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April 2007

The First Love [Lead]
Words from the Cross
Children's Page
At the Rising of the Sun
The Message to Peter
Love from God
Keys to Forgiveness
An Exhortation
A Hymn of Joy

Carl Niemitalo
Terrence Lantto
Gwen Wilson
Alvin Homgren
Markus Ventin
Arne Nordahl
Andrew Mickelsen
Earl Kaurala
Henry Van Dyke

The Father Sent the Son to be the Saviour of the World

Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.

Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear . . .

We love him, because he first loved us.

I John 4:14-19

The First Love

I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. (Revelation 2:4) This must be a very serious offence to our Lord Jesus, as evidenced by what grave consequences can result. He said, *Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent. (Revelation 2:5)*

This letter to the angel (or pastor) of the church of Ephesus, as well as the letters to all seven of the angels of the churches, contains the same words of advice, specifically addressed for you, beloved, and for me: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 2:7)*

May it behoove us to prayerfully ask our Lord to give us the enlightenment to see what it was that led this servant of God, whose first works had been acceptable before God, to fall into this problem, lest it become our problem, also.

Many have sought to know, and have attempted to persuade others to believe, that they have the correct understanding of the "first love" which the angel of the church of Ephesus had left.

There is only one correct understanding. It is the one that Jesus has given to all who will believe his teaching: *He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me. (John 14:21, 23-24)* It couldn't be any clearer than that.

**“If a man love me,
he will keep my words.”**

Jesus and his teachings were no longer the first love in the heart of the angel of the church of Ephesus. It had been replaced by a love for something other than the simplicity of Jesus' teachings of Jesus, namely the doctrine of the kingdom of God in Him. That appears to be absent from the list of the works of righteousness (for which Jesus did commend him, such as being against all evil, and finding false apostles to be liars; and for his name's sake having labored tirelessly, and that he had even hated the deeds of the Nicolaitans, in which he was in agreement with Jesus).

This is very similar to what we hear preached in many organizations today. They use the name of Jesus to promote good works, and they demand that we just love the Lord, and they admonish us to be careful not to get too involved with doctrine or we may lose our first love.

The Lord's apostle, John, who has been referred to as the Apostle of Love, wrote, *Whosoever transgresseth, and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds. (II John 1:9-11)*

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 appears that the falling away from the first love can happen only if a person begins to compromise with the words of Christ.

That happened in several instances recorded in the Scriptures. And we preachers, as well as all the dear children of God today, have access to a multitude of "religious" articles, some good, but some unscriptural (all writings of men). Much of it appeals to the natural man, including that which is offered to us by such who are *desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. (I Timothy 1:7)*

If a departure from the teachings and commandments of Christ had taken place, and the *commandments and doctrines of men (Colossians 2:22)* had become more meaningful to labor with against the evils and false apostles in Ephesus, we can understand why the Lord called them to *remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works (Revelation 2:5)*. The first works that Jesus commanded his own were *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:47)*

With the angel of the church of Ephesus, the loss of the first love was certainly not in that he was devoted too much to the believing, teaching, and loving of all things that the Lord Jesus commanded (Matthew 28:18-20), but rather because he undoubtedly was tempted by the Devil to love the world and the things that are in the world, not the least of which includes elevation to the *pinnacle of the temple. (Matthew 4:5)* A minister from Finland called that portion of Scripture the "preachers' text" because the flesh of man desires elevation. Preachers and teachers are not immune, for even the first disciples wanted to know: *Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven? (Matthew 18:1)*

May we continue to petition our beloved Lord Jesus to preserve that love for Him and his teachings which *is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost. (Romans 5:5)* This love will not be removed from where the true doctrine of the Gospel of Christ is believed and proclaimed.

Jesus said, *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)* What an unspeakably great and precious gift our Lord has provided for us!

*Pastor Carl Niemitalo
Inman, South Carolina*

I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him.

II Corinthians 11:2-4

Words from the Cross

Jesus spoke only a few words from the cross. The first we find recorded in Matthew 27:46, when He cried, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* That was the most pitiful cry when the Saviour of mankind cried out to his Heavenly Father. God did not forsake Christ because of his sins, but because of ours. Christ was the sinless Son of God. He took our place on the cross so that you and I can go free.

There are only two words that Jesus spoke for Himself. They were the words, *I thirst.* (John 19:28) The most profound words ever spoken were when He said, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34)

Then we go to the next words that Jesus spoke from the cross, when He answered the thief who was crucified with Him. The thief became a sinner when he saw Jesus dying, when he told his companion that they deserved to die, *but this man hath done nothing amiss.* (Luke 23:41) Then, in repentance, he turned to Christ and said unto Him, *Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.* And Jesus said unto him, *Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* (Verses 42-43) There was no waiting period; no questions asked such as, "What have you done to merit salvation?" There were no good deeds to be done. The merits were already in place through the suffering of Christ.

We can read in Isaiah, *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.* (Isaiah 53:5) We see here what great love Jesus has for the fallen sinner. We have a very wonderful lesson in the love of the Saviour. The malefactor had no time to go out and perform good works. He became contrite of spirit. In the 34th Psalm, we read, *The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.* (Psalm 34:18) This man was saved by faith. He believed Jesus could and would help him, for there was no other help but Jesus.

So it is with us, also. We need to come to Jesus in repentance, for we have nowhere else to turn. Where will we find Him? No longer on the cross. He is where his own believers are. Remember what Jesus said to John when He said, *Behold thy mother!* Christ can only be found in his Church and nowhere else.

Some people teach that you can accept Christ wherever you may be. They say only to invite Him into your heart. That is partly right, but it is not what Scripture teaches. Did Jesus tell Paul that his sins

were forgiven there on the road to Damascus? No, He gave Paul an address to go to, for *the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do. (Acts 9:6)* Paul was obedient to Jesus, and went into the city and was three days without sight, and he prayed those three days, and the Lord appeared unto one called Ananias, who was told to go to a street called Straight. But Ananias was fearful of the man, for he had heard how Saul had raised havoc with the Church. But Jesus told him to go, for Saul was a chosen vessel unto Him to bear his name before the Gentiles. So Saul was converted and became the great preacher, Paul.

Now we go to Jesus' last words on the cross. *Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit. (Luke 23:46)* This was also for our benefit so that we would know in whose hands our spirit is.

At last He said, *It is finished. (John 19:30)* Our salvation was sealed that day by the blood of Christ, for with it, He has covered our sins, for He died not for himself, but for us that we may have that place in Heaven where we will be forevermore.

So let us rest on the words of Jesus, and let us rest upon the entire Word of God, for by it we gain salvation.

Terrence Lantto
Stanley, North Dakota

Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.

I Peter 4:13

Children's Page

Dear Children,

For our Easter story, will turn in the Bible to Luke 23:34-56 to finish where we left off last month, and then we'll look at Luke 24: 1-12.

He Is Not Here, for He is Risen

Jesus was hung on the cross between two prisoners. The crowd looked on. Some people laughed at him, some made fun of him, but Jesus was not angry at them. Rather, He pitied them, for He said, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. (Luke 23:34)*

The rulers even said, *He saved others; let him save himself, if he be Christ, the chosen of God. (Verse 35)*

The soldiers mocked him, and when He was thirsty, they gave Him only vinegar to drink, saying, *If thou be the king of the Jews, save thyself. (Verse 37)*

A sign was hung over his head which read, *THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. (Verse 38)* It was clear whose King He was, but He was not to be an earthly king.

One of the prisoners on a cross next to Jesus demanded, *If thou be Christ, save thyself and us. (Verse 39)* But the prisoner on the other side of Jesus said that they deserved to be put to death, but that Jesus did nothing to deserve it. *And he said unto Jesus, Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom. (Verse 42)*

Jesus replied that he would go to Heaven with him that very day. His words were: *Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* Jesus could see that that man was sorry for what he had done, and that he believed Jesus was the Son of God. Jesus forgave him his sins and gave him a place in Heaven. Praise God.

It was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. (Verses 44-45) During the day, the sun stopped shining. It was dark for three hours. The people were afraid.

Then out of the darkness came a loud cry. The Bible says, *When Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the ghost.* He gave his Spirit into his Father's keeping, and He died.

There was a centurion nearby who *glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man. (Verse 47)*

After a time, the people went away, some glad that Jesus was dead, but many whose hearts were very sad. A man named took Jesus' body and put it in his own tomb.

There were certain women from Galilee who had been watching to see where and how Jesus was buried. When He was laid in the tomb, they went home to prepare spices to put on his body.

Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them.

And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. (Luke 24:1-4).

The women were afraid. They bowed down their faces to the earth, and the shining angels said unto them, *Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.*

And they remembered his words. (Verses 5-8) Yes, the women thought, that was exactly what Jesus said would happen, and it came true.

It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary, the mother of James, and other women who ran then, and told the apostles excitedly that Jesus was risen just as He said.

The apostles did not believe a word of it. To them, it sounded like the women had made up a story. *Their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not. (Verse 11)*

There was one apostle, Peter, who had to go see for himself, so he ran to the sepulchre. He stooped down, looked in, and saw only the linen clothes that Jesus had been wrapped in, laid by themselves. He knew then that what the women said was true. He went away wondering at all that had happened.

There certainly was a lot to think about. The disciples would not be able to understand the meaning of their Saviour's dying and rising again until God would send the Holy Spirit to them and put that knowledge into their hearts.

We that say we believe in God and Jesus can only do so because that same Spirit lives in us. God is the one who gives it to us. He has put faith in our hearts, and He is the one we all need to turn to daily. Let us ask that He will help us to grow more in Him.

Our Saviour died and rose again so that you and I can live. We thank and praise God for the gift of Jesus, and pray that He will always be our greatest treasure.

*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*

At the Rising of the Sun

Very early in the morning the first day of the week, they came unto the sepulchre at the rising of the sun. (Mark 16:2) What a sunrise that must have been! The grave was open and the stone was rolled away! Jesus was risen!

That sunrise was different from all others that had occurred before in the history of our race. Its difference did not lie in the natural phenomenon seen when the sun rises and sets according to the well-devised plan of the Creator. This difference was not seen by the tomb guards when the angel came and rolled away the stone from the entrance to the tomb. Neither the guards nor the Lord's inner circle of followers recognized, at first, the significance of that morning's events.

The difference in that sunrise was that it ushered in a new day, a new time, a new era for believers: the New Testament era, in which the followers of Christ call themselves Christians. The sin debt had been paid by the conquering Lord. The power of death was destroyed. The Devil was vanquished. Even hell itself quaked; its gates closed, and the doors of Heaven opened--all because Jesus, the Saviour, lives.

The miracle that attended his dying-- the rending of the temple veil-- signified the coming of this new era. *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us . . . Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:24, 28)*

The Heavenly Father accepted the work of his Son. The message, *He is risen (Mark 16:6)*, signified an open Heaven. Satan could no longer make accusation that our salvation rested only on an unfulfilled promise.

Apostle John testified to this truth, saying, *I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. (Revelation 12:10-11)*

With the Prophet Isaiah, we can now say, *In that day thou shalt say, O Lord, I will praise thee: though thou wast angry with me, thine anger is turned away, and thou comfortedst me. Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and not be afraid: for the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation. (Isaiah 12:1-2)*

Four hundred years before Christ, Malachi, the last Old Testament prophet, closed his writings with this promise: *Unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings. (Malachi 4:2)*

Likewise, John closed Revelation, the last book of the New Testament, with a promise concerning Christ. This promise, referring to his second coming, is brief, but filled with hope: *Behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me. (Revelation 22:12)*

May the Lord give us renewed faith this Resurrection morning so that we may respond, *Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)*

Pastor Alvin Holmgren
Seattle, Washington

The Message to Peter

Be not affrighted: Ye seek Jesus of Nazareth, which was crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold the place where they laid him. But go your way, tell his disciples and Peter that he goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you. (Mark 16:6-7)

Those were the words that the angel spoke to the women at Jesus' grave on Easter morning. Earlier, Jesus had told his disciples the things that were going to befall Him. He said that He would be delivered into the hands of his enemies, who would kill Him, but that He would rise from the dead on the third day.

But his followers did not understand what He meant. Having witnessed his capture, his crucifixion, and his burial, they were without hope of ever seeing Him again because they did not remember what He had said about his resurrection.

God's Word and promises are surer than anything in this world. He always keeps his word. He keeps his promises even if everyone forgets what He has said, or if no one would believe his Word. The angel at the tomb had to remind the women that Jesus had said He would rise again.

Even though the disciple Peter had so faithfully expressed his love for Jesus, he denied his Lord three times. When Peter saw that the enemy seemed to be in control, fear and his own weakness prevented him from confessing that he was a disciple of Jesus. Peter had declared his faithfulness in these words: *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. (Matthew 26:35)* That was a difficult moment for Peter; a moment in which he showed his weakness.

All of us have experienced times when it is difficult for us to find comfort in, and obtain joy from, God's Word and promises. In the midst of various trials, we seem to forget. We fail to realize that the Good Shepherd is with us even then, and that He is leading us. It is especially hard to believe and to claim God's promises when we have fallen into sin, and it seems that we have strayed from the path of faith. In these circumstances, we can relate to Peter, who felt unworthy of God's goodness or love because he denied the Lord.

Something of the greatness of the Easter message is shown us in the angel's words that morning when he said, *tell his disciples and Peter*. The most pitiful--the weakest follower--was not forsaken.

The sinner is especially remembered by the one who came into the world to seek and to save sinners, and to bring them salvation. No one needs to live in unbelief and sin. Everyone is to be greeted with the message that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself, and that

He suffered our punishment on the cross. In his glorious Resurrection, He overcame the power of the Devil for the benefit of sinners. Each one of us is to hear that God loved us so much that He would not leave us under the power of sin. For Jesus' sake all the penitent are offered forgiveness for their sins. Because of the blood, the sinner can freely come to Him.

We have been given places where we know that we can meet our resurrected and living Redeemer, and there be reminded of his love for us; reminded of his suffering, death, and resurrection in our behalf. In these meeting places, we, like Peter, can experience God's forgiving and correcting love toward sinners. These meeting places are, above all, in the Word and in the sacraments. Jesus said, *Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them. (Matthew 18:20)*

Have you remembered these meeting places? Every Sunday we can be reminded of the great wonder of Easter: Jesus lives and in his Word, He continues to give us the forgiveness of our sins. When we feel unworthy, we are to go to his meeting places, where we can be helped by the sinners' Friend and Redeemer. When sin, doubts, and unbelief plague us, we can seek Him, who said, *I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. (Matthew 9:13)* There we can confess our sin, and, in the word of absolution, personally receive God's forgiveness— the forgiveness that brings peace, freedom, and joy.

God's kingdom here on earth is a kingdom of grace. Take heed of the words, *Thy sins be forgiven thee. (Matthew 9:2)* From a brother's mouth, you hear the Word that sets you free.

*Pastor Markus Ventin
Zions Missionstidning
Translated by Karl and Susan Sundqvist,
Finland*

Love from God

Easter is a message of love from God. Through Easter, He brought grace to all people through salvation and forgiveness in Christ Jesus. The glad tidings of Easter are of great importance to humankind because they speak of Christ's victory over the Devil's might and power. Because of Christ's victory, we can proclaim the Gospel of the forgiveness of sins to all people who do not have the peace of God by faith.

Apostle Paul preached this Gospel in Antioch: *Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins: And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses. (Acts 13:38-39)*

We can read of the great victory that was won, once and for all, by Jesus Christ. *And there was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.*

And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.

Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time. (Revelation 12:7-12)

The Bible also tells of the innocent blood that Christ shed in Gethsemane and on Calvary's cross for the sins of all people. He died and rose again for our justification. Apostle Paul wrote about Jesus, our Lord, *who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification. (Romans 4:25)*

All these things speak of the redemption and salvation that He provided for us. If we are enlightened to understand that all that Jesus did was for our sake—that we should be redeemed from the power of sin—then the message of the Gospel will always create joy and peace in our hearts.

The old Christians in Norway used to say that if Christianity is no longer dear to us, we should pray to God, our Heavenly Father, regarding the happenings of Gethsemane and Calvary, which Christ suffered for our sake. Therefore, Paul wrote, *That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)* When this takes place, our faith in Jesus, our Saviour, will be the most important thing in our lives. We will also want to share with others about his grace and love so that they, too, may be partakers of this great salvation, joy, and peace that we have in our hearts.

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

Keys to Forgiveness

It must have pleased the Holy Spirit to record twice in Matthew's Gospel the method of reconciliation with God, which reads, *When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?*

And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And 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 16:13-19)

Peter understood the commission aright: that it was upon his confession on the Son of God— the Rock--on which the Church was to be built, and not on himself. Peter's own epistles never declare or vaunt himself as superior to the other disciples. He proved it by stating, *Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12)*

Peter was among the disciples when Jesus relinquished the keys of the forgiveness of sins, and the retention of them, as recorded in Matthew 18:18, which chapter is known as the Church Law. *Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.*

So then, as the keys of "loosing and binding" were commissioned to be employed by the disciples and by those believers empowered by the Holy Spirit, then who holds the keys of death and hell? No other keys are mentioned in Holy Writ. The answer is none other than the Saviour himself, for in Revelation is recorded this fact, supported by Jesus' saying, *Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death. (Revelation 1: 17-18)*

Those two keys He relinquished to no one; He retained them himself. And He followed that pronouncement by saying, *These things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth. (Revelation 3:7)*

Jesus realized that most ears are dull of hearing, for He said over and over: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Revelation 2:7)*

Is it not remarkable that, centuries before – in 712 BC -- the Prophet Isaiah prophesied the advent of Christ, upon whose shoulder God would lay the key of the house of David? *So he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. (Isaiah 22:22)*

The Church rests upon the power and the Word of God, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. Is it not the best sanctuary for any timid soul who seeks security in this life, and in the life to come? Christ's congregation was small while He trod this earth, despised and rejected of men, yet it is the mighty fortress founded on God's Word. Into it, the seeker after truth dares to venture to secure his soul's destiny, against which the gates of hell shall not prevail.

God forbid that we should ever lose the use of the keys. The Lord Jesus commissioned the use of the keys unto the end of time, to set the sinner free: two keys only, not three: one for the opening and one for the closing, the forgiving and the retaining. How else to set the sinner free?

God says that our sins have separated us from Him. Hence, it behooves us sinners to repent, and to have his sins blotted out by the 'loosing key,' which will unlock the door of grace for us. God's Word tells us that all have sinned, and thus fall short of the glory of God. In this human tabernacle of clay in which we live, there is nothing that will remove the flesh-nature from us, nor make it so that we do not sin again. There is always the war of the spirit against the flesh, our physical portion, as Paul verified in Romans 7:19-23.

It is also written: *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. (I Timothy 4:1-3)* These are mortal inventions of men who have wandered away from the Rock of the Holy Scriptures.

Satan is busy in these perilous times, as he always has been against God's people. Sin always besets the believer whose mind wants to be fixed on Christ and his finished work on Calvary.

There is no need, however, to become depressed over having sinned, since the remedy is plain. We may fall many a time, but we must come back to the Lord in true repentance, confess our sins, forsake them, and have them forgiven.

God's plan is presented in the third chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: *Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. (Romans 3:24-25)*

Andrew Mickelson
Excerpts from "How to Gain True Peace of Mind"

An Exhortation

Whoso keepeth his mouth and his tongue keepeth his soul from troubles. (Proverb 21:23)

Years ago, when I was in school, it was not uncommon to hear “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me!” shouted by some unfortunate child who was being taunted by classmates on the school playground. The kids doing the taunting shouted unkind words in return, the one being taunted yelled back, and then the bell rang. All trooped back inside; and that was the end of the confrontation.

Or, was it? The American poet, Emily Dickinson, once wrote, “A word is dead when it is said, some say; I say it just begins to live that day.”

Unkind remarks and malicious conversation do hurt; and they hurt more than sticks and stones in the long-term, for they affect something deep inside the human heart. Those heart-wounds are difficult to heal, as the effects can linger on for years. This is true for both the target of gossip and negative remarks, and for the one who is doing the “talking.”

James wrote, *Even so the tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. (James 3:5-6)* Whoah! Let’s read that again. Those are tough words, words that have the power to shock us into examining our own verbal conduct. For example, a word said in jest can very easily be hurtful to the other fellow who is not amused by the remark! And so on.

There is something within our human nature, however, that enjoys spreading the news, especially when it reflects poorly upon another person. These kinds of communications are detrimental to our relationships with family and friends, and even– the truth must be told– with each other as brothers and sisters in Christ.

We have all experienced verbal barbs, but I don’t think that any of us is innocent of ever having made an unkind comment, of gossiping, of making unjust speculations, or of saying something in a humorous way but really intending to hurt. Because we have not kept control over our mouths and tongues, we become troubled, as noted in Proverb 21:23. Not only have we hurt another, but we have caused hurt to ourselves.

It goes without saying that we need to ask forgiveness from those whom we have hurt. This also means that we need to look deep within our own hearts. Jesus said, *But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.* (Matthew 15:18)

James indicated that it is impossible to tame the tongue; and it is true that our flesh is naturally unruly. However, Paul exhorts the Christian to put to death the parts of the body that are prone to sin (Colossians 3:5). As the children of a gracious Heavenly Father, we have been given the gift of the Holy Spirit, who reminds us that we can do anything through Jesus Christ, who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13).

Having, therefore, laid *aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us* we are indeed strengthened to *run with patience the race that is set before us.* (Hebrews 12:1) Unburdened, we can continue our journey in true joy and confidence.

If I have wounded any soul today;
If I have caused one foot to go astray;
If I have walked in my own willful way,
Dear Lord, forgive!
If I have uttered idle words or vain,
If I have turned aside from want or pain;
Lest I myself shall suffer thro' the strain,
Dear Lord, forgive!
If I have been perverse or hard or cold;
If I have longed for shelter in Thy fold;
When Thou hast given me some fort to hold,
Dear Lord, forgive!
Forgive the sins I have confessed to Thee;
Forgive the secret sins I do not see;
O guide me, love me, and my keeper be,
Dear Lord, Amen.

["If I Have Wounded Any Soul Today," C. M. Battersby]

*In God's peace,
Pastor Earl Kaurala
Alston, Michigan*

Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Proverb 18:21

A Hymn of Joy

Joyful, joyful, we adore Thee,
God of glory, Lord of love;
Hearts unfold like flowers before Thee,
Praising Thee, their sun above.
Melt the clouds of sin and sadness,
Drive the dark of doubt away;
Giver of immortal gladness,
Fill us with the light of day.

All thy works with joy surround Thee,
Earth and Heaven reflect thy rays;
Stars and angels sing around Thee,
Centre of unbroken praise.
Field and forest, vale and mountain,
Blooming meadow, flashing sea,
Chanting bird and flowing fountain,
Call us to rejoice in Thee.

Thou art giving and forgiving,
Ever blessing, ever blest,
Well-spring of the joy of living,
Ocean depth of happy rest!
Thou our Father, Christ our Brother,--
All who live in love are thine;
Teach us how to love each other,
Lift us to the joy divine.

Mortals! join the mighty chorus
Which the morning stars began;
Father love is reigning o'er us,
Brother love binds man to man.
Ever singing, march we onward,
Victors in the midst of strife,
Joyful music lifts us sunward,
In the triumph song of life.

Henry Van Dyke