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September 2006

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Jesus Spake This Parable, Saying,

What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing.

And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost.

I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.

Luke 15:3-7

My Doctrine is Not Mine, But His that Sent Me

Jesus said, *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself.

He that speaketh of himself seeketh his own glory: but he that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true, and no unrighteousness is in him. (John 7:16-18)

These words contain an important lesson for all of us, especially for those who labor in the Word and doctrine. We must never allow ourselves the privilege of tailoring the doctrine of Christ to fit our own thinking, or of adjusting it to suit our circumstances, or the time and place of our ministry. This has often been done in order to effect organizational unity or some other type of outward unity.

Who has given such authority? Surely not the Lord, in whose kingdom we serve. His prayer for unity among his followers is only fulfilled through unity of spirit.

When we identify with Christ as the only means of salvation, believing that there is no other name by which we may be saved, we must also identify with his teachings concerning how we become partakers of this perfect plan, of which Almighty God is the author.

Jesus' great commission directed the disciples to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature. When Jesus had his first post-resurrection meeting with his disciples, He said to them, *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you . . . Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained. (John 20:21-23)*

Before his crucifixion, He had referred to this same authority with the words, *I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (Matthew 16:19)*

According to contents, the Scripture is basically divided into two parts: the Law and the Gospel. In our preaching, it is not enough to preach the Law, the word that convicts of sin, because the Law only accuses and terrifies the conscience. Peace can only be found when we hear the voice of God as it is expressed in the forgiveness of sins. Jesus said, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:15)*

"The kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel."

On the other hand, Luther remarked in his writings that there are many preachers who speak of the forgiveness of sins, but hardly say a word about repentance. If forgiveness is preached without repentance, the consequence is that people assume that they have received their sins forgiven. Pastors must be taught and guided so that they preach the whole Gospel: repentance and the forgiveness of sins.

True faith brings with it consolation and joy, and such consolation and joy cannot be experienced unless the heart is penitent and seeking. *To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word. (Isaiah 66:2)*

There are two important parts of the Christian faith: repentance resulting from contrition and anguish of heart, and faith in the Gospel through which we receive the forgiveness of sins and are justified before God.

Many people shy away from the use of the authority that Christ gave, and which is commonly called "the keys of the kingdom." They defend their failure by saying that it was intended only for the initial twelve disciples and that, after their decease, the commission is no longer valid. This certainly was not the understanding of Apostle Paul, who was called to his

mission after both the resurrection and ascension of Jesus. Paul claimed and magnified his office as an ambassador for Christ, and said that he was given both the ministry and the word of reconciliation.

All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (II Corinthians 5:18-20)

Church history shows that there were serious differences among the adherents of the Protestant Reformation. When Luther's gifted helper, Philip Melancthon, became too conciliatory in his efforts to unify the divided pro-reformation forces, he was reminded that the confessions of the church were not his private property to alter as he saw fit.

This is good advice for today's ministry. Let us be faithful, remembering these words of Jesus: *My doctrine is not mine, but his that sent me.*

The Lord attached so much importance to the Gospel ministry that He said, *This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come. (Matthew 24:14)*

Let his call be our preparation, his commission our authority, his Gospel our means, and his Spirit our enabling power.

Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington

Psalm 19

*1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.
2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.
3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.
4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,
5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.
6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.
7 The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.
8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.
9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.
10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.
12 Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret faults.
13 Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression.
14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my redeemer.*

On God's Revelation

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork. (Psalm 19:1) The world around us proclaims that there is a wise, good, and powerful Creator. Springtime daffodils, the Alps, colorful clown fish in the Great Barrier Reef, and the amazing fingerwork of talented musicians all point to the greatness of God's imagination and handiwork. To say that this is an accident formed from some atoms banging together is as absurd as throwing a bunch of spare parts into the clothes dryer and expecting a Swiss watch to come out. The wonder of the world around us is one way in which God reveals himself to mankind. Let's call this God's *general revelation*.

The other method by which God reveals himself is through his plan of salvation, which was given to specific believers and recorded in the Bible. We'll call this God's *special revelation*.

Philosophers and theologians struggle with the relationship between the two categories, and contemplate which of them can bring God's salvation. Is God's general revelation simply nature bearing witness of its Creator? Or is it possible that this general revelation can nurture us to gain salvation? Where does special revelation fit into all this? We must begin by briefly defining the two terms before we continue.

God's revelation is definitely found in the natural world, as shown in Psalm 19:1-4. General revelation is not limited to this, however. It has been described as God's self-manifestation to all persons at all times and in all places. This can be done through nature, history, and the inner being of the human person. God has not only put evidence of himself in his creation, but He also guides the course of history, and gives moral and spiritual qualities to all people. These are the *natural* ways in which He gives humans knowledge of himself.

There are also *supernatural* methods God uses in communicating his plan. These are special revelations that come only to certain "special" or "specific" people. These revelations come at definite times and places, enabling those people to enter into a redemptive relationship with Him. Special revelation includes all the words of the Scripture but is not limited to them: for example, it also includes many words of Jesus that were not recorded in Scripture. All of the words spoken by Jesus were special revelation since they were, in fact, the Word of God. Unfortunately, not all of them were written down.

Psalm 19 breaks down God's revelation for us nicely. It falls naturally into three parts: God's general revelation through his creation (verses 1-6), God's special revelation through the Law (7-11), and the response of the faithful believer (12-14). Studying the entire Psalm will give a much greater picture of general revelation and where it fits into God's plan than simply taking the first few verses that discuss God's presence in nature.

In this Psalm, David paints a beautiful picture of the heavenly bodies, giving proof that God exists. They show the good work of his hands in creation, and they reveal Him to all people. The heavens proclaim Him all the time, in a

universal language, and throughout the world (1-6). This clearly states that knowledge of who God is can be gained through general revelation, but gives no support for salvation therein. Support is only given for knowing two things: his glory and his handiwork.

Immediately after turning the focus to God's special revelation in the Law, David mentions God's plan for humans. The focus is no longer on the existence of God, but on God's plan for his people. The focus is on restoring the soul of man. David states that God's Law is perfect, sure, right, pure, true, righteous, and more desirable than gold. He says that it not only restores the soul, but also makes wise the simple, makes the heart rejoice, enlightens the eyes, and that there is great reward in keeping it (7-11). This great reward sounds like a way of salvation in God's special revelation. None of this was spoken of in reference to general revelation.

A result of this discussion of the Law is a piercing of David's heart. He is convicted of sin, and realizes that he doesn't even know all the ways in which he has sinned. He prays for cleansing of his hidden sins. He also prays that willful sins would not have power over him, and he wants to be kept from falling into them (12-13).

In the final verse, David shows his faith in the Lord, who is his strength and redeemer. It was only after relating the special revelation through God's Word that David acknowledged the way of salvation. That is when the man of faith responds. The heart is pierced by the living word of God. The writer to the Hebrews put it this way: *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* It is only God's Word that can do this, not general revelation in the world or within the conscience of a human being.

**"For the word of God is . . .
a discerner of the thoughts and intents
of the heart."**

One might wonder about the saving power of the Law, as the Old Testament children of God did not have Jesus Christ, yet they were saved, and were called God's children. Paul explains that as well. It was not the Law that saved, but grace, through faith in the promise of God. (Romans 4:1-25)

The salvation of God's people in the Old Testament did not come from adherence to the Law or from sacrifices for their sins. God's promise of the coming Messiah was the object of their faith, through which they were found righteous. They looked to the promise of their Saviour, and today's Christians look to the completed act that Jesus performed. In one of his sermons, Pastor Scott Niemitalo described it in today's terms, saying that the Old Testament children of God were living on credit, while today we are living on debit; but it is the same salvation sacrifice performed once for all.

Paul wrote of the way of salvation when he described the Gospel of Christ to the Romans, saying, *It is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth (Romans 1:16)* before going into his description of the universal need for righteousness. He tells of the guilt of both Jews and Gentiles, and gives proof of guilt for all humanity. (Romans 1:18-3:20) To neither general revelation nor the Law does he give salvific reverence. He tells that, by the deeds of the Law, no one shall be justified in the sight of God because the Law only brings the knowledge of sin; and without the Law there is no transgression. Righteousness, however, is apart from the Law by faith in Jesus Christ *for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3: 23)*

If the Law can only convict the heart of a sinner, and does not bring salvation, then it logically follows that general revelation, of lesser power than the Law, also cannot bring salvation. This is the extent of the power of general revelation: it is sufficient to reveal God's power and divine nature, but insufficient to save from the lack of righteousness. Only the Gospel of Christ can save the soul.

The answers to our original questions rest throughout the Bible. General revelation is found in nature, and it can nurture our belief in God, but without special revelation there is no salvation.

Jesus, himself, confirms this in every one of his teachings of the way of salvation. He never teaches salvation by looking to nature, history, or inward to the inner being of the human. The way of salvation is clear in all his teachings. In his great commission, He said, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved. (Mark 16:15-16)*

For a matter of such importance, there can be no mistake. We are saved by grace through faith. Faith is that belief that comes by hearing God's Word. Believing in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, is the only thing that brings salvation. God makes it very clear in his Word. It should be no great surprise that the way of salvation is made known in the most well known verse of the Bible. *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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. (John 3:16-18)*

God's might and creativity can be found all around us, but the wonderful redemption story for our souls sits right on our bedside table tucked in our Bibles. Praise Him for preserving his special revelation to nourish our undying portion. May God continue to bless and keep us all, and help us make time for studying that which is so important.

*God's peace,
Barry Mattson
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

His Will is Wiser than My Own

God's peace, dear brothers and sisters in faith. Many times when this publication appears in my mailbox, I feel grateful that there are those who will take time out of their busy lives to write a few words of encouragement to us as we strive along this narrow way of life.

How uplifting it is to read that others have the same trials and temptations, and that they, too, know the wonderful peace that fills our hearts when we can hear that all our sins are forgiven and blotted out in Jesus' name and shed blood. Isn't it wonderful to know that He cares for us!

I would like to share some verses with you.

The path ahead I cannot see
Nor know what it may hold for me
Of sunny days or misty morrows,
Of joys and laughter, sobs and sorrows.
But, O how glad that, all the way,
Through strife and woe, when friends betray,
I'll never need to step alone,
For He, who watches o'er his own,
Will walk with me in tender love,
And lead me to my home above.

Author Unknown

Yes, how wonderful it is to know that we need not fear, for He has promised, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5)*

As we watch the trends that unfold before us day after day, we wonder, "Will Christ find faith on earth when He comes again?" as the Bible says, *When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:8)* Many things seem to be creeping in that, on the surface, do not appear to be so bad, but when they take our minds from his Word and from fellowship with other Christians, there is danger.

When we fellowship one with another, we receive strength to carry on; *not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25)* Our Lord said that, where two or three are gathered together in his name, He is there in the midst of them.

In closing, I would like to leave you with this bit of verse:

I know not if the blessings sought
Will come in just the way I thought,
But leave my prayers with Him alone,
Whose will is wiser than my own,
Assured that He will grant my quest,
Or send some answer far more blessed.

Anonymous

*God's peace,
Harriet Holmgren
Lynnwood, Washington*

Pray Without Ceasing

Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.

Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation. (Psalm 27:7-9)

We, as children of the Heavenly Father who loves us and all of his creation, have been given the promise of everlasting life through his Son, Jesus Christ. We have also been given the medium of prayer to speak to Him as children do to their fathers.

King David wrote so beautifully of the Father's grace and mercy toward fallen man, and also of the plea in his own heart that God would care for him. God spoke of David as *a man after mine own heart (Acts 13:22)* when He raised him to become King of Israel. David wrote, *Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy. (Psalm 64:1)* Oh, how wonderful it is to know that we can call upon Him at all times, and that He has promised to hear our cries.

May we remember to pray each and every day as we sojourn here in this life. Our Father in Heaven knows our needs, but He desires that we would call upon Him. He knows our hearts, and hears our cries to be lifted up and comforted.

We find that prayer, then, is most needful in our lives, as we are so forgetful. Zechariah wrote, *Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also. (Zechariah 8:21)*

Prayer is also an escape from life's cares because we can place our fears and concerns into the hands of Him who loves us. Pray that He will keep you from all danger, harm, and evil, which the Devil always presents to us.

We have a way out through Jesus, who gave himself on the cross for our sins. We may hear and believe our sins forgiven in his name and shed blood so that we will not perish, but have everlasting life, as we read in John 3:16.

What a wonderful opportunity we have to talk to Him. Let us not forget this as we go about our daily lives. *I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high. I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving. (Psalm 69:29-30)* May this thanksgiving always remain in our hearts.

*Chad Kuivanen
Chassell, Michigan*

We are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:

Whereunto he called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace,

Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work.

II Thessalonians 2:13-17

Children's Page

Dear Children,

I would like to share a wonderful story from the Old Testament. It is a story that shows us how God pours out his blessings on those who serve Him. You can find this in I Samuel 16: 1-13.

From Shepherd Boy to King

Our story begins with Samuel sorrowing for Saul because God did not choose him to be king over Israel. Saul was not chosen because he sinned against the Lord.

And the Lord said unto Samuel, How long wilt thou mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill thine horn with oil, and go, I will send thee to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons. (Verse 1)

Samuel was afraid to go, as the Word tells us: *And Samuel said, How can I go? if Saul hear it, he will kill me. And the Lord said, Take an heifer with thee, and say, I am come to sacrifice to the Lord. And call Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will shew thee what thou shalt do: and thou shalt anoint unto me him whom I name unto thee. (Verses 2-3)*

I am sure Saul would have tried to kill Samuel if he found out that Samuel really went to find someone else to be King. But God had a way to keep that from happening. He was going to make it appear that Samuel was going to Bethlehem to offer a sacrifice to the Lord, with Jesse present. He would be with the person he needed to see, and the choosing of the King would take place when Saul would not know.

Samuel did as the Lord told him, and went to Bethlehem. When the elders saw him coming, they trembled, and asked if he came peacefully. He said yes, peacefully, and that he was coming to offer a sacrifice. He invited them to come with him. He called Jesse and his sons to the sacrifice, also. The elders trembled at seeing Samuel because God had filled him with his divine truth, and it was powerful. The people were afraid of this power.

He was standing there looking at Jesse's sons, and I'm sure he was wondering which one would be chosen. God had not told him which one, but he waited for God's answer.

The first of Jesse's sons that Samuel saw was Eliab. He was sure this was the one, but God spoke and said, *Look not on his countenance [his face], or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart. (Verse 7)* Before any of the other sons

were brought forward, God wanted Samuel to know what he was looking for. He was looking for a good heart, not just a strong, attractive young man.

The other seven sons were brought before Samuel, but *Samuel said unto Jesse, The Lord hath not chosen these. (Verse 10)* He had seen all the sons, and was probably wondering: Now what? But he knew that God said it would be one of Jesse's sons. *Samuel said unto Jesse, Are here all thy children?*

And he said, There remaineth yet the youngest, and, behold, he keepeth the sheep.

And Samuel said unto Jesse, Send and fetch him: for we will not sit down till he come hither. (Verse 11)

Someone went to the field to find the shepherd boy, whom you can be sure was very surprised at being called away from his work.

Now he was ruddy, [a healthy, rosy color] and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, Arise, anoint him: for this is he. (Verse 12)

Who was the shepherd? He was David. God had told Samuel not to look on the outside only, as a good-looking lad may not have a good heart. God looked into David's heart, and it was good, and that was the most important. We can see that the Word records the fact that David was also a very nice looking young man. I am sure that being handsome, to David, was not as important as believing in God.

We can all learn from that, not just to make ourselves beautiful on the outside, but more importantly, to pray to be beautiful in our hearts.

Our story ends with a very special happening, and a very amazing thing to take place in David's workday. *Then Samuel took the horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. (Verse 13)*

My, what a day for David! He would not forget it. Afterward, he would realize that he did not just dream it, for his hair and clothes had oil on them. The best thing was that the Spirit of the Lord came upon him.

Our story helps us to understand that God loves his children, and will bless those who serve Him. He cannot bless any of us if we choose not to serve Him. I pray that we will all ask God to lead us in serving Him with all our hearts and lives.

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

Trust in the Lord

When some of us were in our teenage years, we wished that we were grown up, and could determine what we should do and where we should go. When our mothers and dads spoke to us, we listened to their admonitions with only partial hearing. Often we thought that we had heard their words so many times that we didn't pay much attention. We knew that they loved us, but sometimes we thought that they were overly protective of us, and worried too much about us. We thought we could take care of ourselves.

It is good to remember that true love always has the truth with it. The Devil, our common enemy for both the young and old, will try in all ways to lead us away from the teachings of God's Word and his admonitions. He will always come to say that it is not so dangerous, even if God's Word tells us it is sin to do what we want to do. He may tell us that others are doing it, and they are Christians. When he comes in this manner, he is very deceitful and dangerous. He does not want us to have good consciences or God's peace in our hearts. He does not want us to be saved.

We know what the Bible teaches. *Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned: From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling. (I Timothy 1:5-6)*

When we are driving a car in an unfamiliar area, it may happen that occasionally we are unsure about which way to go at an intersection. We need to check the map. In our lives, whether we are young or older, we will come to these crossroads, and then it is important that we allow God's Word and the Holy Spirit to lead us so that we take the right direction. It is written: *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. (Proverb 3:5-6)*

Someone might say that he or she doesn't understand God's Word, so how can it direct them? It is not always so important that we understand everything that is written in the Bible, but that we always pray to our Heavenly Father for his direction, and that his protective hand will be over us.

Prophet Samuel said to King Saul, *Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the Lord, he hath also rejected thee from being king. (I Samuel 15:22-23)*

God will always lead us with his Spirit and Word. He will preserve both young and old in this living faith, which He has given to us. Our Lord says that the hairs of our head are numbered; and in another place, he reminds us to cast *all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (I Peter 5:7)*

It is no problem for God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ to preserve us in living faith if we leave our future and life in their hands. The Bible reminds young people as well as all of us: *Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them. (Ecclesiastes 12:1)*

May God bless our young, and all of us, with his heavenly blessing, preserving us with living faith and the love of God in our hearts, with his peace, until the end of our lives.

Let us always do as Apostle Paul wrote, *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)

Greetings of love and God's peace,
Pastor Arne Nordahl
Vancouver, Washington

Let Us Confess Jesus

Whosoever therefore shall be ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation; of him also shall the Son of man be ashamed, when he cometh in the glory of his Father with the holy angels. (Mark 8:38)

In these verses, Jesus spoke of the cost of discipleship, saying that all who come after Him must deny themselves, take up their crosses, and follow Him.

As we ponder these words, we find that there is a price to pay to be a child of his, not in terms of offering, but rather of sacrifice. Our sacrifice is not for merit, but of willing servitude. We serve Him with faithful hearts led by his Holy Spirit. But because we possess a human nature, we find that there is conflict that arises within us as our fleshly hearts rebel and resist the leading of the Spirit. We all struggle with this problem, but we take comfort in the words of Jesus, who said, *Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:20)* In Him, we receive strength to overcome our sinful, rebellious nature.

Dear young brother and sister in faith, soon the school bells will announce the beginning of a new school year. Once again, you will rejoin your classmates and perhaps meet new ones. In your associations with them, they will quickly observe your character, your conduct, and your beliefs. As older brothers and sisters in faith, our thoughts and prayers will be with you. We know how the Devil would entice you to do all the things that the children of this world do. Many of those things are seemingly harmless, but they are often the subtle beginning of a downward, dizzying spiral toward sinful lifestyles.

We pray, dear young Christian, that you will always stand in the truth; that is, in Jesus Christ, your Saviour, never ashamed of your identity as his child. He dearly loves you. His promise to you is true when He said, *I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. (Hebrews 13:5)*

You are the Lord's young missionaries at school and at play. You have been chosen by Him to bring his wonderful message of salvation to others, to both classmates and teachers. Jesus said, *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)*

Those around you will recognize that you possess something wonderful, both in your speech and in your lifestyle. And truly you do. You have Jesus in your heart. He is your guide in life by his Holy Spirit. He exhorts you to sanctify *the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear: Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ. (I Peter 3:15-16)*

Remember always, dear young Christian, what Jesus promised: *Also I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of God. (Luke 12:8)*

May God, our Father, richly bless you young ones. You are the future of the Christian Church on earth.

*In God's peace,
Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan*

Our Father, Thou in Heaven Above

Our Father, thou in Heaven above,
Who biddest us to dwell in love,
As brethren of one family,
To cry in every need to thee,
Teach us no thoughtless word to say,
But from our inmost heart to pray.

Thy name be hallowed;
Help us, Lord, In purity to keep thy Word,
That to the glory of thy name
We walk before thee free from blame.
Let no false doctrine us pervert;
All poor, deluded souls convert.

Thy kingdom come;
Thine let it be
In time and in eternity.
Let thy good Spirit e'er be nigh
Our hearts with graces to supply.
Break Satan's power, defeat his rage;
Preserve thy Church from age to age.

Thy gracious will on earth be done
As 'tis in Heaven before thy throne;
Obedience in our weal and woe
And patience in all grief bestow.
Curb flesh and blood and every ill
That sets itself against thy will.

Give us this day our daily bread
And let us all be clothed and fed.
From war and strife be our defense,
From famine and from pestilence,
That we may live in godly peace,
Free from all care and avarice.

Forgive our sins, Lord, we implore,
Remove from us their burden sore,
As we their trespasses forgive
Who by offenses us do grieve.
Thus let us dwell in charity,

And serve our brother willingly.

Into temptation lead us not.
When evil foes against us plot
And vex our souls on every hand,
Oh, give us strength that we may stand
Firm in the faith, a well-armed host,
Through comfort of the Holy Ghost.

From evil, Lord, deliver us;
The times and days are perilous.
Redeem us from eternal death,
And when we yield our dying breath,
Console us, grant us calm release,
And take our souls to thee in peace.

Amen, that is,
So shall it be.
Confirm our faith and hope in thee
That we may doubt not, but believe
What here we ask we shall receive.
Thus in thy name and at thy word
We say: Amen. Oh, hear us, Lord!

Martin Luther
First Published in: "Geistliche Lieder"
Leipzig, Germany, 1539

The Knowledge of God To be Learned from the Bible

How shall a little infant learn
This great, this infinite concern,
What my Almighty Maker is,
And what's the way this God to please?

Shall some bright angel spread his wing
The welcome message down to bring?
Or must we dig beneath the ground,
As deep as where the mines are found?

I bless his name for what I hear;
The Word of life and truth is near.
His Gospel sounds through all our land;
Bibles are lodged in every hand.
That sacred book, inspired by God,
In our own tongue is spread abroad;
That book may little children read,
And learn the knowledge which they need.
I'll place it still before my eyes,
For there my hope and treasure lies.

Isaac Watts, 1794

We have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

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 2:12-14