

# CHRISTIAN MONTHLY

Vol. LXII - No. 1

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

U.S. - \$12.00; Canada - \$14.00; Foreign - \$25.00

(Washington residents add 7.7% sales tax -- \$.92 for 1 year)

Send articles intended for publication to:

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**CHRISTIAN MONTHLY**

PO Box 220

Yamhill, OR 97148 USA

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E-mail: [ChristianM@Apostolic-Lutheran.org](mailto:ChristianM@Apostolic-Lutheran.org)

Address subscriptions, payments and

Book Concern orders to:

Neal and Lynn Karlsen, Managers

**THE BOOK CONCERN**

PO Box 2126

Battle Ground, WA 98604-2126 USA

Phone/Fax : (360) 687-6493

E-mail: [Book\\_Concern@Apostolic-Lutheran.org](mailto:Book_Concern@Apostolic-Lutheran.org)

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The Christian Monthly (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly  
for \$12.00 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern,  
PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604-2126 USA.

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## JANUARY 2006

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### **I Thank My God Upon Every Remembrance of You,**

*Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*

*Apostle Paul to the Philippians 1:2-6*

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith.*

*Paul to the Hebrews 12:1-2*

## **Begin the Year with Jesus**

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 5:1)*

Another page in the record of our earthly journey has turned, and before us is the yet-unrecorded page of the New Year. For many people, the New Year is viewed as an opportunity to accomplish many treasured dreams. For others, it will bring the conclusion of life's record here on earth. What this year will bring for you and for me we cannot tell. To know who does hold our future is the most important thing. This knowledge is of such great comfort when we are assured by a living faith that Jesus, the great Shepherd, leads us onward. May we faithfully follow Him.

Apostle Paul, the servant of God, has written about the saving faith of our Lord Jesus Christ. As we consider the matters concerning justification by faith, we recognize that this has been the subject of debate for many generations. The main, and perhaps the only, reason for this debate is that the natural mind of man cannot comprehend the simplicity of how a God-given, childlike faith in his Son can bring eternal salvation. The reason for such lack of understanding Paul explained in this way: *But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (I Corinthians 2:14)* We therefore conclude that, unless God gives spiritual discernment, these matters remain a mystery. This is especially troubling to the poor soul who struggles intellectually to reason these matters, seeking the answers and finding none. The question is then asked, How is faith and spiritual discernment obtained?

What does God's Word teach concerning these matters? First, it must be understood that sin is the transgression of God's holy and righteous Law. Secondly, *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)* Thirdly, we read *that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, The just shall live by faith. (Galatians 3:11)* Just as God has so graciously given Jesus to be a ransom for our sins, so He also gives faith to those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness that cannot be obtained by human wisdom. Thus, it must always be the work of God in the heart of man so that Jesus becomes not only our ransom but also our Saviour. The Scriptures clearly teach, *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)*

Again the question is asked: How is this faith and spiritual discernment obtained? We read that *faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)* Jesus said, *He that hath an ear, let him hear . . . (Revelation 2:7)* If a man will lend his heart sincerely to the rightful preaching of God's Word, he will hear that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and are guilty before Him. But there is hope, for God is gracious and forgiving.

Hear the call to reconciliation. *Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. (Isaiah 1:18)*

How beautiful, then, is Christ's invitation. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28)* Here the innocent Lamb of God extends grace and forgiveness to the penitent sinner. Here the humble and contrite can, through repentance, receive the cleansing of their guilty hearts by the power of the reconciling blood of Jesus through the declaration of forgiveness by his servants here on earth. God then kindles a living faith within a believing heart. Through the righteousness of Christ, he is resurrected to a newness of life forever in the covenant of God's grace. In this living faith, man is justified before God and reconciled unto Him. Thus we see it is the work of God from beginning to end. With his work of reconciliation completed in us, we have his peace abiding within, and a lively hope of eternal salvation. Truly there can be no better way to begin this New Year than in Christ Jesus our Lord and Saviour. May the Prince of Peace lead us onward by a living faith.

*Pastor Ken Storm  
Tapiola, Michigan*

*The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.*

*John 3:35-36*

## **Praise is Comely for the Upright**

*Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. (Psalm 33:1)*

The book of Psalms has been rightly called the prayer book of the Bible. It is a volume so complete in content that it seems to express every possible spiritual experience and its accompanying prayer. It has been a source of comfort and joy to believers in every age.

In my youth, I could not fully relate to the older, more experienced Christians' appreciation for the Psalms. However, when God led me to an awareness of my sinfulness, and to value his grace expressed in his forgiveness, I began to view the Psalms through different eyes. King David's words in the 32<sup>nd</sup> Psalm became a comfort to my heart. *Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.*

For a period of time, I was free from the burden of my sin. God was so gracious that He forgave them all. He had led me to his Son, Jesus, my Saviour. I was free from my sins! But there came a time when my faith began to falter; not because of outward transgressions against his will. I knew that God had forgiven my sins, but I realized that my sinful nature did not become a Christian. It did not become holy. This troubled me.

I turned again to Psalm 32, and this time, reading a little further, I found these words: *Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. (Verse 2)* Here was my answer. Our carnal nature remains sinful. But God does not impute our sinfulness unto us even though we are still sinful. The old nature remains the same. It is written in the Scripture that *in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. (I Corinthians 1:30-31)*

In the Epistle to the Hebrews, we find some additional encouragement. *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man. For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

*For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me. (Hebrews 2:9-13)*

When I began to live in this place of forgiveness and assurance, and in the thoughts of this wonderful kingdom of grace and peace, I found the words in Psalm 45 spoke to my heart: *My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.*

*Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.*

*Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.*

*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. (Psalm 45:1-6)*

Then in my heart I could say, *What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. (Psalm 116:12-14)*

Praise is the constant theme of the Psalms. The exhortation to praise, the reason for praise, and the expression of praise often follow one another in this inspired book. We, as Christians, need to use this priceless gift each day. *O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy; (Psalm 107:1-2)*

*The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the Lord from this time forth and for evermore. (Psalm 115:16-18)*

*Rejoice in the Lord, O ye righteous: for praise is comely for the upright. (Psalm 33:1)*

*Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord. (Psalm 106:48)*

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren  
Seattle, Washington*

## The Live Coal

In the book of Isaiah, we find a very interesting portion of Scripture, where Isaiah was given a vision of God's throne. The first four verses describe the scene that Isaiah beheld.

*I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple.*

*Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.*

*Then said I, Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*

*Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: And he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged. (Isaiah 6:1-7)*

When Isaiah saw the glory of God, he lamented his sinful condition, even as many of us have done when God's Word began to penetrate our hearts. We could see what sinners we are.

But we need not despair, even as Isaiah did not despair after the live coal touched his mouth. Before then, he saw his condition of spirit as a man of unclean lips. So have many of us been in the past, but when the live coal of the Gospel touched our hearts, we were cleansed from the unrighteous works and deeds of the flesh. We no longer found pleasure in the world, but its ungodly pleasures became an abomination unto us. Remember that the grossest of sinners can be forgiven if he or she comes to the throne of God, the mercy seat, and lays his or her sins upon Jesus, who took those sins with Him to Calvary.

We must remember that we cannot cleanse ourselves of sin. God has to do that, and He does so by the Word. Jesus said, *Now ye are clean through the word which I have spoken unto you. (John 15:3)* Now some will ask, How can Christ speak to us, for He is no longer on this earth? The very next verse explains it. *Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me. (Verse 4)* He goes on to tell them, *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth*

*in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. (Verse 5)*

First, we see that we must abide in Christ. Secondly, Christ must abide in us. Otherwise, we will bring forth no fruit. That is, we will not be able to bring a sinner into the kingdom of God who is yet bound by his or her sins if we do not abide there, in Christ, ourselves.

Sinners must be led to the spiritual kingdom of God here on this earth, where the children of God reside in spirit. It is a kingdom that cannot be seen with the eye of the flesh. Only with spiritual eyes can anyone see this place of refuge.

Christ cannot be found in a remote place, or by making a decision for Christ. How can one make a decision for Christ? His Word plainly tells us, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you. (John 15:16)*

Beloved brethren, let us rejoice in this, that Christ has chosen us, and revealed his Word and grace unto us. For without the love and grace of God, we would all be lost souls, on our way to eternal destruction.

Now the Lord asked a question of Isaiah, *Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. (Isaiah 6:8)* When one receives the call to the ministry, it comes not as a voice from Heaven or an idea in the head. It comes by the leading of the Holy Spirit, when one is encouraged by God's children to speak and to give a testimony of faith. God gives the ability to speak the truth, to lead in the right and proper direction, and to speak and proclaim the Gospel in its purity. Those who have taken it upon themselves to go into the ministry without the encouragement or guidance of the Holy Spirit only cause havoc and pervert the true Word. When the Holy Spirit is not present; when He is not the guide, then man speaks from the flesh.

We must remember that it is not only ministers who are called upon to speak. Each Christian has this duty, for Peter made it known that we are a royal priesthood. The book of Revelation makes nearly the same statement; that He *hath made us kings and priests unto God and his Father. (Revelation 1:6)* Everyone who is a true child of God has this authority to preach repentance and forgiveness of sins in his name for, as He said, *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47)* But Christ commanded them to remain in the city of Jerusalem until they had been endowed with power from on high. We know this took place on the

day of Pentecost, when the cloven tongues of fire appeared, and the rushing wind. No one can go and preach the true, living Gospel without the power of the Holy Spirit. That is a clear fact. The Holy Ghost must be given to each person. It is a personal gift from God.

Oftentimes we have wondered, How do I know that I have the Holy Spirit? What evidence do I have that the Spirit abides in me? There are many people who look to the manifestation of the Spirit, of speaking in tongues, or to the ability to heal illnesses of the flesh. Now I do not deny that tongues are possible. On the day of Pentecost, each person heard the disciples speak in their own tongues. There have been those who have learned to speak another language in a very short period of time. Also there are those who have had ailments suddenly go away. But to put construction on these as being signs of faith is not according to God. They are his blessings. Grace is what saves a man. Faith is by the redemptive work of Christ, and from Him alone. Though, as Christians, we should do well at all times. We should love our enemies as we love ourselves, and speak to others of the grace of God and his salvation through Jesus.

Even Isaiah could not go forth until the live coal of the Gospel touched him. He could not go forth as a preacher of God's Word. Neither can we, unless we are endowed with power from on high; for if we go without the power of the Spirit, we certainly will lead others, as well as ourselves, astray.

Let us diligently pray that God will enlighten us by his Holy Spirit, and give us understanding and knowledge of his Word so that we will be able to speak of his great love and mercy. It is written, *his mercy endureth for ever. (Psalm 106:1)* It is new every morning. *It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)*

It is by grace that we are saved; not of any works of our own. So let us rest upon his Word, which is unmovable, and a sure foundation on which to build our faith. Let us look nowhere but to our thorn-crowned King who, in the garden, sweat great drops of blood, and who, on the cross, cried, *It is finished. (John 19:30)* He finished the work that was set for Him, and has freed us from all guilt of sin, though we still live in this body of sin. Yet God does not see us in that light, but sees us in his Son, Christ Jesus.

*In God's peace,  
Terrence Lantto  
Stanley, North Dakota*

## God is Light

*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light. And God saw the light, that it was good: and God divided the light from the darkness. (Genesis 1:3-4)*

The first thing that God made was light because nothing can exist without light. It is essential to physical and spiritual life. This spiritual life was with God from the beginning. The Gospel of John explains this light. *This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. (John 1:4-5)* The spiritual light, which is God, has always been.

Darkness came into the world when the Devil, who is darkness, deceived Adam and Eve. The Devil is the father of all lies and unbelief. He has a great following because *men loved darkness rather than light. (John 3:19)*

God, in his love, sent his Son into the world to overcome the power of darkness and to pay the sin debt that has come from darkness. It was through the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross that He paid this debt of sin. It is easy to point fingers at others and not realize that it was for me that He died. We can praise and thank God that, through his Word and the Holy Spirit, He has awakened us to see our sinfulness. Then also through the Word and the Spirit, He has revealed to us the true light and Saviour of our sins-sick souls. *God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (II Corinthians 4:6)*

The psalmist confessed his trust in the light as follows: *The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)*

Simeon, the old man who was in the temple when Joseph and Mary brought Jesus there, saw Him as the light. He said, *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel. (Luke 2:30-32)*

Jesus identifies Himself as the light. *I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)* *As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. (John 9:5)*

*Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)*

*Apostle Paul counsels us: For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light. (Ephesians 5:8)*

*But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. (I Thessalonians 5:4-6)*

*But 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)*

*Isaiah warned us about what will take place in the end times. Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20)*

*Jesus warns us about what happens when we walk apart from Him. But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him. (John 11:10)* The book of Revelation tells us what will happen to those who follow the Devil and darkness. *And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever. (Revelation 20:10)*

The psalmist tells us where to turn for help and guidance. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)* Trust in Him who has promised to be with us unto the end of the world. God has promised us a new home in Heaven. *And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. (Revelation 21:23)*

*And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever. (Revelation 22:5)* God be with you on your journey to your new home in Heaven.

*Pastor and Mrs. Don Salo  
New York Mills, Minnesota*

# Children's Page

Dear Children,

Happy New Year to you all. I pray that this will be a good year for you.

Let's look into Matthew chapter two.

## Wise Men Seek the Christ Child

*Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem. (Matthew 2:1)*

These men lived very far away, and in their countries they saw a new and different star, and in their hearts, by way of the Holy Spirit, they knew the Messiah had been born.

They started on their journey and traveled for many weeks. How did they know where to go? The star went before them, leading the way. When they stopped to sleep for the night, this special star was always there to lead them.

When they reached Jerusalem, they knew their journey was almost over. They went to the palace of King Herod because they thought that surely the King should have knowledge of this special birth, and he would tell them where to go. They asked him, *saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

*When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Verses 2-3)*

Why was Herod so troubled? Because he knew that this Messiah was talked about, and would come someday. He was afraid because he did not want anyone else to be King.

Herod had to call for the priests and scribes to ask if they knew about the birthplace of this child. *And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. (Verses 5-6)*

Herod then took the Wise Men aside, and privately asked them when they had seen the star. Why did he want to know that? Because he wanted to kill the child who could become King in his place. He needed to know how old the child was.

Herod told the Wise Men to go and look for the child and then come back and tell him. He said he wanted to worship him, too. Herod was not telling the truth.

The Wise Men left the palace, and there was that same star ready to lead them, and lead them it did, stopping right over the home where Jesus lived.

How happy these men were! The Bible says, *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense and myrrh. (Verses 10-11)*

Oh what a special meeting that was for those men! They had seen the true Messiah, the one promised in the Word so long ago. It was a meeting they would always remember.

The Wise Men did not go back to Herod because God came to them in a dream and told them to leave for their own country another way. God had his protecting hand over his Son, and no harm would come to his Son, Jesus, outside of his will.

Today we worship the newborn King: Jesus. "O, come let us adore him, Christ the Lord." [*"O Come All Ye Faithful"*]

*God's peace,  
Gwen Wilson*

*I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day.*

*And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.*

*John 6:38-40*

## **The Sunshine of God's Grace**

*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)*

We have not earned the gift of faith, not even in part. This fact makes the true believer joyful, knowing that it is by grace that we are provided with all things. It is even by God's grace that He awakens our consciences. Though it caused us sorrow, He also revealed to us the fullness of his grace in the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. *For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (II Corinthians 4:6-7)*

Is it any wonder, then, that God is offended when we try to merit a portion of the grace that He has shown to us? He has provided all that pertains to our lives, both naturally and spiritually. We find many reasons why we should merit some things. We may say that we live a "cleaner" life than others; therefore we are more worthy than they are. We do not recognize the real condition of our heart which is trying to cover evil thoughts; perhaps judging another who may recognize his sin more clearly than we do our own. Or we may say that we do "good work," and this offsets the evil that we do, or is the reason for God's grace toward us. Then grace is not a gift.

The true love of God in our hearts will bring forth deeds of love that we do not even try to measure. *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (Matthew 5:44-45)*

It is impossible to know all the blessings that God gives to his children because He also gives good things to those outside his kingdom. We have untold reasons to thank and praise God, not only for the natural gifts but also for the sun which has shined into our hearts. Now we uncover the best reason why God causes the sun to shine on the unjust, for otherwise his grace would never have been revealed to us. We thank God with all our hearts.

*Pastor Ivan Seppala  
Clayton, California*

## **In Christ, We Can Do All Things**

*Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children. (Ephesians 5:1)*

Many parents have been told that their children take after them in appearance as well as in actions. Because our children are physically related, they have the outward features that identify them with us. The way they act and communicate, however, they learn from watching and following the examples of those who are closest to them in their early, formative years.

This can sometimes be a source of embarrassment and regret to parents. Once, while our family was at church for Bible study, one of our children, who was very young, spoke up. His comment related to the subject under discussion. It was obvious to the people there that he had not thought of his comment on his own. Everyone's eyes turned toward me, much to my shame. He was just following his father, who had made a comment at home in his presence, and he was passing on what he heard.

How often I need to pray to God, as David did in Psalm 141, *Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.*

Paul, the Apostle of the Lord, instructs us to follow God, who is our heavenly parent. We can be sure that his example and teachings will not be wrong. To be sure, our attempts to be like Him will not be perfect. However, Paul tells us to do so as dear children. *Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children. (Ephesians 5:1)*

I remember my father working with a rototiller in our garden when I was a boy. How I wished I could be strong like him. Little children are often seen trying to do what adults do. It is the way they learn to live in this world. At school and at home, the child is constantly learning. We may, with confidence, look to our Heavenly Father for guidance and mimic Him. The problem then arises that we may not know God well enough to understand how to follow Him. In fact, it is against our very nature to follow Him.

We must realize that our corrupt nature must be replaced by something pure. Peter wrote, *Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. (II Peter 1:4)*

I believe it is only possible to truly follow God if we look to Jesus. He is the only way to know God. No man cometh to the

father outside of Christ Jesus, for He said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. (John 14:6)*

Paul told us to *walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us. (Ephesians 5:2)* Jesus said, *Without me ye can do nothing. (John 15:5)* So, dear friends, if you struggle to follow God, then it may be that you are looking to do so on your own. I know from experience that it is impossible to do this. In Christ Jesus, I can do all things.

As the children of God, we follow Him in life, and then on to eternal life, which can only be found in his Son, Jesus Christ.

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

*Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.*

*But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.*

*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*

*I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.*

*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.*

*Philippians 4:9-13*

## Teach Us to Number Our Days

*So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)*

Where did I come from? Why am I here? Where am I going? These questions have been asked throughout the ages. There are only two events in our lives that we are sure of. We are born and we die. Tombstone inscriptions are usually very brief. They give our name, date of birth, date of death, and sometimes a few other words. Yet there are many things that happen between those two dates.

In the beginning of this Psalm, we see Moses wrestling with the problems of insecurity, uncertainty, and the brevity of life. When we view life from a perspective without God, there seems to be no purpose or meaning to life.

Today we live in a very mobile society. Moses also experienced this in his wanderings in the wilderness, for he saw a whole generation of Israelites buried there. They were pilgrims and strangers on earth. We all long for a place where we can feel secure, at rest, and loved by those around us.

Moses began this Psalm by saying, *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. (Psalm 90:1-2)* In this world, we are bound in time and space. We cannot comprehend eternity with our minds because it cannot be measured in years. Moses was able to see by faith the timeless past and future. What is long to us is short to God. To God a thousands years is as a *watch in the night. (Verse 4)*

Our lives are marked by change. We age and deteriorate. Only is *Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever. (Hebrews 13:8)* When the Israelites wandered in the wilderness, they had no settled resting-place. Moses had learned that a believer's real home was not in a place, but in a person. What a comfort Moses found in knowing that the Lord was their dwelling place where they could find comfort, rest, and security when they were weary. God is the home of every believing soul. And Jesus said, *Abide in me, and I in you. (John 15:4)*

**"Set your affection  
on things above."**

*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:2-4)*

Moses saw our lives as grass that flourishes and then withers away when seen in the light of eternity. He goes on to tell us why our lives are brief. It is because of sin, which came into the world with the fall of Adam and Eve. *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

From the Word of God, we know that everything will come to an end. Even his kingdom, the Church on earth, will come to an end because everything here is fixed in time. *To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)* In Hebrews 9:27, we read that *it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.* Then we will all stand before the throne of Christ.

Many people today believe that a loving God will not punish sin. God's holiness cannot tolerate unholiness. He knows all our thoughts and intents. Because He is just, He cannot overlook our sin. We might try to hide them or cancel them by our works, but it cannot be done. But God loved us so much that He had to bridge the gap between his righteousness and our unrighteousness by providing us redemption in Christ.

That is why the psalmist wrote, *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* After the lament of the brevity of life and the human sinful condition, the psalmist continued with this prayer to make the most of our brief time here to apply our hearts to wisdom.

We do not know how much time we have. That is why Jesus said, *Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh. (Matthew 25:13)* This was said in connection with the parable of the ten virgins. There were five wise and five foolish virgins. When the Bridegroom came, five went in and five were left out. It was too late for the foolish. They heard the words of the Bridegroom, who said, *Verily I say unto you, I know you not. (Verse 12)*

God's Word says, *Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness. (Psalm 95:8)* May each of us ask God to teach us to apply our hearts to wisdom.

What is this wisdom? It is that which leads us to prepare for eternal life; the life which cannot be compared to this life in length.

We do not naturally have this kind of wisdom. We must get it from God. *But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God. (I Corinthians 1:24)*  
Jesus Christ is our wisdom.

There is only one way to blot out sin: the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we receive, by faith, the promise of the gospel that our sins are forgiven in his name and blood, we become his children, born again by his Spirit.

When we are the children of God, our focus should be on eternal values. We should be concerned about, and reaching out to, the lost. *But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (Matthew 6:20-21)* God's treasures are human souls.

When we possess the "wisdom" the psalmist wrote about, we know where we came from, why we are here, and where we are going. We can live in confidence, knowing that the eternal God who was, is, and will be forever is in control when we are in Him. He gives those in Christ a meaning to their lives, and death becomes a gate to eternal life. *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. (Philippians 1:21)*

"When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more,

And the morning breaks, eternal, bright and fair;

When the saved of earth shall gather over on the other shore,  
And the roll is called up yonder, I'll be there."

*[James M. Black, "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder"]*

Let us praise God in this New Year for giving us a Saviour,  
and, therefore, a meaning to life.

*Pastor Elmer Yliniemi  
Frazee, Minnesota*

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom;  
teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and  
spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.*

*And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of  
the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him.*

*Colossians 3:16-17*

# Man Frail, God Eternal

Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Our shelter from the stormy blast,  
And our eternal home.

Under the shadow of thy throne  
Thy saints have dwelt secure;  
Sufficient in thine arm alone,  
And our defence is sure.

Before the hills in order stood,  
Or earth received her frame,  
From everlasting thou art God,  
To endless years the same.

They word commands our flesh to dust,  
'Return, ye sons of men,'  
All nations rose from earth at first,  
And turn to earth again.

A thousand ages in thy sight  
Are like an evening gone,  
Short as the watch that ends the night  
Before the rising sun.

The busy tribes of flesh and blood,  
With all their lives and cares,  
Are carried downwards by the flood  
And lost in following years.

Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away;  
They fly forgotten, as a dream  
Dies at the opening day.

Like flowery fields the nations stand  
Pleased with the morning light;  
The flowers beneath the mower's hand  
Lie withering ere 'tis night.

Our God, our help in ages past,  
Our hope for years to come,  
Be thou our guard while troubles last,  
And our eternal home.

*Isaac Watts*