

DEFINITE SIGN POSTS OF THE END

Paul N. Smith

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, ye shall not see Me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed be He that cometh in the Name of the Lord."

-- (Matthew 23:37-39)

The blindness of Israel was a constant concern of Jesus. The people could not seem to understand that He was sent from God to be their Deliverer and Redeemer. He had spoken words of truth to them. He had manifested His Messianic authority by performing many miracles for them. None of these Divine credentials had any effect upon them. Their stubborn and rebellious hearts found no room for Jesus of Nazareth. Although they had suffered for many years under the hands of oppressors, they were not ready to accept God's Deliverer. They were not yet humbled enough, nor weakened enough to admit their failures.

Judgment was pronounced upon that nation. To a certain extent that curse remains upon the land. There are no signs of a spiritual revival in the tiny nation of Israel. There are signs that the attitude of some Jewish people is more receptive to the Gospel than ever before. Some of the people realize that miracles have been performed for them since they became a nation, and there will be a remnant of true believers to welcome the Lord Jesus Christ when He reveals Himself to them.

Until that day, suffering and toil will be their lot. They will never be free from enemy oppressors until Jesus delivers them. They are facing the most terrible time in their history. The land which shows signs of years of hard labor, producing food, and some of the best to be found world-wide, will once again be ravaged by war and bloodshed. The blossoming land will be devastated once again. They are producing machinery of all kinds, advanced computer and nuclear parts far beyond what any other country is able to do. This shows that God has blessed that seed of Abraham in a special way; but it is all the work of their hands. The Lord wants to make them and their land fruitful; to show them what He can do. He wants to fight their battles, build for them, produce for them, and bring them everlasting peace.

MATTHEW 21 TELLS THE STORY OF WHAT IS COMMONLY CALLED, "PALM SUNDAY" It is the fulfillment of Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O daughter

of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation; lowly and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. Jesus told His disciples where to find the ass and her colt, and to "bring them unto me. And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. They did what Jesus instructed them to do, and they put on the two animals their clothes, and set Him thereon. You may have wondered why two animals were needed when Jesus used only one. The colt was for use in the future by Christ's Bride, when the greater fulfillment will take place.

"And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees and strawed them in the way. And multitudes that went before and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." This was one of Jesus' brightest moments on earth, as the Old Testament Scriptures were being fulfilled. However, His joy didn't last long, because we read, "And when He was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?" Israel's attitude today would be very much the same as at that day. But, before the Lord will bless His people and restore them to the place He has predestined for them, they must have a change of heart-attitude, and cry, "Blessed is He that cometh in the Name of the Lord." They must acknowledge this despised Nazarene as Messiah, the same One whom they sentenced to die on the Cross. They must realize the terrible mistake they made and repent of their rejection of Him.

The Jews themselves must be brought low like the lowly Nazarene, whom they despised because He was meek and lowly. They reject the Messiah of Isaiah 53. They want a conquering warrior, riding into the land with a huge army to deliver them. But, they must accept the lowly Jesus before the majestic King of kings will come to their rescue. They must realize that their help will have to come from Heaven. They have been depending on the kings of the earth, and their ability to make agreements with them. Some of them will be deceived by the sudden appearance of the false prophet and anti-Christ - Revelation 13. They will depend upon the integrity of the nations and the popularity of the false Messiahs.

This will be their downfall. Their hearts are set on acquiring and occupying the land that belongs to them. Their spirits have not been touched yet. Though there have been some "shaking of bones" in the land, it is not a spiritual awakening. Then the "sinew and the flesh" will

come upon their bones. (Ezekiel 37) They must accept Christ as their Messiah and Savior before "breath comes into their bodies." We feel pity and sorrow for these people. They work so strenuously for the goals that are in their hearts, but they do not realize that all their achievements will be blasted away in the greatest conflict the world has ever known. The armies of the world will be gathered around this small nation, an army of 200,000,000! (Revelation 9). Look on any map, or globe and compare the size of Israel to other nations; and this is the land God chose for these people to show His mighty power in their behalf!

JESUS SAID, "WHEN YE SHALL SEE JERUSALEM COMPASSED WITH ARMIES THEN KNOW THAT THE DESOLATION THEREOF IS NIGH Then let them which are in Judea flee to the mountains and let them which are in the midst of it depart out; and let not them that are in the countries enter thereinto. For these be the days of vengeance, that all things which are written may be fulfilled" (Luke 21:20-22). This is the advice that Jesus would give to the Jewish nation today They would never read Jesus' words unless they received a spiritual revelation. After seeing so much devastation of the things they have built, they will be brought down to nothing, and only a remnant will be left Then, they will cry for Him who has been rejected for so long. Then, they will admit their unbelief and call unto Jesus. Then, shall their light spring forth. Then, shall the Lord bring the people back. Then, shall the desert blossom like a rose. Then, shall their enemies know that God is their God and He fights for them!

MIDEAST PLAYERS ARE SEEKING CREATIVE PEACE SOLUTIONS. The number of nations becoming involved in the Israeli - Palestinian conflict is increasing They are all concerned that a settlement is found soon, as a way of encouraging moderates in these governments and undermining Iranian-backed radicals. The Israelis and Palestinians are not close to finding a two-state solution to their decades-old conflict, but the cost of not doing anything is rising daily. The Palestinians' two main factions, Fatah and Hamas have been in a violent power struggle, although some progress has been made recently. Most parties involved, feel that now is the time to make some settlement.

Israeli Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas have pledged to forge a peace between their countries, calling the vision of two states, side by side, the only path. Livini stated recently that a Palestinian State is "not an illusion. It's there, it's achievable." This has not set well with all of Israel's Parliament, but the fact that he is making such

statements, shows that we are nearing the time when a real treaty will be made.

The militant Hamas group is willing to accept a temporary Palestinian state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and eastern sections of Jerusalem in exchange for a 10-year truce with Israel, so said Ismail Haniyeh, prime minister of the Hamas-led Palestinian government, recently. Top Hamas officials said that the truce was meant to show some flexibility to the international community, but that their goal of destroying Israel had not changed, and that the terror group has a ten-year plan to build a large army and defeat the Jewish state.

THE TROUBLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS BECOMING AN INTERNATIONAL CONCERN. The European Union is in the process of expanding its offices in Israel, including the Palestinian areas, in anticipation of increased security role here. As Israel moves to withdraw from the West Bank, it is believed that trouble will result. The West Bank borders Jerusalem and is within rocket-firing range of Tel Aviv and Israel's international airport.

Sources say that the EU would coordinate handing over security control of key West Bank areas to the Palestinians. EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said, "there will be a historic political evolution and movement in negotiations in the next few weeks and few months, unseen since the Camp David peace talks in 2000."

During those talks, then-Prime Minister Ehud Barak offered Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat a state in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and eastern sections of Jerusalem. From all indications, we are much closer to a Peace Agreement between these two countries, a step closer to the final treaty. The behind-the-scenes negotiations regarding handing over most of the West Bank to Palestinian authority, are being mediated by Egypt and the EU, with United States input. Sources believe that major changes in Israeli-Palestinian affairs are expected within a few weeks to two months.

However, Prime Minister Ehud Olmert's office denied that these meetings were being conducted. Arab states, led by Saudi Arabia, are making some of their most public overtures ever to Israel and American Jews, in an effort to undercut Iran's growing influence there, which includes violence in Iraq and Lebanon.

THE GREATEST DANGER TO MIDDLE-EAST PEACE IS IRAN. "Israel and the United States will soon be destroyed," Iran's President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad said recently during a meeting with Syria's foreign minister. He assured that "the United States and the Zionist regime of Israel will soon come to the end of their lives. Iran has the nuclear power to cause great

devastation upon Israel. North Korea has recently pledged to help Iran with nuclear testing.

The U. S. Military said recently that armor-piercing roadside bombs sent by Iran to Shiite extremists have killed 170 Americans and coalition troops in Iraq. These shipments of weapons and ammunition to Iraq's Shiite militias have been identified, and were being directed at the highest levels of the Iranian government. The Mahdi Army militia is among the Shiite extremist groups that have obtained the powerful bombs. American officers are particularly worried about the armor-piercing bombs that can shoot a large slug of molten metal through the thick armor of a Humvee or Abrams tank.

ALL BAD NEWS, ON THE ONE HAND BUT GOOD NEWS ON THE OTHER HAND. We know by all these reports that the end is near. The prophesied events of the end are clearly seen now. The terrible destruction that is soon to fall on Israel will bring all nations into the conflict. This will become a world-wide issue, and will call for a Treaty to end all hostilities. The anti-Christ will emerge from his hiding place with a solution to the problems. There will be a short period of "Peace and Safety" before real Tribulation comes to the world. Paul told the saints who are watching these signs and are looking for the Lord to come: "But of the times and seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they (the nations) shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child;; and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." (I Thessalonians 5:1-4).

ISRAEL'S EXPECTATIONS WILL COME FROM THE LORD, AND THE HOPE OF CHRISTIANS COMES FROM THE LORD ALSO. Both of these purposes are dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ to fulfill them. He has done all that He can, providing New Life and a secure future for both the Church and for Israel. Let us Christians set the example by looking for Jesus to return at any time. Let us not sleep as so many in the church are doing today. Let's stay alert to the things happening in the world, and listen to our heart-strings, the song of Jesus' soon return. Let's not be weary in waiting and watching; there's plenty to keep us occupied; but let's stay alert to the message ringing in our hearts - Jesus is coming soon! Praise the Lord! It won't be long now. Just think of leaving this old world and landing on Heaven's Golden Shore!

I'LL BE THERE!

The saints will there be clad in light,
And with the Bridegroom reign,
Eternal day excludes the night,
And sorrow, tears and pain.
I'll be there, I'll be there, when the first trumpet sounds,
I'll be there.
I'll be there, I'll be there, when the first trumpet sounds,
I'll be there.
- A. S. Copley, Grace & Glory Carols

THE GOD OF THE LIVING

"I am the God of Abraham. and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

- (Matthew 22:32)

This statement was Jesus' invincible answer to the Sadducees, who taught that there is no resurrection. First He quoted Jehovah's words of comfort to Moses, which were confirmed to him by this added statement: "This is My Name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations" (Exodus 3:6, 15). Jesus then gave the interpretation of these encouraging words, as the "Resurrection and the Life" (John 11:25). Though the bodies of the patriarchs were still in the graves, their spirits were alive because there were a new creation. The new creation life is never dead. The new life in a believer may "die daily" by being poured out in sacrifice for others, yet he is alive forever and can never die. Jehovah is his God; he knows no other, and needs no other.

They who have a form of godliness, but deny its power, are lifeless. The living God is not their God. They are dead in trespasses and sins despite their profession of righteousness. The god of this world, the devil, is their god. He too is dead to the things of the Spirit of the living and true God. How blessed to be born again, born of the incorruptible Seed of Divine Truth! And more blessing is added to know the Scriptures and the power of God, living in sweet fellowship with Him forever! It is wonderful to be alive unto God and know it; and to be so assured of it, that we never can doubt it.

The bodies of these worthies of faith went to the grave, but they did not remain there forever. They arose after the resurrection of Christ, and were a part of that company that went into Jerusalem and "appeared unto many." (Matthew 27:52-53). If we die before Jesus returns, we know that our bodies will not remain in the grave; for our God is the God of the living. It is not possible that we should be held in death's grip, because Jesus is the Resurrection and the Life! While our bodies are asleep in Jesus, our spirits depart to be with Christ. Oh, what an awakening we will have at the resurrection of the dead! Paul declares: "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring (or, lead out) with Him. For this we say unto you by

the Word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not precede them who are asleep. For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:14-18).

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The Voice of Triumph

Lift your glad voices in triumph on high,
For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die;
Vain were the terrors that gathered around Him,
And short the dominion of death and the grave.
He burst from the fetters of darkness that bound Him,
Resplendent in glory, to live and to save;
Loud was the chorus of angels on high -
The Savior hath risen, and man shall not die!
Glory to God in full anthems of joy;
The life He gave us, death cannot destroy;
Sad were the life we may part with tomorrow,
If tears were our birthright and death were our end;
But Jesus hath cheered the dark valley of sorrow,
And bade us, immortal, to Heaven ascend.
Lift then your voices in triumph on high,
For Jesus hath risen, and man shall not die!
— Henry Ware, Jr.

The First Resurrection

Mary M. Bodie

"But now is Christ risen from the dead,
And become the First fruit of them that slept."

-1 Corinthians 15:22

In religious circles there has always been much controversy concerning the virgin birth of Christ, His vicarious atonement on the cross, and His resurrection. The fact that there should be such discussions and arguments, is a surprise to numbers of God's true children in the denominations. Most people are unaware of the great departure from the Truth that is found in Christendom.

But it is one of those "all things" that works good. It has caused true saints, those who are aware of the signs of the times, to humble themselves and cry mightily to Him in behalf of those weak and wavering people, that they might be kept from the evil in the world. The special evil today is the apostasy from the Truth. It has also caused faithful believers to search even deeper into the treasure house of truth; that infallible Guide, the sure Word of God. In that word is an answer for every question of the adversary. I am convinced

more than ever of the validity of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Everything in the universe, as well as all Divine counsel, hang upon it. If Christ is not risen, there is no God, no Heaven, no hell, nor hereafter; nothing but death and corruption awaiting every soul of man. There is no hope beyond the grave except through the resurrection of Jesus, the Man of Calvary.

In I Corinthians 15, the Apostle Paul handled this subject thoroughly from every point of view. He was, and is, the most masterful theologian. He proves the importance of the resurrection to every Christian. In fact, he emphatically states that there is no Christian if Christ is not risen. "Let us eat, drink and be merry; for tomorrow we die," is the counsel to those who deny the resurrection. In the first part of his discourse, he announces six positive proofs, six distinct, times that Christ was seen after His resurrection. Such a witness would be accepted in any court. He was seen by these different ones after He was raised; not in vision, but with their physical eyes. He was visible to 500 at one time. They surely could not have all been mistaken.

Paul adds his testimony to that of the others. He was the Lord in His glorified effulgence, which so blinded him that he was unable to see for three days. In fact, God had to perform a miracle to restore his sight. Was this imagination on his part, imagination so powerful that the vision of Christ not only blinded him, but changed his life in a moment of time. He was changed from being a most zealous Jew, and the most pronounce enemy of the Nazarene, to become one of His most ardent lovers. Or, was Paul a liar? Were all these witnesses liars? Remember, if we question the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are impeaching the witness of those faithful believers, the pillars of the early Church.

Argument One - The resurrection of Christ is true, or there is absolutely no resurrection of any man- (15:12-13). He is as the beasts that perish, death being the end of all. Therefore, he who denies Christ's resurrection, denies man's resurrection also. He is an infidel. Christ answered the infidel Jews of His day, the Sadducees, who did not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "He is the God of the living, not of the dead" (Matthew 22:22-32). Jesus thus announced that those three patriarchs were alive; that is, they had not ceased to exist even if their bodies had not yet been raised; for Christ had not yet died and risen.

Argument Two - The resurrection of Christ is true or all preaching is vain—(15:14). Why preach the Gospel if Christ is still in the grave? In fact, there is no Good News for men without the resurrection. Why preach, then? It is vain unless Christ is raised. Paul, himself, was a fool to suffer and die ten thousand times for the privilege of preaching the Gospel, if there is no hereafter. What have we to tell people of God if the dead rise not? Why go to church on Sunday as we

are urged to do? Why build great temples? Why evangelize the world? If there is no resurrection, the heathen are just as well off in their ignorance.

Argument Three - The resurrection of Christ is true or our faith is vain - 15:14. Faith has no foundation except in the resurrection of Christ. How can we have faith in a dead man? Before I was saved, while still a Catholic, I saw the absurdity and uselessness of preaching about a dead man. After listening to a sermon one Sunday relating altogether to the life of a dead man, whose birth or death, I do not know which was being celebrated, I said at the close: "What is all this to us? What good can that man do for us? He is dead. We need God! Faith in a man cannot save us; hence. God's Son wrought atonement for us on the Cross and God raised Him from the dead.

Argument Four - The resurrection of Christ is true or the apostles are liars; for they all testified that God raised up Christ. They are found to be false witnesses of God, Paul argues - (15:15). Are we willing to call the chosen apostles liars? Nay!

Argument Five - The resurrection of Christ is true or "we are yet in our sins" — (15:17).. There is no salvation for any sinner if Christ is not raised. The justification of a believer depends absolutely upon this important fact. We have no assurance of sins forgiven, no peace, no rest of soul, if God raised not Christ from the dead.

Argument Six — The resurrection of Christ is true or there is no hope of again seeing our loved ones who are asleep in Jesus. They have perished as unbelievers (15:18). The saints who have suffered and died for their faith in Christ; those who were tortured and martyred for His said, have then died in vain. There is no reward for the just; no punishment for the wicked, if there is no resurrection of the dead. All believers perish as the beasts.

Paul was a fool to suffer as he did to spread the Gospel. He was often in sorrow, naked, buffeted, languishing for years in Caesar's dark and damp dungeon. Yes, he was a fool to endure all that he died, if there were not resurrection. The Christian is of all men most miserable if his hope in Christ is in this life only. He has turned his back on the world and faces Heaven; he is a stranger and pilgrim here. He looks for a substantial and enduring home; a city which hath eternal foundations, in which is no decay or change; a City whose Builder and Maker is God. A Christian no longer depends on his citizenship in this world, but has become a new creature and a citizen of Heaven. He may have no prestige, or fame, or money; yea, may be poor, despised and unknown, yet he is happy and contented because of the hope he has in the resurrected Christ. But, if there is no resurrection, he is certainly a fool. There is no such city if Christ is not raised. The believer has nothing in this present time, nor in the future. His hopes are all dependent upon Christ.

These are some of the logical reasonings that Paul sets forth to defend the truth of the resurrection, which was being assailed even in his day. But, praise the Lord! There is more than an argument as proof that Christ is risen, more than even the witnesses who saw Him. Paul adds a final note of triumph, "But now is Christ risen from the dead and become the Firstfruit of them that slept." Oh, what a comforting climax given by the Holy Spirit. At the very time Paul was writing, Christ was risen. There is no doubt of this fact, unless there is no revelation of the Truth.

There is more! Christ's resurrection is the earnest, or pledge of the resurrection of all the redeemed. He is the first Fruit of a great harvest - the new creation - which comprises, not only all the Church, but all Israel, and then the nations which will be saved and walk in the light of the New Jerusalem — Revelation 21:24. All believers will come forth from their graves and be changed in due time, in several companies, or spheres, and all together are reckoned as "the first resurrection." But, there will be at least 3000 years from the time that Christ was raised until the last company will be changed, and yet it is all counted as one resurrection. God saw the whole new creation in His Son when He arose, even as a whole oak tree is in the acorn. "For as in Adam all die," (who can deny that), "so in Christ shall all be made alive;" that is, the new creation.

"But every man in his own order," or rank, not a helter-skelter raising. Each person is in a definite place and company. The whole Church is not raised and changed at the same moment; but the book of Revelation, the consummation report, forbids such a thought. The ranks in the resurrection are clearly visible in this book, and the different companies of the Church are seen. (Read chapter 5:9-10 and 7:9-10). Later, Christ will appear to Israel, to the just ones of that nation, who will be raised. There was a "first rank" of Israel who were raised 2000 years ago, and "they came out of their graves after Christ arose" (Matthew 26:53). All the believing remnant of Israel will accept the Lord and serve Him for one thousand years in their mortal bodies. They will not receive their glorified bodies until the end of the Millennium; and other saved nations will come into their blessings then. The consummation of the resurrection will come at the end of the thousand-year reign of Christ. "Behold, I show you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump, for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written. Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy

victory?" (I Corinthians 15:51-55).

Let's close with the reassuring words to the overcoming believers today: "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first; then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore, comfort one another with these words" (I Thessalonians 4:13-18). -- (Reprint, March 1923)

* God gives grace for this life and glory in the life to come.

The Lilies of the Field

"And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these."

- (Matthew 6:28-29)

Jesus spoke these words as He walked upon the hills of Galilee. Do you have a picture in your mind of just how those lilies looked? Have you always thought that those lilies being like our white ones?

We are told that everywhere in Galilee, wild flowers abound in beautiful profusion, the most beautiful of flowers growing in Holy Land. There are Phlox, lupine, oleander, poppies, hyacinths, iris, gladioli and jonquils. As to the lilies, they are not white at all. They are scarlet and purple, gorgeous things to see. Think of the color of these lilies.

Solomon in all his glory was not as beautiful as these lilies. In Matthew 12:42, Jesus said that "a greater than " Solomon is here." The scarlet color speaks to us of the blood of Jesus Christ, and the purple represents His Royalty. These two colors picture His two advents: His suffering at Calvary and His soon-coming when He will rule from the Heavens.

"His cheeks are as a bed of spices, as sweet flowers;
His lips like lilies, dropping sweet smelling myrrh" (Song of Solomon 5:13). His suffering is typified by the myrrh, which means "bitter." His Bride is spoken of as a Lily. "I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. As the lily among thorns, so is my love among the daughters" (2:1-2). She will be like Him, and she may suffer now, but she will reign with Him when He takes His throne.

"To be like Jesus - that's our goal,
Though it doesn't happen fast;

We trust the Spirit - He's our Guide,
Till we're glorified at last."

Editors Reflections:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become
the Firstfruit of them that slept."

- (I Corinthians 15:20)

Jesus was the Seed that should fall into the ground and die. He is also the Firstfruit of Redemption. God received Him after His resurrection in the glory of that resurrection beauty and power. What a reunion that must have been! Sin and death had marred the body of Jesus, but nothing could destroy that Heavenly Life. When He came forth in resurrection. He did not come forth alone. He was the First of the resurrection Fruit, but he was not the only fruit.

The planting had been successful; He brought forth much fruit. "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive" (I Corinthians 15:22). Jesus assumed the Headship of the human race, and He assumed the sin of all humanity upon Himself on the Cross. When he came forth in resurrection. He emerged as the Head of a New Creation. The first creation ended in death; but the New Creation is alive forevermore. God has received fruit from this one planting - all during this age. The great harvest is yet to come. On the day of resurrection, all believers - those who have gone to sleep in death and those who are alive and remain - shall be brought unto God.

We Christians are the fruits of redemption. Our very existence as children of God testifies to the fact that life has triumphed over death. Jesus pointed to the lilies of the field. How beautiful they were in their growth! And yet, they put forth no effort to achieve this. We are likened to the lilies of the field. By faith, we receive Divine Life. This life will grow and bring forth beauty and fruit unto God. What a blessed privilege is it to yield to the tender, but firm hand of our Husbandman. He will present a most marvelous harvest of fruit to His Father. He will have brought forth much fruit. God has triumphed over His enemies. He has made them to serve His purposes. He used death by the enemy to bring forth life. He took us when we were dead in trespasses and sins and, through the simple operation of faith, has transformed us into beautiful objects of eternal life. He is making us fruitful unto Himself. Miracle of the ages! This fruit will never wither, for the life in each plant is the eternal Divine Life of the Son of God!

NOTICE: Through numerous circumstances, we have been forced to combine two issues of Grace & Glory; that is, the March-April 2007 issues. We are sorry about this, but God knows why. We should be back on schedule with the May 2007 issue.

SPECIAL FELLOWSHIP MEETING

Pastor Pearl Kelly has announced a Fellowship gathering Saturday, May 19 through Sunday, May 20, 2007.

The meetings will be at:

Grace Assembly

16067 Eureka

South Gate, Michigan 48229

For more information, please contact Pearl Kelly at

(313)408-8628.

Said the Robin to the Sparrow:

"I should really like to know

Why these anxious human beings

Rush about and worry so?"

Said the Sparrow to the Robin:

"Friend, I think that it must be

That they have no heavenly Father

Such as cares for you and me."

— Elizabeth Cheney

Faith's Last Stand

Gene Hawkins

"For all the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us ... Now He which stablisheth us with you in Christ, and hath anointed us, is God; Moreover I call God for a record upon my soul, that to spare you I came not as yet unto Corinth. Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy; for by faith ye -I Corinthians 1:20-24

The title to this article does not simply refer to the last time we will believe God before we depart out of this world. Rather, it means that there comes a time in any crisis or situation when faith must make her stand and have the last word. It is faith that cries out, "This is the way it is going to be." That does not mean that we dictate to God, but rather that we realize what He wants to accomplish at that time, and then believe Him to bring it to pass. Note that it is their faith that must stand. As with the Corinthians, so with us, Faith must stand regardless of anything else. Paul did not want them to stand because they felt he was standing over them, dominating what they should do. Faith is an individual requirement, and each one of us must claim that stand. Faith must also have a basis, and in the text above, it is threefold: First, "all the promises of God are yea, and in Him Amen." Secondly, there is God's power, ability and purpose. "He which stablisheth us ... is God." Third, is His previous performance as He has already anointed us with the supernatural power of the

Holy Ghost.

There are many examples of this kind of faith in the Scriptures, and Paul himself is one of these. Acts 27 records his journey to Rome as a prisoner of the Lord Jesus - (Ephesians 3:1; 4:1). He had insisted to the guards that they should not depart from Crete. His advice was ignored, and it proved costly for the entire entourage, for they found themselves in the midst of an horrendous storm. "And when neither sun nor stars in many days appeared, and no small tempest lay on us, all hope that we should be saved was then taken away" (Acts 27:20). This is actually a very encouraging verse for us, because we learn that even the "great apostle Paul" was indeed human, but later, victorious. This verse does not say that everyone but Paul had lost hope. He, too, was included in the fear, but this changed. "After long abstinence Paul stood forth in the midst of them, and said, Sirs, ye should have hearkened unto me, and not have loosed from Crete, and to have gained this harm and lost. And now I exhort you to be of good cheer; for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you, but of the ship" (27:21-22).

The apostle speaks, not as one who is desperately holding on to some fleeting myth, or wishful thinking, but rather of a surety, laying hold of the fact that "the promises of God in Him are yea, and in Him Amen." He had a definite basis for such a declaration. "For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul (was not he fearful along with the rest of them?), thou must be brought before Caesar; and lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee. Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer; for I believe God, that it shall be even as it was told me" (27:23-25). Here is Faith's last stand, as Paul declares: "Sirs, I believe God." That is faith! Paul's spiritual vision was restored as God reiterated His purpose for him. There was reason to "be of good cheer."

We may say, "an angel hasn't appeared to me!" The manner in which God conveys His message to us is unimportant. The fact that He does speak to us is the issue, and He can and does convey wonderful promises to us in various ways. It may be quickened to us in a sound sleep. He also speaks through private study and meditation, and also through the words and thoughts of others, even in a song. God is not limited, and when we hear the words, "I will never leave you nor forsake you," we can know that is His promise to us, personally. "Greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world," belongs to me. "I can do all things through Christ Who strengthened me," can be made just as real in my crisis as it was to Paul. "My grace is sufficient" is something I

too can claim when all my strength is gone. Our spirits can hear that still small voice of Jesus, whispering: "in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." All these and other countless promises can bring specific faith to us in our own storm of crises and needs. God will stand behind His Word!

In Paul's account of the storm and shipwreck, not much changed after his declaration, except perhaps for the worse. The sun did not suddenly burst through the clouds and the waves cease roaring. What we read is that there was a change in spirit, in Paul and in all those who were with him. He said, "Wherefore I pray you to take some meat . . . And when he had spoken, he took bread, and gave thanks to God in the presence of them all, and when he had broken it, he began to eat. Then were they all of good cheer, and they also took some meat" (27:34-36). So it is with us. When faith takes a stand, and we say, "Sirs, I believe God," even though circumstances may worsen, our spirit is revived. The rest of the chapter shows that God fulfilled everything He promised. But, Faith will believe that and take a stand even before it actually comes to pass.

There are others who have had this same experience. Job is a wonderful example of one who had to believe God, though he saw nothing happen immediately. Notice his statement in chapter 13:15: "though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him; but I will maintain mine own ways before Him." In view of his condition and the casualties that befell him, this is a powerful declaration of "Sirs, I believe God!" He could point to nothing visible to back up his claim, yet declared that he was willing to walk the same path and maintain the same ways. He was committed to what God wanted to do in his life, and left the outcome to Him, for "He also shall be my salvation; for an hypocrite shall not come before Him" (13:16). Job was not a novice in the ways of the Lord. Hypocrites certainly cannot stand before Him. Job did not publish any false facade before God or man. Furthermore, faith most emphatically asserts, "Behold now, I have ordered my cause; I know that I shall be justified" (13:18). Is not that a bit presumptuous, seeing what condition he was in? Not to faith. For faith has the last word. Case closed!

Job's life continues to encourage us, in that his difficulties were not over, even though he took such a stand of faith. His healing had not come for all to see; the inward work must still be done, and only God can determine when that is completed. Thus, we find faith standing again in Chapter 23, because just one stand in a long trial is not always sufficient. "Behold, I go forward, but He is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive

Him: On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him; He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him." These are experiences of faith, of which many are not familiar. "I go forward," meaning that Job's look into the future does not net him evidence of God's intervention. A "backward" glance does not show any manifestation of God's power either. Looking on the left hand, still does not reveal God's presence. The left hand of God is the hand of weakness, as opposed to the right hand of power.

Job had some knowledge of this path of faith that Paul announces: "When I am weak then am I strong." He knew some of God's humbling ways of deliverance, but at this point, there is no such deliverance, and Job had not yet experienced the "right hand" of power, for which all of us long at some time. Faith makes a stand, however, in these glorious words: "but He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:8-10). Like Paul, Job's faith claimed God's agenda rather than his own. He knew unequivocally that God's purpose was to produce the divine gold within Him, and submitted himself to any process God needed to use. He further defends his decision to trust God: "My foot hath held His steps; His way have I kept, and not declined. Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food" (23:11-12). Only faith can make such a statement, for there is no evidence of deliverance. However, faith isn't finished yet, for again faith declares that God is in charge. "But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? And what His soul desireth, even that He doeth. For He performeth the thing that is appointed for me; and many such things are with Him" (23:13-14). Job knew that God was making some corporate decisions in his behalf, and we also must realize "many such things are with Him." The life of faith is not one solitary event, but a series of experiences that God deems necessary to obtain His results.

History shows that Job did "arrive," for we read in Chapter 42:5: "I have heard Thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth Thee." So many of our difficulties also are designed to bring us into this intimate knowledge of Him.

Elijah is another one who was witness to faith's last stand. I Kings 18 records the impending end of a severe drought inflicted upon Israel because of their gross unbelief. God had already proven Himself by consuming the sacrifice offered by Elijah, and the prophets of Baal had been forced to bow their heads in defeat and shame. Though that was a great victory for Elijah, still the battle was not over and he was next found

on top of Mt. Carmel with his "face between his knees," crying out to God for what he already knew was his purpose for Israel. He said to his servant, "go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again, seven times. And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not" (18:43-44).

Our experience may often be like this, when we can just see a very small glimmer of hope as the door of deliverance is opened with a very small crack. The Little cloud was sufficient for Elijah to cry out in essence, "Sirs, I believe God." After that came the promised deluge.

The Scriptures record many examples of such faith. Joseph said, "Ye thought evil against me, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20). When did Joseph receive that revelation? Was it while he was in the pit, even before he was sold to the Ishmaelites as a slave? Did he think such thoughts when he was given a prestigious place in Potiphar's house? Or, did God come to him while he languished in prison? It was undoubtedly early in his experience, for we never read even a hint of animosity or bitterness caused by an unforgiving spirit, blaming both God and his brothers for his plight. How often did Joseph remember the dreams he had, and in effect say, "Sirs, I believe God"?

There was a widow who had been blessed by Elisha's ministry. God had used him to bring healing to her barren womb, but then her only child died, and in her grief she once again sought the prophet. Though the child was already dead, faith took a stand and cried out, "It is well; it shall be well" (II Kings 4:23, 26). She could well have said, "Sirs, I believe God." She also received the desire of her heart, as her child was restored to her.

Finally, we read of some worthies of faith in Hebrews 11, who literally make their last stand of faith before they departed. "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country." Faith did indeed have the last word here with this glorious 7-point testimony. First, they died in faith - not sorrow, unbelief, or hopelessness. Second, they did not receive the promises while on earth. Third, they did see them afar off through the telescopic eye of faith. Fourth, they were persuaded (assured, convinced) of them despite the fact that there was no visible proof. Five, they embraced them. They were so real to faith,

they could be enfolded in their arms. Six, This brings a confession to those around them that they were indeed "pilgrims and strangers on the earth." Lastly, they loudly declared that "they seek a country," with not even a hint of returning from whence they came.

Whether we depart by way of the grave, or by translation, all Christians will come to this final stand of faith, and to those who have the same spirit that these worthies manifested, we too can make this last perfect stand of confidence. Paul made his in II Timothy 4:7-8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing."

GOD KEEPS HIS OWN

I do not know whether my future lies
Through calm or storm;
Whether the way is strewn with broken ties,
Or friendships warm.
This much I know; Whate'er the pathway trod,
All else unknown,
I shall be guided safely on, for God
Will keep His own.
Clouds may obscure the sky and drenching rain
Wear channels deep;
And haggard want, with all her bitter train
Make angels weep.
And those I love the best, beneath the sod
May sleep alone;
But through it all I shall be led, for God
Will keep His own.
- Sarah Knowles Bolton

What Is In a Seed

"The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth His handiwork."

"(Psalm 19:1)

"God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that He is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though He needed anything, seeing He giveth to all Life, and Breath, and all things."

"(Acts 17:24-25)

When we look at God's handiwork in the heavens and in the earth, we cannot help but be amazed. Everything with life in it declares loudly the certainty of a Life-Giver. God gives life to all things. Every law that governs creation in heaven and earth shows forth indisputable evidence of the Divine Law-Maker.

We can see this principle of life even in the lowest form

of life, the plant life. There is an unchangeable law of nature. There are plants of every variety, from the tiny flower in the garden to the huge trees of the forest. They all reproduce their own peculiar and particular kind of life through their own seed. All laws of life and nature are in the seed. Oh, the marvel of it is that even in the tiniest seed, is the life to produce another plant like it.

In the animal creation there is a similar wonder, as that of plant life. Every living creature from the smallest insect to the great monster on land or in the sea, as well as birds of the air, can reproduce their own particular kind of life. Is not that evidence that God's decree which He laid down in the beginning of creation, is still operative? The law of life and nature presented in Genesis 1, is that each living thing should bring forth "after its kind."

Finally, let us consider the highest form of life which God created - human life. When He blessed Adam and Eve, He said, "Be fruitful and multiply" (1:28). That command contained the law of human nature and life. At first Adam and Eve were innocent and sinless, but after they yielded to Satan, their life and nature became evil and sinful. Mankind was dependent upon God to reveal His own particular kind of Life and Nature.

Jesus said, "God is Spirit" - (John 4:24). God is a Supernatural Being, A Divine Personality; therefore, His Life is Divine and Supernatural. When Christ who was the Word, came to earth. He was God manifest in the flesh - I Timothy 3:16. He manifested the Divine Nature in human form. "In Him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4). Several times, Jesus said of Himself, "I am the Life." This Life is far above any created life: "For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us" (I John 1:2).

Christ gives this kind of life to anyone who receives Him as Savior. "I give unto them eternal life," (John 10:28). When we accept Christ as our Savior, we are born again, born of "incorruptible Seed, the Word of God" (I Peter 1:23). John also speaks of this Divine incorruptible Seed in connection with the new birth. "Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His Seed (God's Seed) remaineth in him; and he cannot sin, because he is born of God" (I John 3:9). Oh, wonder of all wonders! As all of God's earthly creation reproduces its own kind of life and nature through its seed, so God transmits His own Divine Nature and eternal Life through His own Seed.

In Romans 1, we read of two seeds: God's incorruptible Seed, and man's corruptible seed. Man's seed became corrupt when he yielded to the devil. In Genesis 3:15, we read of two kinds of seeds - the Seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. The woman's Seed is none other than

Christ. "He was made of a woman," as to His physical body. The serpent's seed refers to the seed of Satan, those who utterly reject Christ as Savior.

Thanks be to God! He sent a Savior who can save us to the uttermost. He told us that we can be saved by being born again, receiving a spiritual birth. Jesus taught Nicodemus: "Verily, verily, I say unto thee. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God . . . That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee. Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof; but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:3-8). So, we ask again, "What is in a seed?" We have seen a little of the wonder and mystery of God's creation, how each living creature produces its own seed. Within each seed is hidden the very life and nature of the parent. But the greater mystery and wonder is that God Himself can transplant His incorruptible Seed; His Divine Life and Nature into the heart of a repentant and believing human being! Praise God forever! We are "Partakers of His Divine Nature," and "His Seed remaineth in him."

— Lars Eidness

Jesus, Victor Over Death

Come, ye saints, look here and wonder;
See the place where Jesus lay;
He has burst His bands asunder;
He has borne our sins away.
Joyful tidings!
Yes, the Lord has risen today.
Jesus triumphs! Sing ye praises;
By His death He overcame.
Thus the Lord His glory raises,
Thus He fills His foes with shame.
Sing ye praises!
Praises to the Victor's Name.
Jesus triumphs! Countless legions
Come from Heaven to meet their King;
Soon, in yonder blessed regions
They shall join His praise to sing;
Songs eternal
Shall through Heaven's high arches ring.
- Thomas Kelly

GOD'S SUPERLATIVE

GRACE

Lois Bannister

In the English language there are three degrees of comparison: positive, comparative and superlative, or as is

often expressed: good, better and best. The dictionary gives these meanings for the word "superlative": supreme, paramount, preeminent, superior, transcendent, uppermost best, greatest, finest, prime, choicest, unexcelled, matchless, unequalled, unrivaled, perfect. We can just say. God is inexpressible!

The New Testament was written in Greek, and the Greek language is very descriptive, much more than our English language. Many times it helps us to understand things of the Scriptures. We thank God for dedicated scholars, men of God who compiled the Strong's Exhaustive Concordance and other Word Study Dictionaries. These are a great help to those of us who are not Greek scholars, and they enlighten us and give us a better comprehension of the magnitude of God's plan and purpose for humanity.

God is the God of Redemption, which was planned in the past ages. God's desire was to have many sons (Hebrews 2:10), and from them He purposed a Bride for His Son, as we learn from the writings of the Apostle Paul. "I have betrothed you to one husband that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ" (II Corinthians 11:2). What a superlative plan!

"As it is written. Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them (or, took the cover off) to us through His Spirit, for the Spirit searches all things, yea, the deep things of God. The natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (I Corinthians 2:10-11, 14). Jesus said, "I thank You, Father, that you have hid these things from the wise and prudent and have revealed them unto babes (or, those uncomplicated in mind)" (Matthew 11:25). John 3:34 tells us "God has not given the Spirit by measure (portion or degree)." There is no limit to what the Holy Spirit will reveal to us when we search the Scriptures with faith and open hearts to receive from Him. The unlimited God reveals things to limited humanity who are reaching out for more of Him.

"Much more the grace of God and the gift by grace has abounded unto many by one Man, Jesus Christ" -Romans 5:15. The root word in Greek for "abounded" is "huper, or huperballo, meaning "over, above, more than, superior to, to super abound in quantity or quality; a throwing beyond others, highest possible degree." They are many kindred words expressing these thoughts in the following Scriptures: "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound"—Romans 5:20. We can never begin to comprehend the horrendous weight of sin that Jesus bore that day at Calvary, the weight of sins of all mankind who ever lived or would live. How could anything be much more than that weight of sin He was bearing? Only God could provide the much more grace that enabled Him to endure the cross and finish the work He came to do. It was that

abounding grace that brought Him out of the grave, the Eternal Head of the New Creation. Atonement was complete. God's Plan was complete and nothing of His abundance of Grace will be lost. Grace did much more abound, meaning to "super abound, much more, a greater degree, exceed, superior to, for the sake of, over and above, more than, excel, indicating a surplus, above and beyond all calculations, abundant in quantity, superior in quality.

What is Grace? I Peter 5:10 tell us that He is the God of all Grace. The word "Grace" is mentioned over 100 times in the New Testament. It is "favor, good will, benefit, gift, Divine influence upon the heart and its reflection in the life." It is a favor done without expectation of return; absolute free expression of the loving kindness of God to humanity. It is unearned and unmerited favor; it also means to pardon, rescue, or deliver. When received by faith, grace transforms man and causes him to love and seek after the righteousness of God. God's Grace is not only sufficient to provide forgiveness of sin and taking away the guilt of sin, but also to take away the desire to sin. This is our sanctification, to deliver from a state of commonness and put into a state corresponding to the very nature of God! "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1-2).

Grace is our platform - this is where we stand.

Ephesians contains many wonderful Scriptures expressing some of the superlatives of God's Grace. "Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure (no limit) of the gift of Christ" (4:7). How can we measure the Gift of Christ? "That in the ages to come He might show forth the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus" (2:7). This verse is proof that we don't exhaust the learning experience in this life. God is too great to be seen in His fullness in this life on earth. Our minds could not comprehend the vast Divine Nature of God. Who knows how far reaching His power and holiness are? We will continually learn more of Him as He reveals Himself throughout the ages. What glories await us! "He is able to do exceeding abundantly more than we ask or think (exceeding a number or measure which marks fullness, indicating excess)" (3:20). "Till we all come to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (4:13).

"We have this treasure (Christ) in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (II Corinthians 4:7). "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work" (II Corinthians 9:8). "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became

poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (a personal enrichment by appropriating Christ's principle of sacrifice)" (II Corinthians 8:9).

The Apostle Paul expressed so perfectly the power of Grace when He said, "My Grace is sufficient for you" (II Corinthians 12:7). He had experienced God's grace so wonderfully that he begins and ends his epistles with blessings of God's grace for all who believe. In his letter to Timothy, he said, "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief, and the Grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant, with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus" (I Timothy 2:12-14).

God paid the ultimate cost when He gave His Son to redeem humanity. Redemption cost Him everything - all that He wanted rested on Jesus that day on the Cross. God held back nothing to redeem us for His glory and honor. Through that cost He purchased the ultimate gift of the highest quality, a bride for His Son! Redemption is free to us, how then can we neglect so great salvation? "Great" here indicates magnitude, so vast, so great, so mighty, as He is.

Titus 2:11 tells us "The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men." Though all will not believe and appropriate the redemption provided, that does not lessen the efficacy of the shed blood and the super-abundant grace of God's all-inclusive provision. Not one little detail was left out of God's magnificent, superlative plan!

His Grace Is Sufficient

When powers of sin assail, and enemies prevail,
And you long for peace and liberty;
Then look unto the Lord, 'tis written in His Word,
"His Grace is sufficient for thee."

When the race is well-nigh run, when basking in the sun,
The effulgent light of heaven to see;
Then Jesus you will praise, thru everlasting days,
"His Grace is sufficient for thee."

— Mary M. Bodie

THE PATTERN PRAYER

My Confession

William W. Brentlinger

"After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever, Amen."

-Matthew 6:9-13

It is my personal habit to start my evening prayers in this manner. I like the part where I am asking God to keep me from temptation - the evil one - especially. But, do I need to ask forgiveness on a daily basis? In my case, yes. I am righteous in Christ; yes, I am a saint, but am I always in God's will? No! Are there sins of omission as well as commission? Yes. Does it humble me to realize that although I am a child of God, I still need daily forgiveness? Yes. Is it possible to become so proud that because I am righteous and feel superior to others who fail, whom I am supposed to love with all my heart, mind and strength? Yes, again!

"For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (6:14-15). These verses tell me that unless I forgive that other person, I cannot expect to feel forgiveness from the Father. Verse 16 warns about hypocrites who fast with a sad face; and I am sorry to say that it has been a long time since I fasted for the purpose of prayer, that I cannot be sure when or what it was about. Shame on me! This is another reason that I pray this prayer so frequently.

The more we understand God's love for us,
the more love we'll be able to show others.