



Steadfast

In the Word and Faith



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What Luther Says About Miracles

World Really Full of God's Miraculous Working. We are so accustomed to find that grain grows out of the earth annually, and we are so blinded by this that we pay no attention to it; for what we daily see and hear we do not consider a miracle. And yet it is as great a miracle . . . as Christ's feeding the multitude with seven loaves. SL 11, 1380f



Miracles As Such Do Not Convert Anyone. I would not want the grace to perform miracles; for those who pay no attention to the Word, against which the whole world has no reason to grumble, will not be moved by signs. SL 9, 921

The Word Must Judge All Miracles. In other words, the rule is this: Regardless of their size and number, no wonders or signs are to be accepted contrary to established teaching. We have God's commandment; He has commanded from heaven (Matt. 17:5): Listen to Him; Christ is the only one to whom you should listen. In addition, we have this warning, that false prophets will come and do great signs, but that they are all on the wrong track, away from Christ and toward something different. The only preventive is to have a good grasp of the doctrine and to keep it before your eyes continually. SL 7, 661

The Greatest Miracle. What can be said that is more marvelous than this, that the Son of God assumes the flesh of man and is born of a virgin? What is more astounding than this, that the Son of God, battling with death and the devil, allows Himself to be overcome, offers His life to His enemies, and overcomes while being overcome? And the miracle supreme is this, that the man Christ, who died on the cross, rises from death and from the sealed grave on the third day, ascends to heaven and sits at the right hand of God with His flesh. What can possibly be said, nay, even conceived, that is equal to these miracles? SL 14, 1160s

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Devotion — Romans 1:16,17 (Part 2)

‘V.16. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek.’

This is the Gospel, the good news, of Jesus Christ, the despised Nazarene, living in this world in lowly circumstances, dying the shameful death of the cross, but rising from the dead in triumph. But this is not just an inspiring story, a tale to move to tears of sympathy, to inspire the world to stand up for what they believe in, even to the point of death. This is:

‘2. the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’

The little word ‘for’ tells us a whole lot; this little word gives the reason for something. Paul is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, ‘for’ it is ‘**the power of God unto salvation** to every one that believeth’(Romans 1:16).

Notice from where the Greek word ‘power’ comes from- ‘*dunamis*’, dynamite. Dynamite has great power, a terrifying destructive force that can blow up mountainsides, devastate cities. The Gospel is not an explosive force, blowing up people, but like dynamite, it is powerful. But what is the power in the Gospel? Can the religion of a Man executed by His enemies in the most brutal fashion, a religion of peace, of humility, of love, have any power in it?

You can hold a gun to a person’s head, threaten them with death, coerce them to do your will, but that will not change a person’s heart. You can offer them thousands, millions of dollars to give you what you want, but this will not change their hearts. All the glamour, the wealth, the popularity in the world may provide strong motivation, but this will not change people’s lives. You can preach attractive religions, even reform their outward lives – but nothing man-made, wealth, glamour, work righteous religions, will ever change a person. Only the Gospel of Christ will transform a person, for it alone is ‘the power of God.’

Paul gave up his friends, his career, his influence, his popularity and power as a Pharisee for the Gospel of Christ. Paul was beaten until his blood flowed, was shipwrecked, rejected by his friends, hounded by his enemies, for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. Paul was preparing himself for his imprisonment in Rome, where he would be put on trial before the emperor Nero, alone in front of hostile hundreds, if not thousands, for the Gospel of Christ. He had nothing to gain– he would be alone in Rome, even his Christian friends were too frightened to support him, there was no earthly gain in enduring all of this. Yet, his

heart had been transformed by the Gospel of Christ, he suffered all, endured all, faced all, alone because of his faith in his Saviour Jesus Christ.

It was in the power of the Word that Moses appeared before Pharaoh. Here was Moses, no mighty army at his back, no wealth at his disposal, but alone, clothed in the humble garments of a shepherd, nothing but a staff in his hand. His people were slaves, powerless to defend themselves, so powerless in the eyes of Pharaoh as to be treated with absolute disdain and contempt. But he appeared before Pharaoh with the Word of the Lord, the full power, the full might of the Lord, the Lord God of the Israelites! The Egyptians, by the plagues, were brought to the full realization they could not even stand before the Lord, that even the mighty Pharaoh, and even their mighty gods, the Nile River and the sun itself, were under the complete and absolute control of the Lord. When the Israelites were weak, then they were strong!

How was the power of God revealed in the days of Noah? Even if there had still been a hundred Christians left in His day to provide Him with spiritual support and fellowship in preaching to the people it would still have been a great demonstration of the power of God in him. But where did he get the power, the courage, the faith, to face the world on his own, with only the support of the seven members of his family? Which would have been the greater, to have preached to the millions of the world with the support of even a thousand, or a hundred Christians, or to preach on one’s own?

Next time you are tempted by the devil to despair of your faith because of the small size of the Church and the seeming power of the world, remember Gideon. He conquered with a very small army, microscopic compared to the swarms of the Midianites. Which was the greater victory, to have conquered the swarming teams of the Midianites with one hundred thousand men, or with three hundred? Which is the greater display of the power of the Lord, for God to use an *elephant* to kill an *ant*, or for God to use an *ant* to kill an *elephant*?

Why were none of these Christians ashamed of the Gospel of Christ? Why could they have no fear of embarrassment, no fear of failure, indeed, just no fear, when they lived the Gospel of Christ? As soon as a person accepts the Gospel of Jesus Christ, he becomes a partaker of the righteousness

which is ready for him in the Gospel; a person must simply take what God gives him, and he has the possession and enjoyment of the great blessing upon which life and salvation depend.

As the result of the vicarious work of Christ, the enmity which existed between God and us as the result of our sins has been taken away; through Him peace in relation to God was acquired and is now made the property of men in justification. This peace is based upon the reconciliation founded upon the atonement of Christ, which has completely altered the relation of God to sinful mankind. Through the mediation of Jesus Christ this peace has been brought about through Him by whose agency we also have had access by faith to that grace in which we now stand. The entrance, the way to salvation, lies open before us; Christ has opened the door which leads directly to grace; through Him we now have a standing as Christians.

Hence the relation of peace toward God. We are justified from sins, our sins are forgiven, there is no obstruction between God and us. As a consequence, we can boast upon the basis of hope of the glory of God. The Christian's hope is a precious possession, on account of which he rejoices and glories, because the object of this hope is the glory of God, of which we shall finally be partakers, chap. 8, 16, 17:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together.

And this power and glory of the Gospel is intended for every one, for the Jew first, but for the Greek as well. To the Jewish people God had revealed Himself first, in their midst the Saviour had lived, a continual living manifestation of the Gospel, a revelation of the merciful power of God. But the glad tidings were not confined to the Jews: Jews and Greeks were alike in need of the message of salvation. For neither Law and the works of the Law, on the one hand, nor wisdom and culture, on the other, can deliver mankind from the misery of sin and its consequences.

Salvation is possible only through the power of the Gospel.

Many of us on bended knee have approached God's holy altar and renewed our baptismal vow. There we have given our hand as pledge and declared: 'I renounce the devil and all his works and ways. And I dedicate myself unto Thee, Thou Triune God, to be true to Thee in faith and in obedience unto my end. Amen.'

This is the most important vow any of us will ever make. This oath we have made directly to the Lord God. And remember what you have learnt an oath is according to the Second Commandment? You are calling upon God to help you speak the truth and confirm your commitment to Him, but also to punish you if you should speak falsely. If any of us made this vow from any false motive, to please our parents, gain approval, or as some sort of good work, such a thing is detestable in the sight of God. Then, as you outwardly made this vow with your lips, you are in reality condemning yourself in God's sight.

This vow is very serious, and indeed, knowing the enemies you are up against, very daunting. But remember, you are never on your own, Christ has promised you His continuing, unfailing presence. Trust His promises, His watchful presence, His almighty power to save and protect you. If you are truly sorry for your sins, acknowledge that there is nothing you can do to save yourself but trust alone in Christ and His mercy for your salvation, then believe and be assured in true faith of the promise Jesus gave to His disciples: 'And they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.'

Whatever the devil throws your way to tempt, you can then turn to him and say: 'I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.' Rest in Christ, rely solely on the promises and power of His Word, and may you stand in steadfast faith with Paul:

'V.16. For I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek.'
—TJW.

Following the Biblical Faith of our Fathers

(Translation of old Orthodox Lutheran Works)

BE PREPARED TO SUFFER MUCH TO RETAIN THE TRUTH OF GOD'S WORD

The old Germans had a proverb: '*The Word of God causes a DIVISION among the spirits.*' Whenever God's Word is taught in its truth and purity some ACCEPT it in true faith, but the **great majority ridicule**



it, sneer at it, criticise it and reject it in UNBELIEF. Our Lord Himself tells us this in Matt. 10:34: **'Think not that I am come to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword.'**

What Jesus means is this: My doctrine is of such a nature that if it is purely taught, if all false teaching is exposed, reprov'd and rejected, if all persistent false teachers are avoided, **then peace among men cannot possibly be preserved.** Your arch-enemy, the old evil foe,

hates the pure Word and is doing his utmost to **destroy** the true Church by blinding and deceiving the great majority so that they are offended by the Truth and hate and persecute those who love the Word.

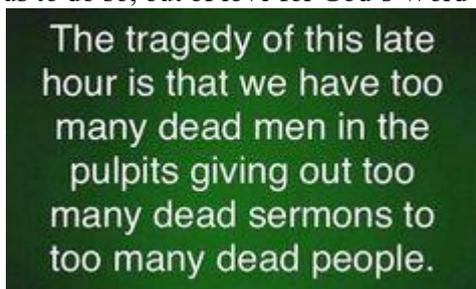


Dear brethren and sisters of the ELCR: By God's grace and mercy we have been granted the greatest and most wonderful treasure and blessing that anyone can receive:

the unadulterated, unalloyed, pure, saving Word of the Lord. If we are to RETAIN it in its purity for the future it will require a STIFF STOUT BATTLE. We will continue to be the **OBJECTS of Satan's greatest hatred.** Oh, whatever we do, let us heed the words of **Luther** who wrote: 'The blessing of the Word is so great that no human heart can comprehend it. That is why its RETENTION requires a **STOUT, STIFF BATTLE.** Even then it is easy to lose it forever if we do not HOLD TO THE WORD WITH ALL OUR MIGHT.' (What Luther Says, p.1411).

There is an old Latin proverb which states: **'TELLING THE TRUTH MAKES ENEMIES.'** If faithful **Athanasius** had been happy quietly to teach the doctrine of the Deity of Christ to his own followers and had not at the same time vigorously condemned and attacked Arius and his followers, then he would have spent the rest of his life in ease and in great honour, because he was a highly gifted man. However, **he had to suffer much**

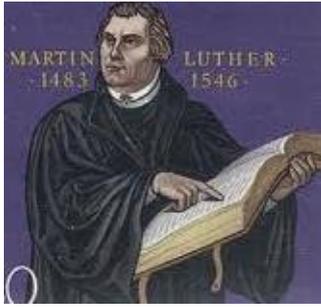
hardship for telling the Truth. It was the same with **Luther** and it is the same today. **Wicked worldly men and false or very ignorant Christians cannot but attack and oppose all those who teach and believe the Truth, because in their blindness they do not realise that Satan is using them to destroy the true Church.** It is hard for the faithful defenders of the Truth when they become the targets for the hatred, scorn and persecution of men, when they are called 'disturbers of the peace', 'peace-haters', 'quarrelsome'. However, **if we truly believe in Jesus as our Saviour and love His Word we CANNOT but CONFESS the Truth and at the same time OPPOSE ALL ERROR** (Mat.10:32). Our consciences compel us to do so, out of love for God's Word and in obedience to the heavenly Truth.



Therefore Christian defenders of the faith of the ELCR, let us always use our Biblical weapons, heed the call to battle, because the true Church has NO CHOICE but to be at WAR continually with Satan. Therefore, if we are to ENDURE, we are to hold out to the bitter end faithfully. The TRUE CHURCH is a FIGHTING CHURCH and will remain so until the end comes. That is why it is often referred to as the **Church Militant.** The moment a Church ceases to use God's Word, the moment a Church ceases to fight against error and ceases

disciplining false teachers, **it becomes a DEAD CHURCH,** a Church at ease, where Satan rules and where the body of Truth is well and truly buried in the grave of error and is **not able to save a single soul.** Woe to that Church which has no defenders of the Truth to sound the call to battle when the arch-enemy attacks.

Let us therefore **imitate all faithful champions** who have fought for every point of Christian doctrine without regard for the favour of men! Men may curse you, but keep on, by God's grace, bearing testimony to the Truth until death. Let each and every one of us of the ELCR hold fast the precious treasure of the pure doctrine! Let this be our slogan: **FIGHT UNTO DEATH ON BEHALF OF THE TRUTH, AND THE LORD WILL FIGHT FOR YOU!**



Dr. Luther urges us: ‘Christendom must have men who are able to FLOOR their adversaries and.... put the devil to shame. But this calls for STRONG WARRIORS who have complete control of Scripture, can refute a false interpretation, know how to wrest the sword they wield, that is, their BIBLE PASSAGES, from the hands of the adversaries and beat them back with them.... Yet **every Christian should be so well armed that for himself he is sure of his faith and doctrine, and he should be so firmly grounded on passages from God’s Word that he is able to hold his own against the devil and to defend himself when people want to convert him to some other view.**’ (What Luther Says, Vol. 1, p.419, No. 1237).

Let us of the ELCR guard our heritage with great tenacity! The evil foe that our fore-fathers **Drs. Nickel, Janzow, C. F. Graebner, Zschech, Prof. George Koch and others** fought so faithfully against many years ago has increased the strength of his army. Many more ‘Lutherans’ have joined his ranks. His assaults are growing more determined than ever before.

Then, onward weary soul,
Look forth toward the goal!
There joy waits you,

The race then run,
The combat done,
The crown of glory will be won.

James states (1:12): ‘**BLESSED is the man that ENDURETH temptation, for when he is tried, HE SHALL RECEIVE THE CROWN OF LIFE.**’

Why still the Division?

(Continued from July- August Steadfast 2016.)
(Translation of old Orthodox Lutheran Works)

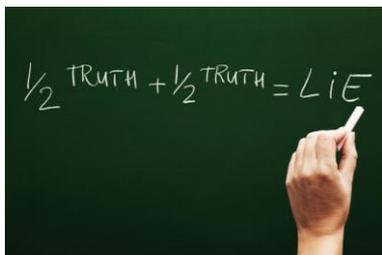


(By Dr. W. Janzow, the General President of our former ELSA [Evangelical Lutheran Synod in Australia]; Taken from The Australasian Theological Review (1931-32) where he points out the **real differences between our old church and the UELCA** (United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia) which were **never settled** before the Union in 1965 and were **cunningly compromised with clever double talk in the Theses of Agreement.**)

THESIS ONE: It is God's will that we Christians in matters of faith adhere firmly, steadfastly to the pure doctrine of God's Word in all its parts in word and actions. That is crucial for us.

The False Doctrine Of The United Church - UELCA Theses 4 on the Doctrine of Inspiration

Thesis Four reads: ‘The doctrine that by the Inspiration of Scripture is meant the impulsus ad scribendum (that is, the ‘impulse to write’) as well as the suggestio rerum et verborum (that is, the ‘suggestion of matters and words’) is also our doctrine.’



In so far as the words read Thesis Four presents a completely correct statement. But just as correct as this statement otherwise can be (if understood in the orthodox Lutheran and Biblical sense, BLW), so too is it **impossible** for this Thesis to satisfy us when we look back at the previous (comments on Thesis 3, BLW). **On the contrary, love compels us to believe that the writers of this Thesis clearly take this statement in a different sense than we understand it and in which Scripture teaches¹.** For if by this Thesis they really intend to say: **God the Holy Spirit has given by inspiration everything which stands written in the Bible, even the**

¹ **Janzow** here shows **how careful** we must be when discussing Scriptural matters with people who use **carefully worded double talk based on the evil ‘Open Questions’ Theory** in order to ascertain what the opposition really teaches. We are reminded of the axiom of **Pastor Kleinig**: ‘Two people may say the same words, but whether they mean the same thing by them is a different matter.’

matters (contained therein, BLW), the individual sentences, yes, even the individual words in their sequence of arrangement, then they certainly surely would have **avoided charging** (the Scriptures, BLW) with ‘irregularities’ (blemishes, errors) in the ‘outward form of God’s Word’; for since by such inspiration of the Holy Scripture also the external form of the Word of God is precisely restricted and fixed, then the writers of this Thesis would indeed themselves be guilty for their criticism (of Holy Scripture, BLW) of **deliberate, wilful blasphemy of the Holy Spirit**. And it is for this reason that we do not as yet have confidence (trust)² in them.



But how they can teach both doctrines: ‘**The inspiration of Holy Scripture is an inspiration of matters and words**’ and ‘**irregularities are attached to the outward form of God’s Word,**’ as it were, in one breath, without falling into **terrible, divine blasphemy**, this is a mystery to us. We here see only two possibilities how the writers of this Thesis can avoid this offence: either they have to **give up the doctrine of Verbal Inspiration of Holy Scripture** in order in this way to salvage their doctrine of ‘irregularities’ (blemishes, errors), or they must **throw overboard**³ **their doctrine of ‘irregularities’ (blemishes, errors)** in order in this way to **preserve the (Scriptural, BLW) doctrine of verbal Inspiration**. To hold both positions is to blaspheme the Holy Spirit Who is fully responsible for everything in Scripture, as well as for the entire ‘external form’ of it.

(ATR, 1932, pages 9, 10. To Be Continued; All emphasis is the translator's; some paragraphs are shortened. Next time Dr. Janzow deals with the UELCA's Thesis Five on the Doctrine of Inerrancy.) BLW.

SPECIAL NOTE:

In 1936 Dr. Janzow wrote concerning this deceptive, blasphemous double-talk:

‘The UELCA confesses that the ‘originally inspired word’ contains no errors, and yet holds that the original writings of the Prophets and Apostles, despite the ‘suggestion of matter and words’, are not free from blemishes or discrepancies in their ‘external form’, through permission of the Holy Ghost and the human frailty of the holy writers;

‘Thus a distinction is made between the word communicated by the Holy Ghost, and the word actually written by the holy writers.’ (ATR, Vol.7, July-September, 1936, No.3, pages 73, 74.)

BLW.

Learning from Luther – Prayer

I have learned over many years that God is more concerned with what we pray than how we pray.

Our maturity in prayer can most easily be measured by the things that we pray for. The more a prayer is conceived from and founded upon the Word of God, the better the prayer. The focus of Christian prayer should concern itself more with spiritual matters than physical matters. The Lord’s Prayer is an excellent example of this. Most of the seven petitions are primarily concerned with spiritual matters. We pray 1) that God’s name would be hallowed; 2) that His Kingdom would

come; 3) that His will would be done on earth as it is in heaven; 4) that He would give us each day our daily bread; 5) that He would forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; 6) that He would lead us not into temptation; and 7) that He would deliver us from evil. We see the spiritual emphasis of prayer when Jesus exhorts us to pray for the power of the Holy Ghost. ‘If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?’ (Luke 11:13). Again He says.

² In 1972 *Pastor Kleinig* wrote concerning this same double talk: ‘The Germans have a saying: ‘Trau, schau, wem?’ meaning in English: ‘Look, whom can you really trust?’

Yes, indeed, whom can you really trust these days, especially in matters of religion?’

³ Abandon, forsake.

‘Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.’ (Luke 21:36). These are wise and God-pleasing topics for prayer. In this article we will see this same spiritual emphasis in the prayers of Martin Luther.

First, Luther taught us to pray for the power of the Word of God, that is, that the Word of God might be powerfully effectual in our lives. He says, ‘But what are the blessings for which Paul’s prayer entreats? Something more than continuance of the Word with his followers, though it is a great and good gift even to have the Word thoroughly taught: he prays that the heart may taste the Word and that it may be effectual in the life. Thus the apostle contrasts the knowledge of the Word with the power of the Word. Many have the knowledge, but few the impelling and productive power that the results may be as we teach... Our enemies cannot censure and reproach us to greater extent than to say that we preach and accept much good doctrine to no purpose; that no one practices it and profits thereby.

‘What answer shall we make? This: In the first place, considering our unsatisfactory condition and the lack of power with the Word, we have great reason to pray with the earnestness Paul’s example teaches. And secondly, though our enemies see little improvement and few fruits of the Gospel, it is not theirs to judge. Thus Paul himself acknowledges the Ephesians were weak. He complains of the same weakness in other Epistles and especially in those to the Corinthians. Everywhere he urges them to do and live as they had been taught. The only reason Paul advocates this is that he saw, as we now see that everywhere they fail, and things are not as they should be... We admit we are not all strong, but it is also true that were there no weakness in our ranks, we would have no need of prayer, perseverance, exhortation and daily preaching... We are aware of, and also lament, our weakness and imperfection. Hence we cry and groan and pray to God to grant us strength and power.

‘We are also certain that wherever the Word of God is proclaimed, the fruits of the same must exist. We have the Word of God, and therefore the Spirit of God must be with us. And where the Spirit is, faith must obtain, however weak it may be. Though visible evidence may be lacking, yet inevitably there must be some among us who pray daily, while we may not be aware of it... Notwithstanding our weakness, we are yet certain the kingdom of God is in our midst so long as we have this Word and daily pray for its efficacy and

for an increase of our faith.’ (*Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. VIII, pp. 272-275)

Secondly, Luther taught us to pray that the Christian church would ‘endeavour to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace’ (Eph. 4:3). Luther writes, ‘The unity of the Spirit is the most necessary and beautiful grace that Christians possess. It holds together the Christian community, preventing factions and schisms... So Paul here admonishes men to be careful for harmony, making every endeavour to preserve it. The term ‘unity of the Spirit’ is used to make plain the apostle’s meaning. He would thus emphasize oneness of doctrine – the one true faith. Since the Holy Spirit is present only where there is knowledge of and faith in the Gospel of Christ, ‘unity of the Spirit’ implies a unity of faith. Above all things, then, the effort must be to preserve, in the Church, the doctrine of the Scriptures, pure and in its unity.

‘Christians, then, should be careful to give no occasion for division or discord, but to be diligent, as Paul here admonishes, to preserve unity. And this is not an easy thing to do, for among Christians occasions frequently arise provoking self-will, anger and hatred. The devil is always at hand to stir and blow the flame of discord. Let Christians take heed they do not give place to the promptings of the devil and of the flesh. They must strive against them, submitting to all suffering, and performing all demands, whether honour, property, physical welfare or life itself be involved, in the effort to prevent, so far as in them lies, any disturbance to the unity of doctrine of faith and of Spirit...

‘The Church is termed “one holy, catholic or Christian church”, because it represents one plain, pure gospel doctrine, and an outward confession thereof, always and everywhere, regardless of dissimilarity of physical life or of outward ordinances, customs and ceremonies... But they are not members of the true Church of Christ who, instead of preserving unity of doctrine and oneness of Christian faith, cause divisions and offenses – as Paul says (Rom. 16:17) – by the human doctrines and self-appointed works for which they contend, imposing them upon Christians as necessary. They are perverters and destroyers of the Church... They are the real apostates, persecuting the truth and destroying the unity of the Spirit under the name and title of the Church and of Christ. Therefore, according to the command of God, all men are under obligation to shun them and withdraw from them.’ (*Sermons of Martin Luther*, Vol. VIII, pp. 288-291)

So here we have seen two more wonderful, spiritual, Bible-based topics that we can add to our daily prayer list. Along with praying the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, the triumph of God over His enemies (the devil, the world, and the flesh), the increase of our love for God and faith in Christ, the keeping of our salvation, and the granting of a blessed death, let us also follow Luther's example in praying for the effectual power of the Word of

God in our lives and the preservation of 'the unity of the Spirit' in the Christian Church. In doing so, we will not just be following Luther, but the Lord Jesus Himself, who prayed, 'That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.' (John 17:21).

—S Wood.

Devotional

My dear fellow Christians,

In the third verse of the Epistle of St Jude we read: '*I exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*'

This is exactly what Dr Martin Luther did in all his work as the great reformer of the Church. By the grace of God he had himself found peace for his troubled soul in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Redeemer of sinners; and by the grace of God he was, through the constant and earnest study of the Scriptures at last led to see that the Church of Rome with its head, the Pope, and its un-Scriptural doctrines of justification by good works, of penance, of the mass, of purgatory, of the invocation of the Virgin Mary and the saints and its many other falsities and abuses, was not the true Church of Christ but a caricature, the antithesis, of it. This knowledge which he had gained he could not but make known; the truth which he had found he could not but preach. He fought, and taught and wrote, not for his own honour or advancement - indeed what could he expect but enmity, hatred, and bitter persecution - but in order to lead men back to Christ's Holy Gospel and to build up the Kingdom of Christ here on earth. He had re-discovered the faith once delivered unto the saints by Christ and His Apostles, and now he contended for that faith so earnestly that he was ready to sacrifice every earthly opportunity, every ounce of his strength, and even his life for the cause of Christ and His Holy Word. Luther, the man of God whom the Lord had chosen for the work of cleansing the Church from the abominations of the anti-Christ did earnestly contend for the faith. Before kings and princes he bore witness of his faith and defended the truth of God's Holy Word. And so he continued to do until, when his work on earth was ended, the Lord whom he had served called

him home from the scenes of his conflicts and labours to his everlasting rest.

And we, dear friends, we are the true children of the Reformation. By the unspeakable grace of God the faith which was once delivered unto the saints by Christ and His Apostles and which Luther restored to the Church has been delivered also to us. In our dear Lutheran Church the Word of God is still being taught in its truth and purity; its every doctrine is held by us as it was in the days of the primitive Church and in the days of Luther. This is no idle boast; we can substantiate the statement to anyone who desires proof. Therefore I ask you: how should we Lutherans, the true inheritors of the blessings of the Reformation, be affected by the memory of the heroic stand and the fearless testimony of Luther? We are thrilled when we read and hear of his noble testimony; its history grips the imagination and makes the heart beat faster. This is well and good especially if these sentiments are mingled with heartfelt thanks and praise to God for the work which He accomplished through Luther, and if we thus give all honour and glory to God alone for the person and for the work of Luther. This is well and good as far as it goes. But does it go far enough? Shouldn't it go further? Oh let us resolve here today that with the gracious help and blessing of God we, too, will earnestly contend, that is, fight and strive for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints. We cannot hope to accomplish what Luther accomplished, no, not the thousandth part of it. But what we can do, that let us do as God gives us our measure of knowledge and of strength.

So let us see to it most earnestly that we ourselves are firmly established in the knowledge of our most holy faith. Surely it is a truism which needs no proof that if we are to contend for the faith we must have a clear understanding of the faith. When St Jude speaks of the faith once

delivered unto the saints, it is clear he means the doctrine of faith. So let us study this doctrine of our Christian faith and diligently teach it to our children. Dear friends, it has ever been the glory of the true Lutheran Church that it has been a Bible Church, a Church which insists on a sound knowledge of Bible teaching and thoroughly indoctrinates its members, beginning with the Christian education of the child in Sunday School and continuing with Confirmation Lessons before the young are admitted to the Lord's Table; and which receives no adults as members without an intelligent acceptance of Biblical doctrine. On these lines let us, by the grace of God, continue, and ever seek to grow in knowledge. For only in this way can we be fitted out to contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints.

And what is the faith once delivered unto the saints? In this let Luther be our guide. In the storm of controversy he learned more and more to found his faith and his teaching on the infallible Word of God alone. By his constant study of the Scriptures he grew in the knowledge of the truth and thus commenced to lay down what is known as the formal, or formative, principle of the Reformation, namely that Holy Scripture, the Word of God, and this alone, is the source of truth and the only guide of the Christian Church in matters of faith and doctrine. And as he advanced in the knowledge of the truth Luther also laid down, more clearly and more vigorously than before, what is known as the material principle of the Reformation, namely the doctrine of Holy Scripture that the sinner is justified by God, and his sins forgiven, only by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. This was the divine truth which Luther had apprehended long before when he was still an unknown monk in Erfurt, and through which his troubled soul had found rest and peace. And it was on these two principles, principles which answer the question: 'And what is the faith once delivered unto the saints?' that Luther founded his writings.

We are to contend, the Apostle says, for the faith. Contend means to fight, to strive. It is a contest in which we are engaged, a battle with the powers of darkness, a battle with the prince of this world and his confederates, with the children of this world.....a fight in which we must never relax our efforts but always gather new strength and put forth new endeavours for we read in the Book of Revelation, chapter 20 verse 7: 'And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison.' Yes, Satan shall be loosed for a little season in order to bring about an apostasy the like of which has never been before. Pastor Peters in his commentary on the Book of Revelation '*The Judge is at the Door*' writes: 'We are being shown

how, shortly before Judgement Day, Satan will again be let loose out of his prison. We see in the 'little season' and in the loosing of Satan the last terrible days of tribulation.'

Dear Christian friends, when Satan is let loose out of his prison, he will be let loose amid Christendom which has the Word, let loose to lead Christendom as such from the Word, from the Gospel. Christendom will not sink back into dark heathendom; it will retain the Word for in his Gospel St Matthew tells us: 'And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,' and due to the blessings which it has enjoyed it will be rich in culture, in the arts and sciences and in scholarship. However the Word of Scripture, the Word of God, will no longer be seen as God's Word. Although its Godly power is felt, yet it will no longer be considered valid.

According to God's plan of destiny the devil will be loosed for a specific reason, namely to strike with hellish blindness the eyes of the disobedient and continuously-resisting Christians who have been blessed so greatly, so that henceforth they will see in the Bible only a human book through which God speaks to man... just as the heathen in darkest heathendom, seduced by the devil, believed that their gods lived in the idols which their own hands had fabricated, communicating with them in various ways, yes, believing that nature which surrounded them was God itself.

In the last days the devil will make Christendom truly pagan, the Bible becoming a dead graven image in which they will no longer will be able to see God's revelation or hear the voice of the God of Truth; to them the Bible will be a human witness of God, an archaic document of God's revelation, in short a human book which speaks of godly things but which contains errors and mistakes. Thus will Christendom, which has the Word, be seduced and led astray by the devil through the light of man's own reason, walking about as did the heathen who, without the Word, walked and believed according to the heart's desire. Christendom of the last days will be in possession of the Bible but it will not be understood.

And this will be supplemented by a truly pagan mode of living which will manifest itself in fleshly lusts and sin service, this in itself being a judgement of God's wrath which follows the despising of His grace. Think of the overwhelming passion for pleasure and creature comfort, the carnal mindedness and the unchastity which has taken over and which is raging especially among the youth. Does this not indicate that indeed a time has come in which, but for the

grace of God, even the true believers are in danger of being lost? Yes, Satan will make his last charge to lead Christendom astray as he had formerly done with the heathen. During these last days he is using the spirit of the times: unbelief, material mindedness, false doctrine, indifference toward the Word, the sciences and the wisdom of the world, sensual pleasures and the weird powers of darkness to attack the Church of God. This also harmonises accurately with what Jesus Himself says of the last days, namely, that they will be exceedingly sorrowful and if it were possible even the elect would be lost; if He did not shorten the days no man could be saved but for the sake of the elect He would shorten the days.

Dear fellow Bible-believing Christians, we read in the Book of Revelation chapter 20 verse 8 that Satan 'shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth', Satan shall go out to where the camp of the saints, the beloved city, the small body is found. These however are found only in visible Christendom where the Word resides. And this small body he will attack with severity, he will frighten it from all sides trying to destroy it. This picture we now see fulfilled before our eyes. Satan has been loosed to seduce the Christians, to draw them away from the Word. A battle never before seen has been kindled against the Word of God and this battle is not being waged as formerly by the heathen, the Turks or the Jews, but by those who are called Christians, yes, by those who profess to be Christians, believing Christians. Man is trying to destroy the foundation of the Church. The Bible is no longer allowed to be what it formerly had been considered: the Word of the Eternal God, written by holy men inspired by God. 'We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light'... these words of Holy Scripture carry no weight any more.

However so that all true believers may be comforted a lovely, magnificent preface precedes the introduction of the Fifth Vision as recorded in the Book of Revelation. In the 15th chapter, in verse 2, we read: 'And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire; and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God'. This is a magnificent, majestic picture,

showing how very different the happenings which we see in this vale of tears appear in God's eyes in the reality of eternity. 'For now we see through a glass, darkly... but then shall I know even as also I am known'. Here on earth the true Church appears as a little skiff in a boisterous sea, tossed about to and fro by the waves which constantly threaten to swallow it. The believers often appear so weak, so frightened and faint hearted, however before God's eyes they are heroes and victors, their lamentations reach His ear. He hears their voices and transforms their lamentations into songs of praise. They stand by the sea, the sea which in the Book of Revelation signifies the 'nations of the world'. However this sea we are told, does not fume or roar but it lies quietly, smooth as a mirror, like a sea of glass. But the sea is mingled with fire which means the wrath of God is to be seen on the surface of the sea. The wrath of God has veritably blended itself with world history and the history of worldly minded Christendom. The true believers however stand by the sea, and while they see God's flaming wrath penetrate the world, they are not touched by it; for them everything turns into a blessing and they stand with the harps of God in their hands and are able, like the three men in the fiery furnace, to sing songs of praise to God even during the dreadful last days.

Yes indeed if we belong to the true believers, if we recognise the seriousness of the times in which we are living, if we see what the world does not see, namely how God's judgements come rushing on, if we recognise that the end is at hand and if, because of this, we at times become faint hearted and fear befalls us, then let us gaze at this picture, reach for our harps of faith, and even though our voice be but an indistinctive stammer, let us nevertheless cry out:

And this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith!' Amen

—John Kleinig

Compiled and adapted with the guidance of Pastor B L Winter

Excerpts from:

Australian Lutheran - The Reformation Jubilee 1521-1921. Pastor W Peters - *The Judge is at the Door*



Notes and News

Hospital: These members have spent time or are still in hospital.

PRAYER.

Lord, Thou hast searched me and known me; Thou art acquainted with all my ways. Thou seest and knowest full well, O dear Lord, that I have a hearty desire to walk in Thy ways and to live as Thou hast commanded Thy children to live and as Jesus has taught us to live by His example. But, alas! I find that I am led astray from the good way and from my purpose by temptations now on this side, now on that. Now it is my own heart that leads me astray by wicked desires; now it is the world with its bad example. Whichever I follow, I incite Thee to anger, O my God and Lord, and wound my own conscience. The nearer I approach to the world, the farther I stray from Thee.

Therefore I pray Thee, lead and guide me by Thy counsel. Thou hast said: 'I will guide thee with Mine eyes.' Here I am, Lord; let Thy good Spirit lead me in the land of uprightness. Behold, I yield myself entirely to Thee, my God. Thou didst lead Thy people dry-shod through the Red Sea; Thou didst bring them unharmed through the wilderness to the Promised Land. Lead me through the dangers of this life, through the wilderness and the temptations of this world, with a good and unsullied conscience, into the life eternal. I commit my heart, my mouth, my members, and my entire life unto Thee. Govern my heart, and fill it ever with holy thoughts. Govern my limbs, that my hands may not reach out after forbidden things, and that my feet may not walk in the paths of sin that lead to hell. Govern my life and my tongue, that they may not utter curses, or shameful, unchristian, and unbecoming words. Govern my entire life, that henceforth I may never sin against Thee wilfully, but may be called and in truth be, a true and pious Christian.

Oh, forsake me not if in weakness I should resist Thee, and leave me not to my own guidance. For if I lead myself, I shall be led astray. Give me a holy carefulness in all my actions, and write Thy holy fear in my heart that I may regulate my life solely by Thy Word and by the example of my Jesus.

Guard, God, our faith forever; Let not Satan, death, or shame Ever part from us our Saviour; Lord, our refuge is Thy name. Though our flesh would fain say nay, Be Thy Word to us still yea. Amen.
(Starck's Prayer Book, p 181-182)

Hymn 303

TAKE Thou my hand and lead me
 O'er life's rough way,
 With heavenly manna feed me
 From day to day.
 Unless thou lead, I falter,
 And go astray,
 Lord, who my life canst alter,
 Choose Thou my way.

**What were the specific reasons
 WHY our early brethren formed the ELCR**

1. Christ's Word says in Rom. 16:17 that true Christians are to separate, have no church or prayer fellowship, with persistent errorists or false-teaching churches: 'Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause [Greek: keep on causing (in spite of instruction)] divisions and offenses contrary to [Greek: alongside of] the doctrine which ye have learned [entire Word of God]; and AVOID them.' Some of those present at the I Annual Convention of the ELCR in 1967.
2. Christ requires of His Church that she continues in His Word. '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).
3. God's honour demands that we accept and keep all His Word. Christ expressly says, 'If a man love Me, he will keep My Words' (John 14:23).
4. The Lord requires of the Church that the pure Word be rightly divided into Law and Gospel. 'Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth', 2 Tim. 2:15.
5. Toleration of error is unfaithfulness to Christ and contrary to the church's duty to defend the Truth from error. In Titus 1:9 all faithful pastors are told: 'Holding fast the faithful Word as he hath been taught that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers.'
6. Finally, where error is tolerated, souls are endangered. Gal. 5:9, 'A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump.' 1 Tim. 4:16, 'Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee.'

BL Winter (Std, 1996, 4, p 38)