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MARCH 2005

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Crown Him the Lord of Life

Who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save;
His glories now we sing
Who died, and rose on high;
Who died, eternal life to bring
And lives, that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of Heaven,
Enthroned in worlds above,
Crown Him, the King, to whom is given
The wondrous name of Love.

*Matthew Bridges and
Godfrey Thring*

A GLORIOUS DAY

In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.

And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.

And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. (Matthew 28:1-7)

**"He is not here:
for he is risen,
as he said."**

The Easter message must begin with the crucified Lord. *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. (Romans 3:23-25)* There would have been no need for a Saviour if any people were righteous. Redemption was the death of our Lord in our behalf.

Peter teaches us, *Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: (I Peter 5:5-6)*

If we resist the humbling work of God in our hearts, we can in no way enter into his kingdom. But He gives grace to those who are exercised by his Word. *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:11)*

With the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, He began the new day of grace for his Church. No longer do we need to see beyond the symbolic Passover to the true Lamb of God, for He has established his Kingdom of Heaven here on earth. He has fulfilled all things in the Scripture on our behalf.

These are now the "last times" that were foretold in the Scriptures. The comfort the angel in the tomb gave to the women depicted the role that the Church was to play in Christ's kingdom here on earth.

This "new Sabbath" ends the Levitical priesthood because Christ has become the true High Priest. *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself. (Hebrews 7:26-27)* Members of his Church are now the royal priesthood. These are they *which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:13)* Just as Jesus Christ was incarnate by the work of the Spirit, so is that new creature in us born of the Spirit of God.

Luke wrote of the power of the resurrection. *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:45-47)*

Now we are new creatures in Christ. *And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. (Romans 8:10-11)*

Dearly beloved, we have reason to rejoice, for the bonds of sin have been loosened when we can truly believe that our sins are forgiven in the name and the atoning blood of Jesus Christ. It is such a glorious day when his own children speak his truth, as He commanded; and when, by grace, He gives us faith to believe.

*God's peace,
Pastor Ivan Seppala
Clayton, California*

HIS UNBOUNDED LOVE

The holiest day of Christian observance is once again near at hand. We await Easter with joy and thanksgiving. Christmas heralded the fulfillment of God's promise of a Saviour, while Easter and the events preceding it tell of the passion and love of our Saviour. He gave his life as a sacrifice for us all, then culminated God's plan for our salvation by rising from the grave in victory over death, hell, and the power of the Devil.

God's love, personified in his Son, is beyond our human understanding; yet, in every believer's heart there is a compelling power that calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies his whole Christian Church on earth. It is the inner working of God's Holy Spirit.

We rejoice today to read the words of Jesus when He said, *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* (John 10:11)

"The good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep."

Dear friend, what does it mean to you to know that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, had to die on Calvary's cross for you? The debt of sin that was yours He willingly paid with his holy, precious blood. He, who knew no sin, became sin for you and me so that we would not have to die eternally. Is this not the reason for us to rejoice? We can never fully comprehend such unbounded love, but may our dear Heavenly Father reveal to each of us individually that it was for me that Jesus suffered and died, and was raised up by the power of God on the third day.

When we pause in our busy lives to quietly consider the wonder of God's love for us, don't we find ourselves deeply humbled by it all? In this humility, let us allow ourselves to be drawn into communion with Him, even as was King David when he said, *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* (Psalm 139:23-24)

As our Lord leads his children in the way eternal, He desires that we yield ourselves willingly, and that we prayerfully seek his spiritual direction. We wish to reach out to Him especially today, when there are so many things in the world that are so persuasive.

They may seem so good and seemingly right, but in reality are designed to appeal to man's emotions.

The truth remains that man can only be saved by a simple, childlike faith in Jesus, which God gives to sincerely repentant sinners. To such are given the peace of a good conscience when the Gospel is audibly declared unto them by the servants of the Most High. The forgiveness of sins in the name and blood of Jesus is the very essence of this wonderful Gospel. For this reason, King David said, *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. (Psalm 32:1)*

We pray for strength to uphold these truths in this day of turmoil and confusion. Our witness may bring some poor, seeking soul to the safe refuge Christ Jesus affords to all who come to Him.

May our life of faith in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ, the Great Shepherd of the sheep, be one of everlasting gratitude. May his love, peace, and joy abound in our hearts this blessed Easter.

Hold fast to that which He has promised, dear Christian friend. Great is your reward in Heaven. It is in the power of his resurrection that we are privileged to cling to this lively hope. One day soon, this hope will be changed to sight by his unbounded love.

Love and God's peace to all of you this Easter season.

*Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan*

Hearing and handling the Word of God is always good and useful. For although the Word does not always strike home, our heart nonetheless remembers what it has heard, and perhaps in an hour and at a time when we need, it will begin really to understand it and feel its power and comfort. In like manner, embers which have lain under the ashes for awhile will start burning again and give fire when one stirs them up and blows on them. Therefore, the Word should not be considered powerless. One should not think that it has been preached in vain.

Martin Luther

ON ACCEPTING CHRIST

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

God's peace. I pray this letter finds you strong in the faith of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This is the first time I have written to you, and I do so in encouragement on this narrow road to Heaven, and to express my concern over a growing trend in the doctrine of many Christians today. Take these as loving words of my heartfelt concern that none be deceived by false winds of doctrine. It is what we do as Christians when we prayerfully weigh what we hear from others about these important matters against the Word of the Bible. Led by the Holy Spirit through the Scriptures, we can rightly divide which doctrines are of God, and which are of men. We know from II Timothy 3:16, that *All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.*

Throughout Christianity today, by far the most publicized teaching in the United States (and an increasing number of other countries) concerns the most important aspect of our lives: the way of salvation. The teaching of which I write to you is the doctrine of "accepting Christ." It is taught in countless churches. Many Christians speak of the day they "accepted Christ" as the day they changed their life for the better.

What is this acceptance of Christ? Does Scripture support it?

Let us now, for a moment, set aside the doctrine I just introduced, and look at the sinful nature of man. Sin and pride have been in every human since the Fall of Adam and Eve. Pride is often, if not always, a cause of sin. *Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall.* Proverb 16:18 rings true when we look at the details of the third chapter of Genesis. The serpent appealed to pride when he falsely promised Eve that eating the forbidden fruit would open their eyes and make them as God. Pride is self-seeking, and it definitely came before the Fall. Conversely to man's sinfulness, God's graciousness is so great that He provides us with a way of life as a free gift, even though none of us deserve it.

It is usually a subtle way in which the Devil comes to us, just as he did in the Garden of Eden. Nothing sounds bad about accepting Christ. What about Christ could be bad? Anything with his name attached should be something good. On the contrary, however, Christ reminds us otherwise. He told us in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke about those who say "Lord, Lord," and do many wonderful works in

his name, but who do not have salvation because their faith is in their own works and not his.

Paul reminds us also: *For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works. (II Corinthians 11:13-15)*

Throughout the Old Testament, we read of false prophets who claimed to have revelation from the Lord, but caused his people to err. Jeremiah chapter 23 is a good example of this. And, in Genesis 11, the attempt at Babel to build a city and a tower that reached to Heaven shows us that even when intentions are God-ward, we cannot gain salvation or get into Heaven by any accomplishments of our own.

What is "accepting Christ?" The word *accept* connotes action on the part of the accepter. It is a choice *for* Christ and a commitment to put our faith in Him for life. I have heard it this way: "We each must make a choice -- either to accept Christ's work for us, or to reject it." Remember that, in evaluating sayings of man, we turn to God's Holy Word as a measuring stick for the truth. We see in the Bible that Christ told his disciples (of which we are), *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. (John 15:16)* To say that we must accept Christ puts the responsibility for salvation in our hands, not his.

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you."

Those who promote this doctrine insist that when they choose to take Christ as Lord of their life, it is a choice not only to accept what He has done on the cross, but also to make Him their personal Saviour. They also claim that their salvation is in Him alone, and not founded upon any worthiness or fitness of their own. That contradiction – that we must choose to be saved, but we are not saved by our own "worthiness or fitness" -- is the part that is troubling for me. It makes the gift of grace dependent on our own choice. If we are saved by a choice we make, then indeed it is our own "worthiness or fitness" that saves us because it is a pretty good choice on our part.

I firmly believe that we are not saved by our own merit, and that the doctrine of "accepting Christ" is contrary to Scripture. Some may say it is merely semantics, but this doctrine obviously becomes a work of man. It is more than God convicting the heart and bringing people to repent and receive the forgiveness of their sins. It is a decision for God; a decision for Christ. There is no humbling repentance, there is

no forgiveness of sins, and there is no confession that we are nothing. It is turning around our own lives and living *for* Christ. In reality, it is a transparent attempt at self-cleansing with Christ's name attached, and nothing more.

Salvation comes to us freely, and we can take comfort in that. We can take comfort because we do not need to focus on any feeble attempts to gain righteousness, or make any attempts toward Heaven, as much as our prideful flesh may want to be elevated. Rather than such pride, the Bible teaches humility.

Christian humility isn't an act of avoiding talking about good things we have done. It is not about us. It is about Him. Humility is the opposite of pride in that we are humbled by the greatness of the redemptive work of Jesus on the cross. I am humbled by the tremendous love of God for an undeserving sinner like me. We are humbled by his great grace in even keeping us in faith on this journey to Heaven. We can look outside and notice that the sun outshines the moon in the daytime; sometimes so much that the moon can't even be seen. Likewise, the light of his work should outshine ours in our hearts and minds.

Finally, pride in our own works does not make us reliant on faith. Faith is essential for salvation. *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

Faith does not come from a choice we make. Faith is a free gift of God, and does not come from anything we do to earn it. We are, however, told the method through which God gives faith to his children. *So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)*

We all struggle with faith and the assurance of salvation, and it is a blessing to be able to go to a Christian brother or sister and confess those sins that weigh on our faith. We know how that burden is lifted and faith is rekindled -- by hearing. Faith then, surely comes by hearing the wonderful Gospel message of forgiveness.

Let us pray, dear friends, to keep our focus on his works and not our own, to stay strong in this faith through hearing his Word, to search the Scriptures when we are unsure, and to pray for the discerning Spirit to rightly divide the words of man from the Word of truth.

*Barry Mattson
Boerne, Texas*

RISEN AND VICTORIOUS IN CHRIST

The resurrection news is the most glorious and far-reaching word that has been uttered by mortal tongue. It offers blessings of inestimable worth. There is no greater joy than to have risen with Christ, and to possess living, victorious faith in Him.

The resurrection message does not consist only in a teaching or a doctrine about which we learn and to which we give mere intellectual assent. It is not just a subject that we should be able to discuss theologically in an intelligent manner. Neither is its essence something that is seen fulfilled regularly in nature when it awakens from the dormant, death-like sleep of winter and puts on the fresh, new beauty of spring.

Concerned about the true understanding of the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, Martin Luther wrote, "How is a dead man profited, however much life may be preached to him, if that preaching does not make him alive? Or of what use is it to preach righteousness to a sinner if he remains in sin? Or to an erring, factious individual, if he forsakes not his error and his darkness? Even so, it is not only useless, but detrimental, to listen to the glorious, comforting, and saving doctrine of the resurrection if the heart has no experience of its truth; if it means naught but a sound in the ears, a transitory word upon the tongue, with no more effect upon the hearer than as if he had never heard."

The key to the resurrection experience lies in the personal realization that Jesus was delivered to death *for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.* (Romans 4:25) Its effectiveness is found in the individual awareness of our sinfulness, and of our need for grace. When I spoke of personal salvation with Christian friends in Latvia, they often emphasized their belief in the basic Biblical truth that the knowledge of sin must precede the knowledge of grace.

The word *death* is used in Scripture as a means to identify the condition of those who are not in fellowship with God. It is referred to as being *dead in trespasses and sins.* (Ephesians 2:1) Of himself and his experience, Paul said, *For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died. And the commandment, which was ordained to life, I found to be unto death.* (Romans 7:9-10)

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. (Romans 3:19)

The Gospel message provides the foundation upon which rests the hope of our salvation. *Our Saviour Jesus Christ . . . hath abolished death, and hath brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. (II Timothy 1:10)* How can this simple message do such great things? How can this Word even raise the dead? The power is that of the Holy Spirit, which calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and preserves it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.

In his instructions to the disciples, the Lord told them that the means by which his ministry is made known and available is through the preaching of repentance and the forgiveness of sins in his name. In many ministries today, this order no longer exists. The invitation to embrace Jesus as Saviour has been replaced by the familiar, commonly used injunction to "make Him the Lord of your life by submitting your life in service to Him." If it is in this way that citizens are enlisted into his kingdom, we are in danger of depriving them -- and the Lord Himself -- of his primary purpose for coming into this world. Jesus explained his mission by saying that *the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:28)*

Our relationship to Jesus is not established upon our service to Him, but upon our being the beneficiaries of his sacrificial service to us. The primary emphasis in ministry must have as its foundation the order of grace that the Bible established. Otherwise, we will never truly know the joy of being risen with Christ, or of living in victorious faith through Him.

When the grace of God, which brings salvation, appears to a convicted sinner, he finds that he is no longer his own, but the Lord's, possession. It is then that he rises with Christ; and the new man, who has been created within him, seeks *those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. (Colossians 3:1)*

All that Christ is, and all that He has done, become ours through faith. We can rest in the assurance that, because He lives, we, too, shall live. Through Him, we are victorious by the power of faith -- and that faith is the gift of God.

His love has won the love of our hearts. He is our Saviour, the blessed and only Potentate, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

Crown Him the Lord of life,
Who triumphed o'er the grave,
And rose victorious in the strife
For those He came to save;
His glories now we sing,
Who died, and rose on high,
Who died eternal life to bring,
And lives, that death may die.

Godfrey Thring
"Crown Him with Many Crowns"

Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington

We love him, because he first loved us.

John 4:19

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Dear Children,

I would like to share with you the 23rd Psalm. This is a prayer that David wrote. It is a wonderful prayer, and it is a good one to memorize. When I was a teenager, I wrote it on piece of paper and kept it under my pillow, and each night I would I try to memorize a part of it. Little by little, I would add more until I knew it all. You might like to do something like that. Maybe there are some of you who already know it by heart, and that is very good.

The 23rd Psalm

*The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.
He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me
beside the still waters.
He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of
righteousness for his name's sake.
Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I
will fear no evil: for thou art with me;
thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.
Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine
enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.
Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my
life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.*

This is such a wonderful prayer, as it brings such comfort. One can say it feel like God is there listening, as He is. It gives praise to Him, who deserves to be praised very much.

David had many difficult times in his life, but he knew that he could go to God and ask for strength. He knew that he would be heard, and also that he would certainly find the help he needed.

You children can pray to God any time, as He never sleeps, and is always waiting to receive your prayers. They are precious to Him, just as you are.

May God give you a good day. Believe in Him, who is so good to his children.

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

In Memory of Our Dear Göran Fagerholm

There is so much beauty and joy in life. Positive and wonderful things happen, and everything that is fine and full of light is like the blossoms on a rose bush. But even the most beautiful rose has thorns. Losing Göran last summer felt like the most painful thorns. But we have been reminded that faith will carry us all the way to Heaven.

Göran Fagerholm was born on May 13, 1937. He grew up with nine brothers and sisters. Göran left his childhood faith for a few years, but received the grace to repent in a special way. A Christian brother invited him to church services, where God called Göran, and he received the grace to believe his sins forgiven in the precious name and blood of Jesus.

We were married in 1959, and lived in Jakobstad (Pietarsaari). We moved to Gertruds in Larsmo, and were blessed with eleven children.

Göran became a minister of the Word here in Näs in 1977. It was always important for him to bring forth the glad tidings of God's great grace and love, as well as the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins. It was especially important to him that the message reached the young people.

As a preacher, Göran traveled around Finland, Sweden, Norway, and Russia, as well as North America. He organized plane charters for groups to attend many church conventions there. During the summer of 2003, Göran was called as the visiting minister from Finland to the USA and Canada. What a blessed joy that trip was.

For the past few years, Göran enjoyed the life of retirement from his job. His illness was short and intensive. From being a man in full stride, everything suddenly changed when he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Göran felt that his time was soon to end, and he surrendered to God's will. God strengthened him so that he was absolutely sure that faith bears all, that grace is sufficient, and that God was with him according to his promise. That strengthened us, too. Sometimes we heard him say quietly, "He surrounds me on every side and holds my hand in his hand," and "I put my hand, weak as it is, again in thy strong hand."

In June, the angels came and took Göran home to Heaven. We were reminded of how important it is that our passport is stamped by the blood of Jesus when it is our turn to make the homebound journey.

There is no limit to how much we miss Göran, but we thank God for all he meant to us. With God's help, we will continue in the same faith until we meet again in Heaven. May God's peace rest over the memory of Göran.

*Maj-Lis Fagerholm
Näs, Finland*

STRENGTHEN THE THINGS THAT REMAIN

Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die. (Revelation 3:2)

Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. (Revelation 3:3)

When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also. (II Timothy 1:5)

It seems apparent that we are living in the last days. Not just with the progression of blatant ungodliness around us, but particularly with various divisions springing up, and with some leaving the church they have been raised in and looking for truth elsewhere. Living faith is a precious gift that for many of us has been graciously handed down through the teachings and examples of our parents and grandparents. But I pray that God would reveal this doctrine -- concerning the righteousness of faith contained in the Gospel -- to our hearts, and that it would remain there.

It's no small thing to disregard the teachings of our parents and church elders. The Israelites traveling in the wilderness were not happy with the manna that God provided, and they longed for something more. There were serious consequences for their thanklessness. We need to pray that we will always be thankful for the simple, preached Word, the living bread from Heaven. Where the bread of life is, we have it all.

This should be of concern to us, as Paul warned the Thessalonians, *Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition. (II Thessalonians 2:3)* We need to pray that this falling away will not come to us personally.

We will reap blessings untold if we continue *steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. (Acts 2:42)* And we can pray for our pastors that they may preach the Word in season and out of season, yet following that great commission that Christ left to his disciples: *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47)* We need not look elsewhere. It doesn't get any better than this, than to be assured of, and believe our sins forgiven.

God truly gave us a perfect and entire way to obtain peace. That great commission contains a complete and wonderful blessing for us: to have, and to be able to apply the power of, his name and his shed blood. For *without shedding of blood is no remission (Hebrews 9:22)* of sins.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. (Romans 1:16)

**"I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ:
for it is the power of God unto salvation
to every one that believeth."**

By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name. (Romans 1:5) Pastors have the responsibility toward their flocks to make sure that they lead them according to the will and Word of God. We pray that we will always hear certain sounds from our pulpits. *For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? (I Corinthians 14:8)*

Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the Lord; Thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them. (Ezekiel 34:9-10) How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! *(Romans 10:15)*

To avoid Christ's doctrine is to create a vacuum that will only be filled with a socialistic and humanistic religion. You could call it a politically correct religion so common in churches today; *having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. (II Timothy 3:5)*

Be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive. (Ephesians 4:14)

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. (II Timothy 4:3-4)

Let us pray that each of our pastors will keep *holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers. (Titus 1:9)*

In the first chapter of Titus, it tells about whole houses who are subverted by following teachings that should not be taught. Some of this occurs for the sake of money. We see ecumenical or "non-denominational" teachings and revisions of the Bible written for mass profit. They proclaim unity and love, but pervert and omit the perfect doctrine of Christ.

Martin Luther wrote that some people warned him that he, for the sake of love, should not so sternly maintain this or that article of faith. He answered: "Cursed be that love and unity for whose sake the Word of God must be put at stake." Luther wanted unity inspired by the love of the truth.

The New Testament speaks not only of the necessity of contending for the faith, but it also commands believers to separate themselves from

those who deny the faith. Even John, the apostle of love, wrote, *If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed. (I John 1:10)*

May God grant that our ears could always be turned to the truth, and that our hearts will be open to receive it. We live in a time when the doctrine of Christ is under attack. Even the Word of God is attacked with the revisions of the Bible that leave out key doctrinal foundations (such as the blood of Christ and the deity of Christ), and, instead, promote salvation by works.

These things are causing a famine in our land, as spoken of in Amos: *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord: And they shall wander from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east, they shall run to and fro to seek the word of the Lord, and shall not find it. (Amos 8:11-12)* By allowing, or ignoring false doctrines as they are taught, we could allow our atmosphere of truth to disappear.

For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. (Matthew 24:24)

Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not. (Verse 26)
Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. (Verse 23)

God is always found where his Church and the ministry and word of reconciliation is. *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. (Matthew 10:40)*

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. (I John 1:7) It is in this fellowship that Christ dwells.

And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. (Matthew 24:22)

*In God's peace,
Phebe Johnson
Astoria, Oregon*

HUMILITY

At this time of the year, we especially remember the passion of our Lord Jesus Christ. We thank God that He has preserved the Scriptures in order that we may read and study the happenings of the Easter season as well as the teachings of the entire Bible.

Maundy Thursday is observed on the day before Good Friday, when our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, was crucified. The washing of the disciples' feet is one of several important incidents that occurred on this day. This event is recorded in the thirteenth chapter of John.

Our brother, Martin Luther, wrote in this way: "We must understand by the term 'foot washing' a disposition which not only willingly serves others in a humble spirit, but which is also ready to forgive the failings of the brethren. As St. Paul said, *Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.*" (Galatians 6:2) Further, Luther said, "Let harmony and friendship prevail among us as much as possible, and, to this end, let us exercise the spirit of humility."

Apostle Peter was going to reject the washing of his feet by Jesus when he said, *Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me.* (John 13:8) Peter then became very eager and said, *Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head.* (Verse 9)

Christ has given us a beautiful example in humility, and in the washing away of our sins in his precious name and blood. Through his Spirit, God has revealed to us that we are sinners saved only by his grace.

Thanks be to God! Let us bear one another's burdens.

Pastor Howard Prouty

The Friend of Sinners

One there is above all others
 Well deserves the name of Friend:
His is love beyond a brother's,
 Costly, free, and knows no end:
They who once his kindness prove
 Find it everlasting love.

Which of all our friends to save us
 Could or would have shed his blood?
But the Saviour died to have us
 Reconciled in Him to God:
This was boundless love indeed!
 Jesus is a Friend in need.

When He lived on earth abased, [Susie, above the bold "e" we need a
backward accent; same two lines down.]
 Friend of sinners was his name;
Now above all glory raised
 He rejoices in the same;
Still He calls us brethren, friends,
 And to all our wants attends.
Could we bear from one another

 What He daily bears from us?
Yet this glorious Friend and Brother
 Loves us though we treat Him thus;
Though for good we render ill,
 He accounts us brethren still.

O, for grace our hearts to soften!
 Teach us, Lord, at length to love:
We, alas! forget too often
 What a Friend we have above;
But when home our souls are brought,
 We will love Thee as we ought.

John Newton
1725-1807