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happy Birthday

Dec. 10 • Frank Piotrowski, Love you much!
 Dec. 12 • Jenny Johnson
 Dec. 13 • Justin Weimer
 Dec. 15 • Ken Cooper
 Dec. 16 • Courtney Frazine
 Dec. 19 • Dan Feldt
 Dec. 27 • Rachel (Rose) Weimer
 Jan. 16 • Zofia Piotrowski, Love you much!

Anniversaries

Dec. 14 • Jim & Pattianne Feldt
 Dec. 30 • Ron & Mariann Cooper
 Dec. 23 • Dan & Kim West

Get Well wishes

Dorothy Birkholz
 Virginia Pierce
 Pastor Tim Swan
 Garry Eppard
 Richard & Rachel Blackmer
 Irene Cramblet

If you would like to list a February, March, or April birthday or anniversary, or get well wishes for a special person in the next issue of FAN send or drop off \$4.00 with the name, date, and information to

Fruitport Area News
 420 N. 3rd Ave.
 Fruitport, MI 49415

When Jesus comes

By Pastor Ronald Prather
 (Pastor of Abundant Life Tabernacle)

There is a verse in the Bible, in the book of Hebrews, chapter 11 and verse one: "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen."

Faith and hope are not the same. Faith is now; hope is later. Faith simply declares who God is, what God has done, and what God will do. There is a "first cause" if we are to receive anything from God. "He that comes to God MUST believe he IS God and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

The wise men diligently sought the Christ child and found him. Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord because he sought for it. We never find anything until we look for it.

One's life can be too full of storms and conflict for it to be dull or monotonous, but storms can produce some of the most beautiful sunsets. In the gospel of St. Matthew, chapter 14, we have a group of disciples in the midst of the sea on a "dark and stormy night." The wind and the waves were contrary to the men as they battled the elements. Note these men were not like Jonah, running from God. They were in the will of God! Sometimes we ask God, "Why the storm?" The Psalmist David asked God "why" on many occasions, and he was still called "a man after the heart of God."

No doubt, the disciples were in high spirits; as they had just come from the miracle of seeing Jesus feed 5,000 people with a sack lunch. Tuna fish anyone? They saw themselves promoted in heaven, sitting on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. They were relishing the idea of royalty when, suddenly, STORM! There was no comfort, little progress and great strain as the men tried to maintain a sense of direction. Sound familiar? How do you make sense out of something that seems to make no sense?

"And in the fourth watch, Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea." Why the fourth watch? It's the last watch before the dawn, 3 a.m. to 6 a.m. He waited until their strength was exhausted.

Perhaps a lesson here: God's opportunity never comes until man's extremity begins. Or, God uses trouble to "get" to us. As long as we think we can manage the "tough" of our lives, he will not manage. Negative thoughts entered their minds. The sea separated them from Jesus (or so they thought). Trouble was a "sign" that Jesus forgot them. The "sting" of trouble is "unbelief." Your adversary whispers, "God has forgotten you. He doesn't care." Their faith was not of the highest order. Faith that feeds on signs and miracles wants more signs and miracles. When Jesus stepped into their little boat, their "situation," there was an immediate calm and peace!

Let's give more of ourselves to Jesus: Faith, loyalty and commitment, a broken spirit, more emptiness of self. JESUS WILL COME TO YOU!•

Forgetting those things which are behind

By Pastor Dan Gardner
 (Pastor of Crossroads of Life Ministries)

Philippians 3:13-14: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

I'm amazed at how many people cannot forgive and forget other people's past. At our church, we preach Christ crucified and what Jesus did at the cross will give you victory over sin. But we also believe your past is your past, and man has no right to bring it up.

That's the reason why I got out of a denomination and went independent. When we live by a set of rules that a denomination has placed on its people, we limit God's ability to work in and through a child of God. Don't misunderstand me. I'm not saying we shouldn't live by rules. I believe the Bible is our rulebook when it comes to the things of God. I hear a lot of people who say they can't be used in church because they have a past, so they quit going to church because they feel they are not wanted. They're heart broken, and it's sad to say it's because of man-made rules that are not even biblical. I'll give an example: In some denominations, you cannot be used if you get a divorce. (I won't mention names, because I don't want to start a war.)

Pastors, if this is the kind of God you serve, then how will anybody make it to heaven? The God that I serve forgives me of all sin and not only that, but he casts them as far as the east is from the west, never to be remembered any more. Not only that, but the scripture at the top says it all. Paul, who was an apostle, said, "...forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth for those things which are before us."

Whoever reads this article, let me give you some good news. It doesn't matter what you have done, if you asked Jesus into your heart and you meant it, you are

Whoa, Nellie
 by Al Schneider

I had it figured out a long time ago. Life, that is. I knew where I was and where I was headed. With Jesus as my master and the Bible as my handbook, I was on my way. I was motoring on cruise. Life was good.

Then, recently, I came across an old familiar Bible verse, a sobering one to say the least. I read that verse as though for the first time. You'll find it in I John. It says simply, "We shall be like him." That verse grabbed me by the throat and hasn't let go.

I'm not sure just when such alteration is to take place. But, here I am approaching the time of my departure, and I'm not one bit like him.

Interestingly, I came across the verse while reading Dennis Okholm's *Monk Habits for Everyday People*. The book was an eye opener, and after only a short excursion into the book, I decided that it couldn't hurt to apply some of these habits into my mundane life. Don't get me wrong. I'm not considering a monastery. People my age don't enter much of anything. Still, a bit of self-imposed Benedictine discipline couldn't hurt.

But this was a bit much. How could I ever be like him? Never mind that in my daily routines I find virtually no one that is "like Him." Are we a hell-bound generation? Maybe.

I sought wisdom from scholars. I have books galore. Most commentators suggest that, bit-by-bit, we inch our way into his likeness. I don't buy it. It's a little like whistling Dixie while we wait for the South to rise again. In my case, I need an instant transformation. There isn't time for "inching." And I'm not talking about a new birth, Nicodemus style. I'm thinking more like a restoration that makes me fit for a walk through the Garden of Eden (but with clothes). Only then would I be like Him. How likely is that? Woe is me. Who said the Christian walk was an easy one?

By the way, if you're looking for answers as you read on, forget it. I haven't much to offer anyone. But I could propose this. If you're young enough, you might consider becoming a monk. If you're old like me, then pray hard. Better yet, find someone wise and ask him or her.

To be sure, there are those who offer answers. One commentator says simply "when we see Him, we'll be like Him." Huh? That same writer suggests that, in the meantime, we do all we can to become acceptable.

Gregory of Nyssa (fourth century) may have given the best answer. Realizing how difficult it is to imitate Jesus, he singles out one attribute, the poverty mentioned in the Beatitudes: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of Heaven." He goes on to say that everything else associated with the divine nature is beyond our capacity and that only through humility can we free ourselves from the distinctively human sins of pride and arrogance. He concludes that we imitate God by being humble.

Thanks, Gregory. •

saved. And your past sins are forgiven. And if any pastor or church tries to bring it up, tell them "Jesus forgave me, washed me, cleansed me, and my past is none of your business."

If you are looking for a church that believes in the Cross of Christ and believes in the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and you have a past that your church won't forgive or forget, and you're about ready to give up and stay home, then come to Cross Roads of Life Ministries at 18 S. Third Street here in Fruitport. Services on Sundays are at 10:30 a.m. and Wednesdays at 7 p.m. You'll be loved and accepted, no matter how bad your past is. May God bless you and your family this holiday season. •

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(Submitted by Consumers Energy)

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