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JUNE 2005

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The Father's Love

Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

I John 3:1-2

AN EVERLASTING LOVE

I have loved thee with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)

"I love you." These words are frequently spoken, and often with sincerity, yet when whispered in the ear by an intimate, the heart yields an affectionate response. If words spoken by a mortal lover bring happiness to our hearts, what reaction ought we to expect when Christ Jesus, the heavenly Bridegroom, tenderly whispers into our ears, *I have loved thee with an everlasting love?*

There is a difference between the love we share with each other and the love that is spoken of in our text. Our love is born as a result of beholding attributes of beauty in another which stimulate our senses and stir within us a desire to love as we look upon their inward and outward qualities.

However, in the case of divine love, it comes not as a result of any outward charm, beauty, or sweetness of disposition that we possess, for we are devoid of such qualities. Rather, it comes as a result of God's grace given to us through the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This fact, which ought to bring joy to our hearts, is borne out in the tender dialogue found in Solomon's "Song of Songs." When the bride, feeling her unworthiness and shame, responds to the tender entreaties of the King by saying, *I am black (Song of Solomon 1:6)*, only to hear him immediately reply that she is *comely*. In this exchange, we see the bride, the picture of a doubting and troubled child of God, pressed with worries and fears, reminded by the King, our heavenly Bridegroom, that, in his eyes, she is beautiful and fair. May the Bridegroom's response cheer our anxious hearts when unbelief and sin press hard against us.

Further to our encouragement should be the word *thee* in our text, as it reveals the object of the Lord's love: you and me, his children.

Strange it is that no galaxy of sparkling stars, no Angel Gabriel of stunning beauty, no proud and earthly King seems to have caught his attention in his quest for a bride. No, it seems that some other object of beauty has arrested his attention and captured his heart, provoking an expression of love such as the world has never seen when He set his affections upon *thee*.

Amazing it is that the desires of Almighty God can find satisfaction in the frail temple of a human heart, but we are told in his Word that *the Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart;*

and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (Psalm 34:18) Further we read, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble. (James 4:6)

May the encouragement of his Word motivate us to *lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us (Hebrews 12:1)*, and trust by faith in the Lord for all our needs.

Remember, too, how we are told that *the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward him. (II Chronicles 16:9)* From these words, we understand that our God delights in every opportunity to exhibit his love to believing souls, and will, as in former days, bring down the walls of Jericho, deliver the harlot, Rahab, strengthen the hand of Gideon, quench the violence of fire, and turn to flight the armies of our enemies for the protection and succor of his children. He does all this so that, in the end, we will attain the eternal inheritance with Him in Heaven.

So, let us rest in the everlasting nature of his love. As He has set his love upon us, so it will remain, even as it is written, *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)* and *I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. (Malachi 3:6)*

*Your brother in Christ,
Cal Niemela
Chassell, Michigan*

Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.

Jeremiah 31:3

My son, forget not my law; but let thine heart keep my commandments: For length of days, and long life, and peace, shall they add to thee.

Let not mercy and truth forsake thee: bind them about thy neck; write them upon the table of thine heart: So shalt thou find favour and good understanding in the sight of God and man.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs 3:1-6

BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HAVE NOT SEEN AND YET HAVE BELIEVED

The report of Christ's resurrection meant little to his disciple, Thomas. Even though the other disciples told him that they had seen the Lord, Thomas would not be convinced by their report. He said that he would believe only when he saw and touched the nail prints and the wound in Jesus' side. Eight days later, when Jesus appeared to the disciples the second time, Thomas acknowledged his presence by saying *My Lord and my God. (John 20:28)*

Then Jesus spoke directly to him, saying, *Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (Verse 29)*

The experiences of this disciple are a lesson for all of us. Thomas is often spoken of as the doubting disciple; the one who put more trust in seeing than believing. Yet, if we are truthful, we must admit that this tendency is inherent in our nature. It is common to all of us. Feelings can play a big role in our Christian lives -- much bigger than they should. It is entirely possible for our feelings to bring us into bondage and rob us of the salvation assurance made possible to sinners through the perfect work of Jesus Christ.

I have often spoken with Christians who have expressed a deep concern because they do not feel the presence of God in their lives as much as they would like. This is not a concern foreign to believers. I can readily relate to their experiences. But comfort is not found only in sharing our mutual burdens; it is found in the certainty that faith and assurance are built upon an entirely different foundation than feelings. Were our hope geared to feelings, it would rise and fall with immeasurable frequency. It would not remain constant, and we would never be secure. Feelings must not master us. If they rule us, we soon become slaves. But it is Jesus Christ the Saviour, our Lord, who reigns in our hearts. He gives us the freedom of children, as heirs of God and joint heirs with Him.

While in military service during the Korean War, I was searching for the cause of the many feelings of uncertainty that worked to undermine my trust in the Saviour. Since Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever, and I claimed Him as my Saviour, I wondered why I was frequently subject to many adverse feelings in my Christian walk. My uncertainty was caused by using feelings as the foundation rather than faith in Christ. One day,

while reading some Reformation-era Christian writings, I came across a message that shed new light into my soul. I copied it in shorthand on an index card, and I carried it with me day after day, year after year. It reminded me that *we are saved by hope (Romans 8:24)* and that *we walk by faith, not by sight. (II Corinthians 5:7)* Let me share this message of hope and encouragement as I transcribe it from that same tattered card which has been in my possession for more than forty years:

"Let us arm ourselves with the Scriptures so that when Satan accuses us by saying that we are sinners, and as such we are condemned, we may reply: 'Indeed not; the very fact that I am a sinner makes me want to be just and saved. For that reason, I take refuge in Christ, and will be saved. By calling me a sinner, you are supplying me with weapons against yourself so that I can destroy you with your own sword. Christ died for sinners. Yes, Satan, you, yourself, proclaim to me the glory of God by reminding me of God's love to me, a miserable, lost sinner. *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. (John 3:16)* When you remind me of my sins, you revive in my memory the great truth that it was on his shoulders, and not mine, that all my sins were laid. *The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:6)*, and it was for the transgression of his people He was smitten. So, when Satan reminds us that we are sinners, we need not be terrified, but comforted beyond measure."

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington*

*When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy,
Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.*

Mark 2:5

LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER

Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth. (Proverbs 26:20)

The Bible instructs us that *the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. (Proverbs 9:10)* The Word of God is our guide in life, helping us in every need. As in all of the problems we face, if we would ask the Lord to lead us, and if we would follow Him, the wisdom He gives us from above would always be what is best for us.

In the words, *Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out*, God wants us to understand that much of the strife in our lives can be caused, or worsened, by the way we react to what we hear. Imagine a fire that has been kindled, and think how it can be either stoked up by adding more fuel, or cooled off to go out by the lack of it.

We are often in conversation with someone when we hear about something that has happened to someone else. The news may be sad, and hard for us to understand how it could happen, especially when it concerns someone in the Church. Our hearts should turn in prayer to the Lord at those times, asking Him to help and heal the wounded. But often we are inclined to turn to someone else and re-tell what we have heard in our own words. This often changes the news a little, and after awhile it is so far from the truth that more hurt is done than good. We may have played the game in which you whisper something in the ear of the person next to you, and they to the next person, and on and on. Then the last one says it out loud to the whole group. It is often so far from the original phrase that we laugh at it. We see how easily things get distorted.

Pray for wisdom from above. Think before you speak about something, and it may be that the fire will go out and the hurt may be healed rather than added to. Gossip is a very hurtful thing, and can add so much to problems.

Pray for healing that comes from above, and ask how you might help someone rather than add to the fire. God help us all in this.

*God's peace,
Pastor Ron Holmgren
Hockinson, Washington*

*A talebearer revealeth secrets: but he that is of a faithful spirit
concealeth the matter.*

Proverbs 11:13

OUR HOPE AND JOY

Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Romans 15:13)

Since it is *through the power of the Holy Ghost* that true divine joy, peace, and hope are obtained, let us first meditate upon that power. From whence does it come? It issues from the *God of hope*. How may we obtain it? Through the Holy Spirit. They who do not possess the Holy Spirit cannot have this power. Therefore, one must first receive the Holy Spirit, and, in order to receive it, one must be born again -- born of the Spirit -- and become a child of God.

In the Word, it says, *As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. (John 1:12-13)*

The foremost thing, then, is to receive the Lord Jesus. How is He received? He is not now in the flesh as He was then, but He is in the Spirit and in his Word so that, by faith, one can receive Him by believing his Word and obeying it. The Word of God is preached by those who have the Holy Spirit, and *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)* The God of hope instills in the listener the hope that he may become a child of God.

This hope inspires him to obey the Word: to repent of his sins and to ask for the forgiveness of his sins. God then gives him the power to believe his sins forgiven. He is encouraged by the Spirit and the preaching to believe them forgiven in the name of Jesus, who shed his atoning blood for the forgiveness of all sins. Thus he believes on his name and is born of God because God accounts his faith for righteousness and gives him his Holy Spirit.

This happened to Paul in Damascus when Jesus sent Ananias to him, who laid his hands upon him and blessed him, and he was filled with the Holy Spirit. (Acts 9:17-18) It is from such an experience that Paul could write such words in our text to the Christians at Rome. It is also from such experience that the true servants of God hopefully preach repentance and the forgiveness of sins today so that they who hear may believe in the name of Jesus and be saved.

The fruit of such living faith is not only that one receives the Holy Spirit, but also that he is filled with joy and peace -- the peace

of a good conscience -- because his sins are forgiven. He receives the joy of salvation as well because *the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)*

Man, by nature, is prone to despondence, and often cherishes gloomy and hopeless forebodings. He is unable to resolve his own difficulties, and, disappointed with efforts to improve society, he can easily become skeptical and hopeless because all man's efforts seem to be in vain. The Holy Spirit was given to banish such gloom from our minds, and to inspire us to cheerful hope, knowing that *with God all things are possible. (Mark 10:27)*

This is the difference between the true believer and the unbeliever. The true believer, speaking in general, is a man of hopes; the unbeliever is the man who is hopeless. This was the condition of the world when Jesus appeared on the scene. Men were dissatisfied, suspicious, and disgusted with the corruption around them. They were without any faith that could sustain and cherish a lofty hope for mankind. They could not comprehend that any power could be introduced into the world capable of even attempting -- far less achieving -- the regeneration of man. This seems to be the same today.

A child of God is a person of hope in this world. The followers of Christ appeared on earth, each one with a hope that death could not tear from him, neither could disappointments quench it. The Holy Spirit was given to reveal to them the *God of hope*. Man's dejection and despair arise from his lack of faith in God, and nothing but a Biblical living faith in God can bring him a change of heart and mind.

Let the truth be recognized that a living hope must begin in God. Fix your hopes, as many do, on human beings, upon human institutions, upon human plans, and their failure will involve you in cruel disappointments. But if, for you, the Lord lives and reigns, if He is your Saviour who has redeemed you with his blood, then there is a sound basis for your hopes -- a basis that no power on earth and no power from hell can overturn or even shake. This was the power that sustained the apostles when persecution befell them.

It was our Lord Jesus who brought hope and every other blessing to this benighted, unhappy world. That Jesus cherished hope is well known. His parables regarding the progress of his kingdom, his assurance that when He is lifted up, He would draw all men unto Him, his prediction of his reign, and his return to take

his own unto Himself -- all show the unwavering confidence and calm expectation regarding the future.

The children of God, who have the glorious hope that there is better in store for them, should also have this unwavering confidence in a joyous future. The Christian's hope extends beyond this life, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, this hope is awakened and sustained. His glorious influence counteracts the earthly and depressing powers by which we are all beset. It makes the promises of our Saviour effective so that we abound in hope.

**"Now we see through a glass,
darkly; but then face to face."**

The heart that knows nothing of the cheerful gladness that living faith imparts to this life can know nothing of the glowing anticipation and lively hope that it inspires. Apostle Paul stated *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (I Corinthians 13:12)*

Hope that is worthy of the name reaches beyond us. It must include others or it is not a living, God-given hope. Living hope cannot limit salvation to within the narrow bonds of myself and my people. Living faith and hope are emphatically unselfish. They want to include all people -- every nation, color, and tongue -- because living faith and hope come from God, and God wants all men to be saved. We shall behold this scene that the Apostle John saw as he wrote, *I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. (Revelation 7:9)*

It is not enough to have a good hope of our own salvation. If the mind of Christ is in us, we desire to reach out as far as possible, regardless of objections or obstacles. Enlightened and large-hearted children of God are more interested in the spread of living Christianity than anything else on earth. Taught by the Spirit of truth, they rely upon the faithful words of Jesus: *Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:33)*

Error may seem to prevail, and we may tremble for the truth. Superstition and legalism may encroach upon the simplicity of the Gospel, making us ask: are the old rituals and traditions to revive?

Lukewarm feelings may steal over Christians and hamper the activities of the Church. Yet the true Christian is not daunted by these signs of the times, distressing though they be.

Though wars, cruelty, slavery, vice, and ignorance still scourge the human race, Christ's followers do not yield to fear. They remember the promise of their Lord: *Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18)* Its dead branches will be lopped off and its living branches may be pruned so that life may be more vigorous and fruit more abundant, but it shall not be destroyed. Gold may be cast into the furnace and the dross consumed, but the precious metal shall only be refined and purified so that it will shine brighter and be made more fit for the Master's use.

O, that this may be a season of lively hope for all the children of God who await the coming of their Saviour. He will come in power and glory. His promise will be fulfilled, so *lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21:28)*

But what hope have you, dear unbelieving soul? Surely you do not want to go to a hopeless, Christless grave and eternity! If you are in need of help or counseling, feel free to call upon those in our ministry. Believers are at your service day or night. We want to help you, and may God grant you grace to repent and believe. Amen.

Andrew Mickelsen

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you,

I Peter 1:3-4

COME AND DINE

Come and dine. (John 21:12) This was the invitation Jesus extended to his followers as He stood on the Tiberius Sea shore. Although it happened so many years ago, the invitation of Jesus is still sounded above the din of this world's frenzied activity. Do you hear his entreating invitation, my friend, or does this world demand your attention so completely? Is the intrigue it holds so captivating that we fail to hear Him?

How patient our Jesus is as He continues to invite his own to come and dine. In spite of ears that have become dull of hearing and hearts that have become weary of the journey to the point of indifference, his invitation continues. He knows our struggles, our trials, and temptations. He knows that, in times like these, we are prone to weaken and grow faint. He knows that, without nourishment, we cannot continue the journey.

It isn't the natural fish that He wants us to dine upon, but spiritual food. It isn't our natural journey here on earth that concerns Him so greatly, but the spiritual. Even as we must be nourished with natural food to be strengthened in this natural body, we must be fed with spiritual food that strengthens our spirits. Oh, that we would then give heed to his invitation to come and dine, knowing that it is his Holy Word that nourishes and strengthens his followers. *I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world. (John 6:51)*

We are living in perilous times, dear fellow traveler. Now is not the time for indifference or complacency. Now is not the time for an occasional taste of the spiritual food, to be only minimally filled. It is time for us to feast on the wonderful Word of Life so that we can be strengthened to meet and successfully turn away the onslaught of the enemy of our souls.

Dear Christian friend, recognizing that the enemy is extremely clever and deceitful, and that the struggle we face today is one of life or death, where do we stand? Will we throw our hands up in despair and resignation, as some of Christ's followers did when He walked on earth, or will we resolve in our hearts to "come and dine" in order to be strengthened? It was when many of Christ's followers turned back and followed him no more that Jesus said unto the twelve, *Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord,*

to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life (John 6:67-68)

If our answer is the same as Peter's, let us earnestly pray to God for strength to set our priorities in order. May we, as Christian parents, set the example for our children, for whom we all are accountable before God, by being doers of God's word and not only hearers. Let us bring our children with us to feast on the Word in our Bible studies, worship services, and Christian fellowship gatherings. Children will always learn better by our example than by well-intentioned instruction.

Today we have the freedom to gather together before God's Word. We don't know what tomorrow may bring, or if there will be a tomorrow. But this we do know, as the songwriter has written, "Soon the Lamb will take his bride, To be ever at his side. All the host of Heaven will assembled be; O 'twill be a glorious sight. All the saints in spotless white, and with Jesus they will feast eternally." [*Come and Dine,* C.B. Widmeyer] Let us, therefore, *come and dine.*

*In Jesus Christ, our Lord,
Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan*

My son, keep thy father's commandment, and forsake not the law of thy mother: Bind them continually upon thine heart, and tie them about thy neck.

When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.

For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life.

Proverbs 6:20-23

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Dear Children,

Hello to each of you, and wherever you are, I do pray that you are well. I have had a sad week because my father passed away, and I miss him. But I can have joy because I know that he has gone to Heaven. Heaven is a place of everlasting happiness.

My father loved Jesus, and God's plan for him was all in place. God saw that my father's job on earth was done so He called him home, away from any more cares, work, sadness, and ever so many things that are with us here on earth.

I was looking through the Bible, and came across the story of Paul when he was a prisoner. He was doing the Lord's bidding, too, but God was right there beside him. You can find this in Acts, chapter 26.

Paul Before King Agrippa

Paul had been killing Christians, thinking he was doing the Lord's will, when Jesus called him to be a preacher of the Good News of salvation.

In our text, Paul had been taken prisoner, and had just been brought before King Agrippa to see if they could find him guilty of anything. King Agrippa gave Paul the chance to speak openly about what he was being tried for.

Paul told the King that he grew up as a Pharisee (one who knew and followed all the Jewish laws, but did not believe in Jesus as the Saviour). He said, *Now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God, unto our fathers: Unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope's sake, king Agrippa, I am accused. (Acts 26: 6-7)*

After this, Paul told the King how he had done so many things against the name of Jesus by killing Christians and shutting them up in prison. He went on to say that he was on his way to Damascus with orders from the chief priests to do more harm to more Christians when God spoke to him.

Paul said, *At midday, O king, I saw in the way a light from heaven, above the brightness of the sun, shining round about me and them which journeyed with me.*

And when we were all fallen to the earth, I heard a voice speaking unto me, and saying in the Hebrew tongue, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest.

But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee. (Verses 13-16)

Paul was not to hurt any more Christians, but would preach salvation through Christ unto them, which would open their eyes to the light that is in Jesus so they could receive forgiveness for their sins. God turned Paul's life right around from bad to good. We know that God can do that with anyone.

And Paul told the King that he was only doing the Lord's will when he was cast into prison. Paul told of those things that he preached; of those things that the prophets and Moses said should happen, such as Christ's death and resurrection. This was in itself light unto all people, both small and great.

There was a man named Festus of high standing in the court of King Agrippa. He shouted in a loud voice, *Paul, thou art beside thyself; much learning doth make thee mad.*

But Paul said, *I am not mad, most noble Festus; but speak forth the words of truth and soberness.*

Paul then told Festus, *For the king knoweth of these things, before whom also I speak freely: for I am persuaded that none of these things are hidden from him; for this thing was not done in a corner. (Verses 24-26)*

Paul then asked the King, *King Agrippa, believest thou the prophets? I know that thou believest.*

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. (Verses 27-28) Paul said that not only did he wish the King to become a believer, but that all people would come to believe as he had.

The King, the Governor, and Bernice (a woman with the King) spoke together privately. They felt there was nothing to accuse Paul of, but they could not set him free of his chains because Paul had already asked to speak to Caesar. So Paul would have to remain in chains until the next step, which was to board a ship and go appeal to Caesar.

We will continue next month with Paul's voyage on the ship.
God bless each of you.

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

SEEING WITH THE EYES OF FAITH

By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward. (Hebrews 11:23-26)

When we have children, we have hopes and dreams of what they will become. As Christian parents, our greatest hope and prayer is that they will always know the Lord and follow in his way. When our children are young, we have a great influence on them. Sometimes we even try to force our own ambitions and desires on our children. Then we are shocked when we find the self-will of the child asserting himself in a completely unexpected direction. We do not know the plans God has for our children, but we do know that He loves each one and wants them to be in fellowship with Him.

We also know that Satan, the evil one, is real, and going about seeking whom he may devour. That is why we need to guide our children in the ways of Christ, and teach them to guard against the snares of the Devil by the Word of God.

One passage in Hebrews 11 stands out. It says, referring to God, *But without faith it is impossible to please him. (Verse 6)* When we believe Him and show it by living according to his Word, that is faith. Faith overcomes fear by going forth on the promises of God.

God selected Moses to carry out a great work. The first test of faith involved his parents shortly after his birth. According to our text, the roots of Moses's faith go to his parents, for his life was in danger. They chose to follow God rather than the Pharaoh's decree to kill all boys born to the Israelites. They hid Moses for three months. The faith of Moses himself came to a test when he identified with his own people instead of remaining in Pharaoh's house.

Moses had a divine purpose and call for his life, but he was not the only one. God has a purpose for all people in every generation. When we study great servants of God, some have had difficult childhoods. Yet they somehow grew up, like plants in the wilderness instead of in gardens. God watched over them, guiding them and allowing trials and troubles to turn out for their good. We

don't have the wisdom, nor is there a need to speculate who and how God selects people for specific tasks. However, we know that, even today, God is preparing those whose hearts are open to his leading for great works.

Moses was raised by Pharaoh's daughter in all the wisdom of Egypt. The Bible tells us very little about this period in his life. From historians and Jewish tradition, it is believed that the Pharaoh at that time did not have a male heir, so Moses, as his adopted grandson, was likely prepared to become the ruler of Egypt. God allowed him to be trained in the leadership skills that he would need in a different capacity later on.

At forty years of age, Moses faced a major test of faith. He had been brought up in the luxury of the court of Egypt. Now he saw the suffering of his people, the Israelites. Look at his position. He had honor, authority, and even the kingdom. Isn't this what we all naturally desire, and would give almost anything to have? What would he gain if he gave it all up? He would suffer with the nation of slaves.

The decisions we make today can affect us the rest of our lives, and have eternal consequences. Moses saw with eyes of faith what God revealed to him. He had faith in God that had already been instilled in his youth. He saw all the treasures in Egypt, but he also saw the pleasures and sins that had immediate rewards but would end in disappointment and disaster. When the time came, Moses could see his real calling, and chose the *reproach of Christ [as] greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*.

Too often today, we think more of what we can get from the present life rather than seeing with the eyes of faith the great reward promised by Christ to those who trust in Him.

We are living in a selfish, self-sufficient age. We do not like to think of ourselves as being like the Laodicean Church that Jesus addressed in Revelation, but their lukewarm condition can easily set in. Do we desire to serve God?

I would like to encourage you young people to prayerfully ask the Lord to prepare and lead you in his will, and show you an area of service in his kingdom. God offers opportunities for service, but are we closing those doors because of our own desires or fears?

As we continue the story of Moses, we see that he made mistakes. God had called him, and he had surrendered to God, but he ran ahead of God and took things into his own hands. He went in the energy of his flesh, thinking he was doing the right thing, but it was not what God wanted. He ended up fleeing Egypt and

becoming a shepherd in Median. God had chosen Moses for this work, but the time was not right, the people were not ready, and Moses had more to learn in the school of God.

God wants us to learn humility. No man can boast before God. We need to learn that God's work can only be done by the power and guidance of God. Moses had received the basic training in the court of Egypt. He knew God's plan and purpose for Israel, and by faith he knew that he was to be the leader of Israel. But Moses had to learn that the people of Israel would be delivered by what God did; not by what Moses did.

After forty years as a shepherd in the desert, Moses was ready. By faith, he knew God was with him. He was conscious of God's presence and power, and that gave him courage to face the wrath of the King.

Moses celebrated the Passover because he trusted in God. He passed over the Red Sea with the children of Israel as by dry land. The Egyptians followed, but were drowned because they did not cross over by faith, but they presumed upon God and their end was destruction.

May God guide each of us according to his Word and by the Holy Spirit. May we always look to Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith.

*Pastor Elmer Yliniemi
Frazee, Minnesota*

Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

Psalm 22:4

The Good Fight

Fight the good fight with all thy might,
Christ is thy strength and Christ thy right;
Lay hold on life and it shall be
Thy joy and crown eternally.

Run the straight race through God's good grace,
Lift up thine eyes and seek his face;
Life with its way before thee lies,
Christ is the path and Christ the prize.

Cast care aside, lean on thy Guide;
His boundless mercy will provide:
Trust, and thy trusting soul shall prove
Christ is its life, and Christ its love.

Faint not, nor fear, his arms are near;
He changeth not and thou art dear;
Only believe and thou shalt see
That Christ is all in all to thee.

*John Samuel Bewley Monsell
1811-75*

In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.

Psalm 31:1-3