

Leaves Of Hope #23

Family Devotion written by C.M. Gullerud

Renew me, O eternal Light,
And let my heart and soul be bright,
Illumined with the light of grace
That issues from thy holy face.

L.H. 398:1

Romans 12:1

Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship.

As a Christian family, it is the desire of all our members to live honestly and cleanly as in the light of the day. We wish to avoid and cast aside those things that are done only under the cover of night. We want to be Christ's people from head to foot and give no opportunity for the carnal way of life. In order that our lives may be thus characterized we welcome such words of encouragement and instruction as we find in Paul's words to the Christian congregation in Rome.

Quite often our flesh rebels and turns us away from the words of the Spirit, coaxing us to go our own merry way and give no heed to Scripture. But as surely as we are led

by the Spirit, we will listen and take them to heart with a prayer to God that they will move us to bow to the good and acceptable and perfect will of the Almighty.

By the mercies of God, the plea is made, asking us to present our bodies a living sacrifice to the Lord our God, which is our reasonable service. This is not a matter of a forced or slavish service brought on by the fear of the consequences if the master's word is not followed. But rather the Lord, who redeemed us, moves us to listen and to follow out of love.

Luther has worded it well in his explanation of the Ten Commandments. The meaning of each commandment is introduced by the words: **"We should fear and love God"** that we may perform the good and avoid the evil. This is not the fear of one who cringes under the crack of the whip but the godly fear of a child of God who respects and loves God so much that one dreads nothing more than to act contrary to his will.

It is with this in mind that Paul sets forth his earnest plea calling upon the members of the family of God to live a life of service, holy, acceptable and reasonable. What the details of this service consist of - we will hear more in devotions to come.

But before we take these words of instruction before us, we confess that we are not coming as proud men and women, boys and girls; but as penitent sinners, admitting our misdeeds and our shortcomings. We do not come with the idea that we are about to hear how good we are, and how much we deserve words of praise and commendation. Rather we come as people who need words of instruction, admonition, direction, and guidance from on High. We welcome such Scriptures as we are sure the families in Rome welcomed them and were glad to hear them and repeat them in their family devotions.

We will be mightily moved as the words of God's wisdom call upon us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds that we may prove that which is the good and acceptable will of our Savior-God.

Destroy in me the lust of sin,
From all impureness make me clean.
Oh grant me power and strength, my God,
To strive against my flesh and blood.
Create in me a new heart, Lord,
That gladly I obey thy Word
And naught but what thou wilt, desire;
With such new life my soul inspire. L.H. 398:2-3