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August 2005

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This is the Love of God,

That we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous.

For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.

Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?

This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth.

I John 5:3-6

ONWARD, CHRISTIAN SOLDIER

Paul, the faithful apostle of our Lord, wrote to the Philippian Christians, *I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)*

Diligently, Paul continued the ministry into which he was called. Although confronted by many enemies of the Gospel, he did not give in to weariness, or faint in his effort to bare the truth. When confronted with opposition, he received strength and comfort from the words of the Lord spoken to him in a vision: *Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee. (Acts 18:9-10)*

To the Corinthians, Paul wrote, *I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified. (I Corinthians 2:2)* To the Romans, he declared, *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)*

In our day, we, too, through Paul's message, are encouraged to press onward. Having once placed our hands to the plow, we dare not look back. Many times the journey becomes difficult, and we wonder if we will ever reach our eternal goal. In this Christian walk, we are likened to soldiers who are engaged in battle. We fight against an enemy who is cunning and merciless. As we press toward the mark, let us not be distracted by this enemy, or fall into his traps. We fight for our very lives.

Today there is so much preaching, and yet, so often, the very essence of the Gospel of Christ appears to be absent, which is the preaching of repentance and the remission of sins in the name of Jesus and in his atoning blood. The Bible says, *Without shedding of blood is no remission. (Hebrews 9:22)* Without the remission of sins, there is neither life nor salvation. Such empty "social gospel" preaching dulls the hearing, and apathy, followed by complacency, begins to rule. The call for Christian soldiers to continue the battle is muted, and confusion reigns.

Thanks be to God that we do not have to fight alone. He sent his only begotten Son to be our leader and our Saviour, lest the enemy rout and destroy us. How reassuring to hear, above the noise of battle, the trumpet call so clear. There is no uncertain sound given to confuse the faithful warrior. Look unto Jesus, dear fellow soldier. He continues to go before us. He waves his bloodstained banner of grace aloft so that the weary soldier might behold, with hope, the victory that lies ahead. The coveted prize awaits the victor. It is the crown of everlasting life, and *an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you. (I Peter 1:4)*

Believe this with all your heart, dear friend. Our Lord made this promise to you and to all whom, by faith, believe their sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious blood. May God give us all strength to press onward. He has given his Christian soldiers the great commission to preach the living Gospel.

*Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan*

CONFESSION OF SINS

Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (James 5:16)

As soon as the first people fell into sin, they received troubles, and from their consciences were forced to confess their sins. (Genesis 3:12-13) At the time of Nehemiah, those people who realized their condition gathered together and fasted in sackcloth. Casting ashes upon themselves, they confessed their sins and those of their fathers. (Nehemiah 9:1-2)

When John the Baptist preached in the wilderness of Judea, those who were awakened by his preaching of repentance came and *were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins. (Matthew 3:6)*

When Paul preached in Ephesus, many people *that believed came, and confessed, and shewed their deeds. (Acts 19:18)* Without end, we could name those who, upon conviction, had to appear openly and unconditionally with their deeds of darkness, confessing their sins. Therefore, James admonished, saying, *Confess your faults one to another.* By no means do the children of God want to walk under burdens of sin, for it makes travel slow.

God's children transgress a great deal, so the apostle tells us to confess them one to another. But would it be the same if we told them in secret, somewhere in a hidden place, straight to God, so that no one would know anything about them? Without doubt, it would be more pleasant for our pride, but that is not confession. The Devil has invented this kind of doctrine for the Pharisee. Through this kind of silent "confession," sins don't move anywhere from the conscience.

Why don't they? Because God has not established such an order for grace. For, to God, our sin register is known whether we confess them to Him or not. James, the brother of the Lord, wrote, *Confess your faults one to another.* Is this confession light or delightful, since God's children admire it so much? It is everything else but pleasant. Old Adam's pride suffers from it dreadfully. You would rather do the hardest kind of labor than confess your sins if working could free you from them. *He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. (Proverbs 28:13)*

In the Catechism, we are asked, "Is confession necessary?" The answer is, "Yes, not only necessary but also beneficial, because by confession one receives comfort and peace of mind." Confession is followed by absolution in the atoning blood of Jesus, which is given for us to believe. It brings peace and rest to the soul of the one who trusts in it with his heart's faith. For the confession of sins, absolution, and the atoning blood of Jesus avail nothing if one's heart does not accept them.

The children of God want to follow Him with all their hearts, and, in practice, carry out his instructions. They have a journey to the Lamb's wedding, and to enter, you must have the spotless wedding garment. Therefore, they are careful to preserve faith and a good conscience, putting away sins, faults, and doubts which are obstacles to their peace and freedom.

On the arms of prayer, God's children remember each other so that the merciful Father, through his Son's merits, will carry all of us weak ones across the wilderness of tears safely to our destination, where there is no more sin.

Matti Suo
Finland

Dear Christians, One and All, Rejoice

Dear Christians, one and all, rejoice,
With exultation springing,
And, with united heart and voice,
And holy rapture singing,
Proclaim the wonders God hath done,
How his right arm the victory won;
Right dearly it hath cost Him.

Fast bound in Satan's chains I lay.
Death brooded darkly o'er me.
Sin was my torment night and day.
In sin my mother bore me.
Yea, deep and deeper still I fell.
Life had become a living hell,
So firmly sin possessed me.

My own good works availed me naught,
No merit they attaining.
Free will against God's judgment fought,
Dead to all good remaining.
My fears increased till sheer despair
Left naught but death to be my share.
The pains of hell I suffered.

But God beheld my wretched state
Before the world's foundation,
And, mindful of his mercies great,
He planned my soul's salvation.
A Father's heart He turned to me,
Sought my redemption fervently.
He gave his dearest treasure.

He spoke to his beloved Son:
'Tis time to have compassion.
Then go, bright jewel of my crown,
And bring to man salvation;
From sin and sorrow set him free.
Slay bitter death for him that he
May live with thee forever.

This Son obeyed his Father's will,
Was born of virgin mother.
And God's good pleasure to fulfil,
He came to be my brother.
No garb of pomp or power He wore,
A servant's form, like mine, He bore,
To lead the Devil captive.

To me He spake: Hold fast to me,
I am thy rock and castle;
Thy ransom I myself will be,
For thee I strive and wrestle;
For I am with thee, I am thine,
And evermore thou shalt be mine.
The foe shall not divide us.

The foe shall shed my precious blood,
Me of my life bereaving.
All this I suffer for thy good
Be steadfast and believing.
Life shall from death the victory win.
My innocence shall bear thy sin;
So art thou blest forever.

Now to my Father I depart,
The Holy Spirit sending
And heavenly wisdom to impart
My help to thee extending.
He shall in trouble comfort thee,
Teach thee to know and follow me,
And in all truth shall guide thee.

What I have done and taught, teach thou,
My ways forsake thou never.
So shall my kingdom flourish now
And God be praised forever.
Take heed lest men with base alloy
The heavenly treasure should destroy.
This counsel I bequeath thee.

*Martin Luther's First Hymn, 1523
Translated by Richard Massie*

THE SIGNS OF THE LAST TIMES

In Luke, we read, *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring;*

Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory.

And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.

And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand.

Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away.

And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth.

Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. (Luke 21:25-36)

By ringing the bells of judgement here, God wants to awaken the unbelievers from slumber, and draw hearts to seek Jesus. We find in these words a solace from the Father for his children about their attainment of rest and blessedness at the sound of the trumpet. Therefore, the bride longs for the gracious coming of her Bridegroom with the confidence that He will crown her with glory.

Let us, therefore, be attached to the Gospel of our God and Christ to the end, even though the whole world would rise in arms against us. For this reason, Eve fell to the wiles of the serpent in that she did not remain faithful to the plain instructions given her by God.

Thus, also, does Jesus, by the Word of God, defend the rejoicing of his children in the Church. Indeed, the serpent would have devoured us long ago, and all the children of God from this earth, had we departed from the Gospel of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins. This is demanded by the enemy of the soul with great power: that we should cease to declare the forgiveness of sins in his name according to his Gospel, and discard and condemn as sin our songs of hosannas. This surely would bring joy to the Devil, were it possible to happen so.

**"Heaven and earth shall pass away,
but my words shall not pass away."**

May we trust it, find pleasure in it, and rejoice in it through the power of Jesus' blood. It is necessary for us to pray often with the words that Jesus taught us in the Lord's Prayer. May his Spirit strengthen us.

The signs that are spoken of in our text will materialize, according to the Word of Christ, at the time when the Day of Judgment is before our eyes, just as history relates events that happened before the destruction of Jerusalem. But spiritual signs are always visible to people who have their eyes open.

For instance, in the sun, which signifies spiritual Christianity, the signs of death and drowsiness have become prevalent, which forces people, after their awakening from the slumber of sin, into distress and doubts. This makes it necessary for the Lord to awaken the prophets and preachers of faith, who, with the glory of Christ, reveal the darkened sun -- that is, to purge or reform the doctrine of salvation according to the Word of God.

The moon signifies carnal wisdom, in which we also see signs. For many with their darkened minds deny and blaspheme Christ, while others become steeped in sin.

The stars represent those ministers whom the dragon of unbelief has smitten a third part down from Heaven. From among such ministers may also be found signs of unbelief. They are not mindful of the welfare of the flock; some having even become enemies of living Christians.

From all this has developed a fear, and a waiting in human hearts that God would allow the doctrine and the grace of the Good Shepherd, Jesus, to appear. Jesus made this known by his grace and the glory of his blood to which souls may retreat, as in distress from fire or flood, into the haven of peace in Him.

Truly these spiritual signs indicate the last time of this world. It tells the bride of her glory and the day of release, and reminds her to await the coming of the Bridegroom with her lamp burning brightly. It is her heartfelt desire to see God and the Bridegroom, face to face, through grace.

Oftentimes we may feel doubts because of our sinfulness, and wonder whether the Word of the Lord will be sufficient for our glory. Still, God's children are blessed, and marked in the hands of the Father through the innocence of Christ. For the promise of grace by the Lord remains steadfast, and will be fulfilled even if Heaven and earth perish.

Neither was Jonah a "good Christian," but rather became resentful of God's grace at Nineveh. He attempted to defend his disobedience. Neither have the other prophets and apostles been free of the great

temptations of sin. The Lord left a testimony of them because they were acceptable to Him through the blood of Jesus. Console yourself with this, dear child of God, in your infirmities and sorrows, when the Devil demands good Christianity from you. We are weak, but also powerful and pure in Christ, through faith, in the Holy Ghost. For you and I, beloved friends, have the testimony from God that our sins have been forgiven through Jesus' blood. This righteousness most certainly is acceptable to God.

Therefore, we do not have time to burden our hearts in surfeiting, nor to begin to lambaste a brother, saying, "The Lord will tarry in his coming." Thus will the multitude of unbelievers do before the great Day of Judgment. Let our walk look as poor as it may in our own eyes, or in the eyes of others, but Jesus will not forsake his bride in spite of her numerous deficiencies. Neither does the Father see any fault in his Son's bride, robed as she is in clean linen, washed in Jesus' blood.

When we lived without God on the road of sin, we felt no weakness in our faith. But when the light of the Holy Spirit came into our hearts, we found within there the deep root of corruption. At that point, however, the evil spirit was driven out by our Saviour when we believed.

We still need to watch and pray so that we will be able to go with the joy of victory in our hearts into glory at his call. May the lamps of the wise virgins ignite into flame when the voice of the Bridegroom calls. Woe unto the defecting ones who forsook their Lord, and viewed his flock as sordid!

Awake from your sleep, you slumbering souls, to meet the Lord Jesus. The voice of the Bridegroom may yet be heard today as sins are forgiven in his name and shed blood.

We know that the Son of God is coming. Then will the firmament of Heaven be filled with hymns of praise (which we have begun here), and the glory of Jesus will appear. The wedding of the Bridegroom shall then be faultlessly held around the throne of God.

*Aatu Laitinen
Finland
"Gospel Sermons"*

HEED THE SIGNS

The Bible speaks in many places about the end of the world. It gives signs that will precede this happening, both in the world and in the kingdom of Heaven. As we see the events around us, we believe that we are now living in the end time. This is certainly not a positive message for unbelievers, but for the children of God, it is a message of joy. Jesus said, *When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21:28)*

Thoughts about the end of the world and the signs of the times have always been of interest, especially to the Christian. We can also see from the following narrative that these concerns were also with the disciples.

As he [Jesus] sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.

And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows.

Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.

And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.

But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved. (Matthew 24:3-13)

**"He that shall endure
unto the end,
the same shall be saved."**

Many of these signs are obvious today, but it is very important to notice that the first words of his answer were *Take heed that no man deceive you*. This refers especially to the false prophets that shall arise.

If we, as God's people, see these signs and pay no attention to them, it may go poorly with us at the end of our journeys. Therefore,

it is so necessary that we do as it is written, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 3:22)*

Sometimes God, in his grace and love, lets the sound of the trumpet be heard. One way He does this is when his servants are led by his Spirit to speak warnings to his people. It is imperative that we heed the voice of the Spirit when He sounds the trumpet, and not be foolish, as were the people spoken to by the Prophet Jeremiah. *I set watchmen over you, saying, Hearken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. (Jeremiah 6:17)*

Jesus spoke in parables about the last times in the kingdom of Heaven. In the parable of the Ten Virgins, five wise virgins took oil in their vessels with their lamps, but the five foolish ones took their lamps, but no oil with them. Often in the Scriptures, oil represents the Holy Spirit. For a person's lamp to give light, it is necessary for the Holy Spirit to dwell in the heart by faith. The light in our lamps of faith is the love of God shed abroad in our hearts.

May God, in his grace, give us, his children of the last times, ears to *hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*. May He preserve us with his love and living faith in our hearts to the end.

*God's peace,
Pastor Arne Nordahl
Vancouver, Washington*

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Dear Children,

I may never meet most of you to whom I write these stories, but we can still be brothers and sisters in Christ. That is the special thing about being a Christian. Many of us will never know each other here on this earth, but one day we will be in Heaven together. What a great meeting that will be.

In our last story, we were with Paul on the ship in the rough sea. He was a prisoner, and he was with many other prisoners. Their ship was wrecked, and they all swam to shore.

Where did they land? Let's find out. You can find the next part of our story in Acts 28: 1-11.

The Island of Melita

When they (Paul and the other prisoners) were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. (Verse 1) Paul and all others on board the ship had never been there before. I'm sure they wondered who lived there, and how they would be treated. The Bible tells us, And the barbarous people shewed us no little kindness: (meaning they showed great kindness) for they kindled a fire, and received us every one, because of the present rain, and because of the cold. (Verse 2) How glad all the men from the ship were to be treated so well in a strange land.

When the men were gathered around the fire, and when Paul had gathered a bundle of sticks, and laid them on the fire, there came a viper out of the heat, and fastened on his hand. And when the barbarians saw the venomous beast hang on his hand, they said among themselves, No doubt this man is a murderer, whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live. (Verses 3-4)

The island people might have known that Paul had been killing people. I'm not certain that they knew it was Christians, but nonetheless they thought that this snake had been meant to bite Paul and kill him for all the killing he had done. Was Paul going to die?

And he shook off the beast into the fire, and felt no harm. Howbeit they looked when he should have swollen, or fallen down dead suddenly: but after they had looked a great while, and saw no harm come to him, they changed their minds, and said that he was a god. (Verses 5-6)

Did you children notice that the barbarians thought of Paul as a

god with a little "g"? That tells me that they only knew of false gods. They did not know the real God who had just allowed Paul to live, even though this type of snake can kill someone in a few minutes with its poison.

There was a chief man of the island who took Paul and the others in for three days. This chief's father was very sick, so Paul went unto him, and laid his hands on him and prayed, and healed him. When the other islanders learned of this, they brought others who were ill or diseased, and Paul healed them, too.

When Paul and the others were ready to leave the island, the Bible records how they *honoured us with many honours; and when we departed, they laded us with such things as were necessary.*

Where were they going? To Rome, of course. It took a long time to get there, especially having been shipwrecked and having to start all over with a new ship and supplies. They were finally on their way again after having spent three months with the people of Melita. Paul made new friends there, and shared his faith with them, so certain things were accomplished by the hand of God, who led them on their journey. He had a plan.

You will have to wait until next time to see where our story takes us next. How would Paul be received before Caesar in Rome?

I pray that we will all be courageous and strong in our faith in God, just as Paul was.

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

Romans 8:28

OUR ENEMY, SATAN

In the Bible, we read, *For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. (Ephesians 6:12)*

If we consider and summarize what the Apostle Paul here indicates about our enemy, we get a frightening picture of him as very mighty, cunning, and smart. He is also an invisible enemy who can be quite close to each of us without our suspecting it.

When Paul wrote that *we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers*, he did not mean that we don't have to fight against our own evil flesh or inborn depravity. He meant that, in this fight, we do not, as in ordinary ways, have any visible bodies to aim our weapons at. We cannot hit them with a sword because these enemies are spirits whom we cannot kill. They are invisible, and come nearby without our seeing them or fearing their presence the least little bit. This is a precarious circumstance.

Paul lets us understand that our enemies are not weak and ignominious ghosts, but mighty and considerable when he calls them principalities and power, or authorities. These words make us understand that the Devil has a real empire with special orders and constitutions so that some evil angels rule over the other devils. Moreover, he calls them rulers of this world, which certainly is a fearsome name.

So, also, has Christ himself called the Devil the *prince of this world*. (*John 12:31, 14:30, 16:12*) Paul even called him the god of this world: *In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. (II Corinthians 4:4)* These names clearly announce what we, in part, can see with our eyes; that the Devil fully rules over all unconverted mankind so that kings and emperors are under his power as small, weak slaves or faithful, obedient subjects.

We also know that our enemy is of high descent; namely, he is a fallen angel. He has a terrific courage when he dares to fight against the Mighty God. In the days when Christ was here in the flesh, the Devil went so far in haughtiness that he boldly asked the Lord himself to fall down and worship him.

We can understand what power he has over poor man when Apostle Peter called him a lion roaring with hunger. *Be sober, be*

vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (I Peter 5:8)

It is true that all these are terrible indications of our enemy; so much so that a man can dread living on this earth. And this, at least, is sure: that those who do not stick to the Lord in the fear of God must no doubt be in, or will fall into, the hands of the Devil. This, too, is sure: that if the Lord leaves us to ourselves, we are lost. Then, at any moment, the Devil can throw us into a most awful depth of sin and folly, and thereafter into the abyss of hell.

But we also know that, if we do not fall sleep, or try to believe in our own strength, but become small children and weak sheep before the Lord, the fight will not depend on our own strength nor on the Devil's power. The Lord, himself, will fight for us, carry us in his arms, and protect us as his lambs. If, for a single hour only, the Lord were to give the Devil full freedom over us, within that hour he would tear us to pieces and throw us into hell. Thus, each moment of our lives when this does not happen is a witness of the faithful, gracious, and mighty presence of God. Oh, that we will bear this in mind!

So the fight is a spiritual fight. It does not depend on our power or strength. Therefore, the most horrible quality of the Devil is his cunning and manifold scheming, by which he can deceive and charm us so that we do not seek the strength of the Lord but willingly surrender to the enemy. Therefore, the Scripture has spoken most of this quality of his.

In the last book of the Bible, he is called the old serpent who deceives the whole world, and in it so many clever, learned, and enlightened men. *And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. (Revelation 12:9)* But maybe there is no word more indicative of this enemy's dreadful richness of cunning than the one from the mouth of Christ: *the depths of Satan. (Revelation 2:24)* And the Apostle Paul wrote that, in order to deceive us, *Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. (II Corinthians 11:14)*

May God preserve all of us. Certainly no human intellect, no culture, and no watchfulness are enough against *the depths of Satan* if God Himself does not preserve our spirit with his enlightenment. Against the depths of Satan I want only to put the depths of God, and to remember that *He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. (Psalm 121:4)*

C.O. Rosenius

THE PROMISE OF THE FATHER

The Holy Spirit is known by many different names. In one of his post-resurrection meetings with his disciples, Jesus called Him *the promise of the Father*. (Acts 1:4) On earlier occasions, Jesus referred to Him as the Comforter and the Spirit of Truth.

The Spirit affects our lives for good more significantly than any other power. He is the source of true comfort, of lasting inspiration, of perfect guidance, and of unlimited strength. We receive this Spirit when we have heard and believed the Gospel message of salvation (Ephesians 1:13). The continuing presence of this Spirit in our lives is more important than anything else we possess.

The Bible is not silent on this matter. It states plainly, *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. 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.

Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live. For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:9-17)

I Corinthians 3:16 asks the question, *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?*

The Spirit proceeds from the Father and is of the same essence as the Son. *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. (I John 5:7)* Realizing, then, that the Spirit is a part of the triune Godhead, we often stand in awe of the personal manner in which God deals with sinners. It is his Spirit who calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and preserves us in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. As sinners saved by grace, we are individual possessors of this divine essence we call the Holy Spirit. When we contemplate God's intervention in our lives, his personally expressed concern for our salvation, and his promise to remain with us always, we are often more than overwhelmed by the continuing knowledge of how He cares for us.

The Word of God teaches us to be careful in our response to the Spirit; not to quench it. *Quench not the Spirit. (I Thessalonians 5:19)* And we are told: *Grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. (Ephesians 4:30)* The Lord himself emphasized the importance of obedience and reverence to the indwelling Holy Spirit. He said, *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. (Matthew 12:31-32)*

It was important to Jesus that his children would share a common sign by which the world could recognize us. This sign could not be a form of righteousness only external in nature, as something to be worn on the sleeve. Jesus wanted a truly genuine sign that had divine, and not human, origin. He chose love, or charity: *Above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. (Colossians 3:14)* He said, *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:34-35)* The love of which He spoke was not natural or human love. Neither was it a love that would be evidenced in word only, for He said, *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth. (I John 3:18)*

If we seek to meet this requirement by looking into our own sinful hearts, we will be disappointed. The love that Jesus spoke of does not originate in us. Its origin is in Heaven, and it is *shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. (Romans 5:5)* If we quench the Spirit, we quench the flow of this love, and hinder the evidence by which Jesus said his children were to be known here in this world.

Pastor Alvin Holmgren
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Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?

And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped?

For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?

So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air.

There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.

Therefore if I know not the meaning of the voice, I shall be unto him that speaketh a barbarian, and he that speaketh shall be a barbarian unto me.

Even so ye, forasmuch as ye are zealous of spiritual gifts, seek that ye may excel to the edifying of the church.

I Corinthians 14:6-12

Fellowship

Blow, wind of God, and set us free
From hate and want of charity;
Strip off the trappings of our pride,
And drive us to our brothers' side.

Shine, light of God, upon our face,
Kindle our hearts with beams of grace;
Beneath the gladness of thy sun
Our life with all mankind is one.

Fair world of God, whose teeming soil
With harvest's boon repays our toil,
May thy rich fulness forth declare
Thy Maker's universal care.

Speak, Son of God, thy Father's heart:
Teach, Son of Man, the brother's part,
Till earth shall be, like Heaven above,
One holy family of love.

*William Charles Braithwaite
1862-1922*

Therefore said [Jesus] unto them, The harvest truly is great, but the labourers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth labourers into his harvest.

Luke 10:2