these things are served through the Word, communion, and baptism.

He reminds us that we’re sinners, but sinners saved by grace and truth. He doesn’t demand that we somehow lift ourselves up to Him. He demands perfection. That perfection is found 100% in His Son, not at all in us.

It’s very freeing to know that. I don’t have to be guilt-tripped or feel inadequate. I can go to church and know that I’ll be served by God Himself, regardless of how worthy or worthless I’m feeling at the moment. I wouldn’t trade that for anything.

Jamon Holmgren
Brush Prairie, Washington

Exhortation to Receive the Sacrament

The Large Catechism

BUT IF YOU SAY: **What, then, shall I do if I cannot feel such distress or experience hunger and thirst for the Sacrament?**

Answer: For those who are so minded that they do not realize their condition I know no better counsel than that they put their hand into their bosom to ascertain whether they also have flesh and blood. And if you find that to be the case, then go, for your good, to St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians (5:19-21), and hear what sort of a fruit your flesh is: *Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revelings, and such like.*

Therefore, if you cannot feel it, at least believe the Scriptures, they will not lie to you and they know your flesh better than you yourself. Yea, St. Paul further concludes in Romans 7:18: *I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing.* If St. Paul may speak thus of his flesh, we do not propose to be better nor more holy. But that we do not feel it is so much the worse; for it is a sign that there is a leprous flesh which feels nothing, and yet the leprosy rages and keeps spreading. Yet as we have said, if you are quite dead to all sensibility, still believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you. And, in short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason have you to go to the Sacrament to seek help and a remedy.

In the second place, look about you and see whether you are also in the world, or if you do not know it, ask your neighbors about it. If you are in the world, do not think that there will be lack of sins and misery. For only begin to act as though you would be godly and adhere to the Gospel, and see whether no one will become your enemy, and, moreover, do you harm, wrong, and violence, and likewise give you cause for sin and vice. If you have not experienced it, then let the Scriptures tell you, which everywhere give this praise and testimony to the world.

Besides this, you will also have the devil about you, whom you will not entirely tread under foot, because our Lord Christ Himself could not entirely avoid him. Now, what is the devil? Nothing else than what the Scriptures call him, a liar and murderer. A liar, to lead the heart astray from the Word of God, and to blind it, that you cannot feel your distress or come to Christ. A murderer, who cannot bear to see you live one single hour. **If you could see how many**

knives, darts, and arrows are every moment aimed at you, you would be glad to come to the Sacrament as often as possible. But there is no reason why we walk so securely and heedlessly, except that we neither think nor believe that we are in the flesh, and in this wicked world or in the kingdom of the devil.

Therefore, try this and practise it well, and do but examine yourself, or look about you a little, and only keep to the Scriptures. If even then you still feel nothing, you have so much the more misery to lament both to God and to your brother. Then take advice and have others pray for you, and do not desist until the stone be removed from your heart. Then, indeed, the distress will not fail to become manifest, and you will find that you have sunk twice as deep as any other poor sinner, and are much more in need of the Sacrament against the misery which unfortunately you do not see, so that, with the grace of God, you may feel it more and become the more hungry for the Sacrament, especially since the devil plies his force against you, and lies in wait for you without ceasing, to seize and destroy you, soul and body, so that you are not safe from him one hour. How soon can he have brought you suddenly into misery and distress when you least expect it!

Let this, then, be said for exhortation, not only for those of us who are old and grown, but also for the young people, who ought to be brought up in the Christian doctrine and understanding. For thereby the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer might be the more easily inculcated to our youth, so that they would receive them with pleasure and earnestness, and thus would practise them from their youth and accustom themselves to them. For the old are now well-nigh done for, so that these and other things cannot be attained, unless we train the people who are to come after us and succeed us in our office and work, in order that they also may bring up their children successfully that the Word of God and the Christian Church may be preserved. Therefore let every father of a family know that it is his duty by the injunction and command of God, to teach these things to his children, or have them learn what they ought to know. For since they are baptized and received into the Christian Church, they should also enjoy this communion of the Sacrament, in order that they may serve us and be useful to us; for they must all indeed help us to believe, love, pray, and fight against the devil. ~

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee: As thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

John 17:1-3

IF THEN THE FATHER BE called the only true God, this is said not to the denial of Him who said, "I am the Truth," but of those on the other hand who by nature are not true, as the Father and His Word are. And hence the Lord Himself added at once, "And Jesus Christ whom Thou didst send." Now had He been a creature, He would not have added this, and ranked Himself with His Creator (for what fellowship is there between the True and the not true?); but as it is, by adding Himself to the Father, He has shown that He is of the Father's nature; and He has given us to know that of the True Father He is True Offspring.

Athanasius

My God, Why Have You Not Forsaken Me?

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

WE USE THE TERM “godforsaken” to describe a place that is desolate, remote, abandoned, wretched, miserable. For example: “They live in a hovel in a godforsaken corner of the world.”

But what does it truly mean to be God-forsaken?

When we look into the mirror of God’s perfect and holy Law, we see ourselves as the sinners that we are. Realizing that we justly deserve the condemnation of the Almighty can bring this thought: “My God, my God! Why have you NOT forsaken me?” Do you ever wonder why our Father doesn’t turn His back on His backsliding and oft-erring children?

Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:13-14

Martin Luther on Galatians 3:13:

Hereby it appeareth that the doctrine of the Gospel (which of all other is most sweet and full of singular consolation) speaketh nothing of our works or of the works of the law, but of the unspeakable and inestimable mercy and love of God towards us unworthy and lost men: to wit, that our most merciful Father, seeing us to be oppressed and overwhelmed with the curse of the law, and so to be holden under the same that we could never be delivered from it by our own power, sent his only Son into the world and laid upon him the sins of all men, saying: Be thou Peter that denier; Paul that persecutor, blasphemer and cruel oppressor; David that adulterer; that sinner which did eat the apple in Paradise; that thief which hanged upon the cross; and briefly, be thou the person which hath committed the sins of all men; see thou therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them.

Jesus became Peter the denier, Saul the persecutor, David the adulterer. He became you. He became me. He became sin for us—this One who knew no sin—so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

2 Corinthians 5:20-21

We are not forsaken of God because Jesus WAS forsaken. From the cross our Savior cried, “My God, my God, why have You forsaken me?” This cry of dereliction is the first sentence of Psalm 22, a prophecy of Christ’s suffering. Justin Martyr, born about AD 100, wrote: “The whole psalm refers to Christ.”

As Jesus endured the wrath of God against the sin of the world, God seemed so very far from Him. In speaking that first sentence, Jesus was in effect referring to the whole psalm and proclaiming its fulfillment. Though He was God-forsaken, yet Jesus trusted in the God who will deliver Him. He even called for those who fear the LORD to praise Him!

Paul Kretzmann wrote this about the cry of dereliction:

In these three hours the Son of God was obliged to taste and endure the full force, the full horror of the divine wrath over the sins of mankind. Here the Vicar of mankind was in prison and judgment. Forsaken, rejected by God: that is the torture of hell. What deep humiliation for the eternal Son of God to enter into the depths of everlasting death and torment! But by His enduring the torments of hell we have been liberated, for in the midst of this most terrible Passion He remained obedient to God and thus conquered wrath, hell, and damnation for us.



We are not God-forsaken. We are not desolate. We are not abandoned. Though we are wretched and miserable sinners, God is not remote or far off from us. We have been brought near to Him by the blood of the cross. *But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. (Ephesians 2:13)* God be praised!

I’m forgiven because You were forsaken;
I’m accepted, You were condemned.
I’m alive and well, Your Spirit is within me
Because You died and rose again.

Amazing love, how can it be
That You, my King, should die for me?
Amazing love, I know it’s true,
And it’s my joy to honor You—
In all I do, to honor You.

Billy James Foote

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Summer Travel

Pastor Ray Stenersen
Kennewick, Washington

These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

Hebrews 11:13-16

MAY GOD BLESS YOU AND YOURS as we enter the final days of summer. For many people, perhaps especially those with children in school, summer brings with it the opportunity to travel. Maybe it's visiting family in another state. Maybe it's going to see a national park, attending a family reunion or something else.

Traveling can provide us a picture of life as children of God in this world. In the Old Testament, God called Abram and Sarai (later renamed Abraham and Sarah) to be the parents of His chosen nation. And as part of that calling, He took them on a trip to a new homeland. We can imagine that the journey they took challenged them at times. Travel often requires endurance. Difficulties arise along the way. Where do we stop for a meal? Can't you hold it just a little longer? (Didn't you go the last time we stopped?) Am I hearing/smelling something strange from under the hood? We love it when our travels go smoothly, but we understand that they may not.

So it is with life in this world. We love it when things go smoothly, but should we expect that they always will? Of course not! Additionally, if we think of life in this world like a journey, we are reminded that the final destination is yet to come. When my family takes a vacation, our hearts are not set on the miles that will pass under our tires or the restaurants we'll stop at along the way — our hearts are set on the destination, on the people we'll see and the time we'll get to spend with them. A rough road trip will quickly fade into the background once we've arrived and hug our hosts.

How long do you think it will take for the bumps and bruises of this present life to fade into the background when we arrive at our Father's house in the heavenly city? How long will it take for the pains of this life to fade into the background when we're standing face to face with one who loved us enough to bear the cross for our salvation?

God bless your summer and any travels that may come with it! And as you go, allow the experience of those journeys to give you some perspective as you continue the journey of life in this present age, following after Jesus to our ultimate "home sweet home."

God's peace!

Lord, Thee I love with all my heart; I pray Thee, ne'er from me depart, With tender mercy cheer me.
Earth has no pleasure I would share; Yea, heav'n itself were void and bare If Thou, Lord, wert not near me.
And should my heart for sorrow break, My trust in Thee can nothing shake.
Thou art the portion I have sought; Thy precious blood my soul has bought.
Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord, Forsake me not! I trust Thy Word.

Yea, Lord, 'twas Thy rich bounty gave My body, soul, and all I have In this poor life of labor.
Lord, grant that I in ev'ry place May glorify Thy lavish grace And help and serve my neighbor.
Let no false doctrine me beguile; Let Satan not my soul defile.
Give strength and patience unto me To bear my cross and follow Thee.
Lord Jesus Christ, my God and Lord, my God and Lord, In death Thy comfort still afford.

Lord, let at last Thine angels come, To Abr'ham's bosom bear me home That I may die unfearing;
And in its narrow chamber keep My body safe in peaceful sleep Until Thy reappearing.
And then from death awaken me That these mine eyes with joy may see,
O Son of God, Thy glorious face, My Savior and my fount of grace.
Lord Jesus Christ, my prayer attend, my prayer attend, And I will praise thee without end.

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