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Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

Psalm 112:1-4

The Light Shines in Darkness

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (I John 1:3)

Apostle John wrote five books found in the New Testament: the Gospel of John, the book of Revelation, and three epistles which go by his name. They may be short, but they have much substance.

It is often recommended that new Christians, or those searching for truth, start by reading the Gospel of John because he clearly shows to us the way of life through faith in Jesus Christ. He begins by saying, *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:1-5)

John walked and talked with Jesus. He saw Him heal and teach. He saw Him glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration. He saw Him die on the cross, rise, and ascend to Heaven. John truly knew Jesus. That is why he started his first epistle by saying, *That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life. (I John 1:1)*

In writing his epistles, John was an older man who addressed these letters to his “little children.” Those were the last apostolic messages to the Church, for he was the only surviving apostle. They were written for the Church toward the end of the first century. In them, he emphasized how a child of God should live.

John was writing to a new generation of believers who needed assurance and confidence in God and in their faith. The first disciples went out in the power of the Holy Spirit, and were willing to give their lives for the truth found in Christ. Just as we see in times of revival, people cannot keep quiet about the new life they find in our Saviour. In the new generation of believers, doubts and questions had arisen. One historian wrote about the state of Christianity toward the end of the first century: “Now Christianity had become a thing of habit; it had become traditional, half-hearted, and nominal.

Men had grown used to it, and something of the wonder had gotten lost . . . The flame of devotion had died to a flicker.”

There were many problems confronting the Church at that time, as we experience in our day. There was a declining commitment to God and his Word, just as we witness in our world. Throughout time, believers have been tempted to conform to the world’s standards, compromise God’s Word, and fail to stand up for Christ.

John wanted to show the difference between light and darkness, and encouraged the believers to grow in love toward God and each other. *Again, a new commandment I write unto you, which thing is true in him and in you: because the darkness is past, and the true light now shineth. He that saith he is in the light, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in darkness, and walketh in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because that darkness hath blinded his eyes. (I John 2:8-11)* He wrote this so that your joy may be full. (I John 1:4)

Joy in what? He wants us to know that we are reconciled to God through the forgiveness of our sins. He wants us to grow in grace and truth, and to have a living hope of eternal life with Him in Heaven.

He wrote, *My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. It is sin that separates us from God, for Isaiah wrote, Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you. (Isaiah 59:2)* John continued: *And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. (I John 2:1)*

**“We have an advocate with the Father,
Jesus Christ the righteous.”**

God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. (I John 1:5-6) We cannot live in immorality and claim to be a Christian. *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)*

For us to be in fellowship with God and each other, we need to be grounded in God’s Word. Without this, true fellowship is impossible. We also need unity of believers and the daily guidance of the Holy Spirit. True fellowship is made possible only through a living relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ.

The focus of all the apostles' messages is that our redemption is in the Lord Jesus Christ. He calls us out of darkness and cleanses us from our sins through his name and atoning blood. He makes us new, and we become children of light.

John wrote, *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (I John 1:9)*

When we come to Christ, the Light, all our sins are forgiven. However, we are still sinners, and God wants us to confess our sins. Not because we are rejected, but to remove barriers to fellowship with God and our neighbor that are created by sin. Confession is not a condition for salvation, nor a work of merit, but it is a privilege that frees us from doubt and guilt.

John wanted to assure the believers of that day, as well as us, that, when we walk in the light, *truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (I John 1:3)*

In his epistles, John also addressed the dangers of false teachings which were coming into the Church. Those included asceticism, which was strict self-denial in order to make one better, and antinomianism, or rejection of the Law, which led to indifference in conduct, and immoral behavior.

By knowing the Word of God, we can recognize false teachings. When Jesus was tempted in the wilderness, He responded, *Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. (Matthew 4:10)*

John wanted to rekindle joy and assure believers that Christ gives us the power to walk in the light and resist the deceiver. May the Lord lead us in that light.

*Pastor Elmer Yliniemi
Frazee, Minnesota*

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

Love

It has been said that love is what makes the world go round. Most people think of romantic love, the attraction we have for one another as man and wife. Valentine's Day has just passed, and we have remembered the ones we love in the romantic way, with a dozen roses or some other gift to show how much we appreciate who they are, and how they love us and we love them.

The Greek word for romantic love is *eros*, which is not found anywhere in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, which was mostly written in Hebrew, we find the the same meaning for love in the word *ahab*, which occurs 250 times. In the Song of Solomon, we find a beautiful portrayal of the love between a man and a woman.

Yet, with all its wonder and blessing, this kind of love is not what makes the world go round. Only the love of God, *agape*, keeps the world spinning on its axis and circling the sun. It is God's love which, by his grace, causes natural love to flourish and become a beautiful picture of his love.

True love's concern is not for self, or one's own gratification, but it looks at the needs of the spouse. This attitude– that always looks to what is best for the other– comes not from our own resources, but from the love of God that is *shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. (Romans 5:5)* It comes as we, by grace and in faith, partake of God's love which is revealed and given to us in Christ Jesus. *Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it. (Song of Solomon 8:7)*

When we are united with Jesus, the lover of our souls, we can give that true love to each other. The Word says, *Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. (Romans 13:8)*

The Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men. (I Thessalonians 3:12) May God's grace and Spirit lead us onward in the truth of his love.

*Pastor Mark Matson
Pasco, Washington*

Contentment in Christ

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. (Psalm 119:11) The word is Jesus Christ by faith. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us . . . full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105) We need the oil of the Holy Spirit in our lamps of faith in order for the bright light to cast out the shadows of darkness. To have a lamp without oil is like having a flashlight without batteries. To read the Word without enlightenment of the Holy Spirit makes the Word a book of instruction, history, and theology which can be understood by man's intellect. This is good for this life. But let us pray for those who read the Word without the light of Jesus Christ, that it will convict them of their sins and grant them faith to believe.

Apostle Paul wrote, The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:8-10, 17)

When we have, by God's grace, become new creatures in Christ, a great warfare begins. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other. (Galatians 5:17)

May it be that we would not listen to the Devil or our flesh, which would demand perfection of our carnal portion in order to be saved. Our reason for salvation is not based on our performance toward God, but is based on Jesus Christ. He is our perfection. For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. (Romans 14:17) If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. (John 8:36) Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. (Romans 4:6-8)

There are seminars, and volumes of books on how to improve our lives, and how to gain peace and contentment with God,

ourselves, and our fellow man. I believe God has blessed us in this world with professional people who can deal with health problems of various types. All this is wonderful for this life; to create a better environment for ourselves and the people around us. But if Jesus Christ is not in the picture, and we have not been enlightened by God's grace regarding the redemptive work of his Son, we will never experience true peace and contentment within our hearts and souls-- that which will last unto eternity. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:7)*

May God help us so that our Christianity would not be our intellect working our physical emotions, and mistaken for spiritual emotions. *God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth. (John 4:24)*

There's a peace in my heart that the world never gave,
A peace it can not take away;
Though the trials of life may surround like cloud,
I've a peace that has come there to stay!

Mrs. Will L. Murphy

*In the love and peace of God,
Your brother in faith,
Dave Impola
Everett, Washington*

The light of the body is the eye: therefore when thine eye is single, thy whole body also is full of light; but when thine eye is evil, thy body also is full of darkness.

Take heed therefore that the light which is in thee be not darkness.

If thy whole body therefore be full of light, having no part dark, the whole shall be full of light, as when the bright shining of a candle doth give thee light.

Luke 11:34-36

CHILDREN'S PAGE

Dear Children,

We are once again in that time of year when we remember what Jesus did for all of us. He gave his life so that we might live with Him in Heaven.

There is so much Scripture that covers the story of Jesus' death, but I will briefly touch on what I can. There are two chapters I will take verses from: Luke 22 and 23.

Crucified for All

It was time to celebrate the Passover, when the angel passed over the houses in Egypt that had blood sprinkled on the door lintels.

In the time of Jesus, He had been preaching to the people. The chief priests and scribes, who did not love Him, still followed Him everywhere -- not to hear and learn, but *the chief priests and scribes sought how they might kill him; for they feared the people. (Luke 22:2)*

Jesus had a disciple named Judas. The Devil came into his heart when he learned that some people wanted Jesus dead. It was Judas who, later in our story, took the priests and scribes and soldiers to the garden where Jesus was praying, and let them capture Him.

With the Passover feast near at hand, Jesus had his disciples arrange for their feast. It was at this Last Supper that Jesus told them that his death would soon take place. He broke bread with them and drank wine, and told them to do this in remembrance of Him. We do this in our Communion.

Jesus then went to the Mount of Olives, and the disciples with Him. It was in that garden that Jesus prayed to God, his Father, for strength to face what lay ahead. It was an extremely difficult night for Jesus. He knew he was going to die. But the greatest burden was that He would carry all the sins of the whole world, and die from it, so that all believers would live in Him.

Luke 22:43-44 says, *There appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him. And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.*

After Jesus had prayed three times, He returned to his disciples, who were sleeping, *And said unto them, Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. (Luke 22:46)*

Then Judas came to the garden to betray his Lord and give Him to those who wanted Him dead. Jesus' disciples ran for their lives, as they did not want to be captured.

The captors asked Jesus, *Art thou the Christ? tell us.*

And he said unto them, If I tell you, ye will not believe: And if I also ask you, ye will not answer me, nor let me go. Hereafter shall the Son of man sit on the right hand of the power of God.

Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God?

And he said unto them, Ye say that I am.

And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth. (Luke 22:67-71)

That was all those captors needed to hear. They were set in their minds that Jesus must die. It was indeed a poor excuse to put Him to death, but because they did not believe, they had no use for a man who made himself equal with God. We all know that Jesus and God are one, and you cannot separate them, or choose to believe in one without the other.

Jesus was then taken before the Roman governor, Pilate, to be tried. Pilate could find no fault in Jesus. Pilate then sent Him to Herod because Jesus was a Jew, and Herod was the ruler over the Jews. It was up to him to sentence Jesus to death.

Herod was glad to see Jesus only because he wanted to see Him do a miracle. But of course Jesus would do no such thing because it would have only been for Herod's enjoyment. Herod put a beautiful robe on Jesus, made fun of Him, and sent him back to Pilate.

Pilate again found no reason to kill Jesus. He said to the people, Ye have brought this man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined him before you, have found no fault in this man touching those things whereof ye accuse him. (Luke 23:14)

Pilate was going to just punish Jesus with a whipping and let Him go. But it was the custom to release someone from prison or other bonds during the Passover time. The people would not hear of Jesus being the one released. They said they would rather have Barabas, the murderer, freed. How dark were the people's hearts that they would not believe in Jesus, who had nothing but a heart of love.

Pilate still wanted Jesus to go free, but the people cried all the more, shouting, Crucify him, crucify him! Pilate told the people to deal with Jesus as they wished because he was not going to give Him the death sentence.

Jesus was then beaten, and made to carry his cross, with the help of one named Simon, all the way to Calvary hill. It was a very difficult journey, and at the end of it, Jesus was nailed to the cross.

This was such a difficult day for Jesus. It was also terrible for his followers, and for his mother, but we know this was all in God's plan so that we all might be saved.

May God bless each of you with faith in your hearts and more love for Jesus.

Gwen Wilson

The Master's Call

Grace, peace, and love from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ, be multiplied now and evermore. When the faith of God's children shall turn to sight, our toils and sorrows shall be no more, and our goal will be attained in the land of eternity, where joy, peace, and righteousness dwell forever.

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?

And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! (Romans 10:14-15)

So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)

There is nothing in the whole world more important and urgent than the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Saviour himself initiated this ministry by proclaiming, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel. (Mark 1:15)*

The first messengers were his chosen disciples, whom He called from different secular occupations. He called them to a task they had never known before. *Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. (Mark 1:17)* Jesus was filled with compassion when He saw the multitudes, for they had fainted and were scattered as sheep having no shepherd. He said unto his disciples, *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest. (Matthew 9:37-38)*

But Jesus laid down a limitation for their work. *Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. (Matthew 10:5-7)* As we see, Gentiles were once shut out from the message of the Gospel. Israel, being the first chosen people of God, was to hear the call of the Master. And, because they rejected this call, it was redirected to the Gentiles according to Christ's divine commission. *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name. (John 1:11-12)* Thus, we see that not until Jesus had risen from the dead and had completed his mission

on earth did He charge his apostles to go out into the entire world. We read how, after the conversion of Saul, the Lord spoke to Ananias, *Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake. (Acts 9:15-16)*

As we observe the earthly life of our Lord with his disciples, we notice that they were not left free to choose their own methods, or to adopt their conception of the task pertaining to the saving of lost souls. Since it was not their work, but the work of God, it could not be done without his authorization; otherwise, it would be devoid of his promise. Jesus said unto Peter, *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)*

After the completion of his work here on earth, and upon his resurrection from the dead, Jesus appeared to his disciples behind locked doors. There He proclaimed his great commission: *Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, 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)* All restrictions and limitations were removed. It was proclaimed that *repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47)*

**“Repentance and remission of sins
should be preached in his name
among all nations.”**

We are living in the latter day. Time is short and precious. Multitudes throughout the world have yet to hear the Gospel, and are waiting for that saving message. The same call and authorization of the Lord Jesus rings out to us. This proclamation is clear and concise. Moved by his love and Spirit, and in obedience to his Word, the message remains simple, sincere, and true. The kingdom of God has drawn nigh, and God summons men to repentance and faith. In the light of his Spirit, we find ourselves inadequate, weak, and unworthy. Yet the first step of obedience is one's faith in God. We have been bought with a price; redeemed by his blood of atonement. In his precious and holy name and blood we have believed in God's forgiveness of all our sins. *You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1)*

Yet, why do unbelief and doubt often slow us in the work of God? We are loath to renounce our worldly attachments and give up the obstacles that separate us from the will of God.

Still, we hear the Master's call. We do not belong in the sheltered seclusion of our own selves. In journeying to the fields of labor, we are often subjected to many inconveniences, even hardships and trials. We hesitate to make sacrifices unless we receive personal satisfaction and enjoyment from them.

The kingdom of God is in the midst of our enemies. Also, our mission work takes us away from home into strange areas and into difficult situations. According to God's will and the commission of Christ, Christendom is a widespread people, scattered like seed *into all the kingdoms of the earth. (Deuteronomy 28:25)* But He has promised, that He will gather them, for he has redeemed them and they shall return.

The work is, therefore, the responsibility of the entire Christian Church. The support, love, prayers, and sacrifices of all believers are needed in order to fulfill the divine requirements of Him who has gone before us. He has nourished his own sheep by the still waters of life, and in the green pastures of his saving grace.

Into my mind come the words of the songwriter, "Lost in the night doth the heathen yet languish/Longing for morning the darkness to vanquish . . . Will not day come soon? . . . Light o'er the land of the heathen is beaming;/ Rivers of life through its deserts are streaming . . . Come save us soon!" [*Lost in the Night,* Olav Lee, 1929]

God alone knows where the promise lies. Our part is only to obey Him. He will provide the direction. Let us pray for this love and concern for those who are lost in the night, and for unity and understanding in the encampment of God's own children.

Let us walk worthy of vocation wherewith we are called, *with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. (Ephesians 4:1-3)*

Oscar Wilson

Many Shall Come in My Name

From God's Word, we find wisdom about how we ought to walk during the short time we are on this earth. It says, *Teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. (Psalm 90:12)*

So often, the Devil, the common enemy of our souls, hides this eternal truth: that one day we must depart from here. He tries to mask this fact from both the young and the old. He is a very crafty enemy, and he has great experience endeavoring to deceive the children of God. Sometimes he comes as a roaring lion. The Word tells us to *be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour. (I Peter 5:8)* At other times, he comes to us as a wolf in sheep's clothing or as an angel of light.

We are not the judges of any human soul. However, if teachings and doctrines are not according to the Scriptures, we must beware of them, and of false prophets, for they are deceivers.

We always need to stay with God's Word. Jesus said, *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (John 8:31-32)*

It is important to remember that the Devil also has his servants and church here on earth. When his servants come to us in sheep's clothing, it is difficult for us to see and understand that it is really the Devil who is trying to tempt and deceive us.

He may not, in the same way, tempt those who are already in his power and caught in his net. But, by many methods, he will tempt the children of God. He will try to lead them astray from God's Word. He will especially try to undermine the commandment of the Lord Jesus, *That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47)*

Everyone needs to deal with his or her sin according to the teaching of God's Word. But surely the Devil does not want this. There is nothing more that he hates than the name and blood of Jesus, where, by faith, spiritual cleansing takes place.

To the young people, the Devil may say, "You are too young to be a Christian. Christianity is for old people, and you ought to enjoy yourself at this time in your life. When you are old, you can think about God, and become a Christian." Unfortunately, many people have harkened to this deceit of the Devil's, and have been wounded

by sin in their lives and upon their consciences, continuing in unbelief until their deaths.

God, in his grace, has had his servants preach repentance and the remission of sins throughout the centuries. These servants have not always been popular, especially when they have preached these eternal truths, including admonition and repentance in the spirit of love and truth.

When our Saviour spoke of the last times, the times we are living in now, one of the first things He said was, *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 24:4-13)

Today we live in the last times. We, who have children and grandchildren, often wonder how they can be preserved in faith. But we ought to remember that God, who has begun the good work in them, is also able to preserve them in living faith, even to the end. Therefore, we will leave our lives in the care and keeping of the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, our Lord Jesus Christ.

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

Lord Jesus, Though but Two or Three

For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)

The Lord Jesus made many very generous promises. Here we see that He does not require a large assembly before He is willing to be present with us. During his earthly ministry, He spoke in the synagogues and to various large gatherings, but He often spent time with people on an individual basis.

We have a good example of this in his conversation with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well. She questioned Him about the right place to worship. Jesus answered that question for all time when He said, *The hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. (John 4:23)* The right place to worship is where Jesus is present.

The general application of this Biblical promise is expressed in this gospel hymn:

Lord Jesus, though but two or three
In thy dear name assembled be,
Thou wilt among them show thy face,
And bless them with thy saving grace.

In thy dear name again we meet,
And worship humbly at thy feet.
Thou wilt thy gracious Word fulfill,
And cheer us with thy presence still.

O, Thou, from whom all blessings flow,
Thy peace and comfort now bestow,
Abide with us till life is o'er,
And make us thine for evermore.

Author Unknown

Let's look more closely at the Lord's promise by examining it in context. In the early part of this chapter, Jesus responded to the disciples' question regarding who would have precedence among them by putting a child in their midst and saying, *Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 18:3)* He followed with a

stern warning: *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh! (Verses 6-7)*

When Jesus completed these teachings, He gave some specific instructions on how to deal with offenses that occur in the fellowship. He outlined three separate steps. The first step calls for the offended person to seek out the one whom he feels has wronged him. If this meeting between these two parties does not resolve the matter, the wronged person is to take one or two witnesses with him so that, in their presence, every word would be verified. Should that fail, the third step is to bring the matter before the Church.

Jesus concluded by saying, *If he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican. (Matthew 18:7)* [Editor's note: Here it is important to know the meaning of *publican* in this Bible context. It is "one who is regarded as 'an heathen man and a publican' (Matthew 18:7); one cut off from the church; an excommunicated person." *Oxford English Dictionary*]

When we embark on such a mission, we must invoke the name of Jesus so that we may be assured of his presence. A mission of this kind is not one of revenge toward an adversary, but it is to be a service of love to a fellow Christian. We are told to: *Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life. (Proverb 4:23)*

Jesus regards soul care as something very vital. He wants us to serve one another in love so that no soul would be lost. He wants that the unity of the Spirit would be preserved in our fellowship.

Having briefly examined these teachings of our Lord concerning the handling of offenses, we come to the place in the context where we can see that there is a direct connection between the Lord's promise, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.* And also the earlier verses, especially those that say: *Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 18:18-19)*

*Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington*

Invitation to the Convention

The Eastside Apostolic Lutheran Church of Greer, South Carolina extends a warm welcome to everyone as we host the 2007 Annual Convention.

It will be held at USC Upstate in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Ministers' meetings and the Sunday School meeting will be held Tuesday and Wednesday, June 26 and 27, at the Eastside church.

Worship services will begin Wednesday evening at the church, and continue Thursday, June 28, through Sunday, July 1, at the USC Spartanburg campus.

An information packet has been sent to all congregations with lists of accommodations and RV campgrounds. Any additional information may be found on our church website at www.eastsidealc.com. Or you may call the church at: 864/895-4008. Please leave a message and number if no one is there at the time. Office hours are usually 10 am to 2 pm Eastern time, Tuesday through Friday.

We, in cooperation with the Rutherford congregation and others, pray that, as we gather around the Word of God, the Lord would draw us all closer to Himself and, therefore, closer to each other.

Pastor Raymond Hilman

The Spacious Firmament

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky
And spangled heav'ns,--a shining frame--
Their great Original proclaim.
Th' unwearied sun, from day to day,
Does his Creator's power display,
And publishes to every land
The work of an almighty hand.

Soon as the evening shades prevail,
The moon takes up the wondrous tale,
And nightly to the listening earth
Repeats the story of her birth;
Whilst all the stars that round her burn,
And all the planets in their turn,
Confirm the tidings as they roll,
And spread the truth from pole to pole.

What though in solemn silence all
Move round the dark terrestrial ball;
What though no real voice nor sound
Amidst their radiant orbs be found;
In reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice;
Forever singing as they shine,
"The hand that made us is divine."

Joseph Addison
1672-1719

*The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth
his handywork.*

Psalm 19:1