



Steadfast

In the Word and Faith



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Contents:

- Page 37: What LUTHER Says about *MEANS OF GRACE*
Page 38: Devotion: *Psalm 50:12-15* - T Winter
Page 39: *Reformation Meditation* – B Winter
Page 41: *Blessed Fruits of The Reformation* – Part 5
Page 43: *The Chief Gift of the Reformation* - S Wood
Page 44: *Parents and Children*
Page 45: *The Training Ground of Sound Doctrine*
Page 47: Report of Convention 2017
Page 47: *Notes and News*

What Luther Says About Means of Grace



The Word Is Supreme. The Word of God is the greatest, most necessary, and most important thing in Christendom. For the Sacraments cannot be without the Word, but the Word may well be without the Sacraments. If need be, one may be saved without the Sacrament, but not indeed without the Word, as those are who die before they receive the Baptism which they desire SL 19, 1261

‘Faith Cometh . . by the Word of God’ (Rom. 10:17). God will not permit us to rely on anything or cling to anything with our hearts that is not Christ as revealed in His Word, no matter how holy and full of the Spirit it may appear to be. Faith has no other ground on which it can successfully stand. SL 11, 453

God Channels the Invisible with the Visible. God deals with us in two ways; first, outwardly; secondly, inwardly. Outwardly He deals with us through the spoken Word of the Gospel and through material signs, such as Baptism and the Sacrament of the Altar. Inwardly He deals with us through the Holy Spirit and faith together with other gifts. But He has an order and sequence in which He does all this. What is outward should and must precede, and what is inward should and must follow and come through the outward. God has determined to give no one the inward blessings without the outward one; for He does not want to give the Spirit or faith to any man without the outward Word and signs He has instituted for this purpose, as He says (Luke 16:29): Let them hear Moses and the prophets. Therefore St. Paul may call Baptism a washing of regeneration, in which God richly pours out the Holy Spirit (Titus 3:5, 6, 7), and the spoken Gospel a divine power, which saves all who believe it (Rom. 1:16).

Observe this order, my brother. Everything will depend entirely on it. SL 20, 202 f

God Not Found Outside the Word. Without these means, Word and Sacrament, we obtain none of these things. For since the beginning of the world God has dealt with all the saints through His Word and, in addition, has given them external signs of grace. This I say that no one may venture to deal with God without these means or build for himself a special way to heaven, lest he fall and break his neck, as the pope has done to his followers and still does, and as today the Anabaptists and other schismatic spirits do SL 5, 281 f

Diligently Use the Means of Grace. Since, then, the church has the command to dispense the forgiveness of sins in this way, no one should despise these means of grace, but everyone should use them gladly and often; for Christ certainly did not institute them without a reason. No doubt He knew that we need such remedies, for the devil and our flesh certainly surprise us quickly and cast us into sin. Then where shall we go? For what the wages of sin are we well know. Therefore we must be afraid. We should go nowhere but to the flock (Haufen) to whom Christ has given the command to forgive sin through the Word, Baptism, and the Sacrament. SL 13a, 1179

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Devotion — Psalm 50:12-15

v12. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee, for the world is Mine and the fullness thereof,

v13. Will I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats?

v14. Offer unto God thanksgiving, and pay thy vows unto the Most High,

v15. and call upon Me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me,

In the Apostles' Creed we recite the words, 'I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth.' What do these words mean? We confess with Luther:

'I believe that God has made me and all creatures, that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my reason and all my senses, and still preserves them;

'Also clothing and shoes, meat and drink, house and home, wife and children, fields, cattle, and all my goods; that He richly and daily provides me with all that I need to support this body and life; that He defends me against all danger, and guards and protects me from all evil;'

John 1:3: 'All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made.'

But why? Why did God create us, and why does He still preserve us? Did God need Adam and Eve to feed Him if He was hungry? Did He need them to keep the animals in check, to keep the Garden of Eden from growing wild? Did He need Adam and Eve to provide a living for Him?

No-where does God tells us why He created the universe. He no-where answers why. He no-where told Adam and Eve why they were created. But He did tell them what they were to do.

Genesis 1:28: '**And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'**

God placed Adam and Eve here to have children and populate the earth and to care for and

control all living things. They were created for service, for service to the Lord. They were created, not for themselves, but for God's glory.

Luther continues:

'And all this purely out of fatherly, divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness in me; for all which it is my duty to thank and praise, to serve and obey Him. This is most certainly true.'

Adam and Eve had two sons, Cain and Abel.

Both had occupations- Cain a farmer, Abel a shepherd. Where did Cain get his land, his produce, from? Where did Abel get his sheep? They were gifts from the Lord, gifted to Cain and Abel to serve Him as stewards. Both came before the Lord to offer sacrifices to Him of their increase. Both were offering back to the Lord what was already His. In the eyes of any witnesses, the sacrifice of the one was as valid as the sacrifice of the other. Yet one's sacrifice was accepted by the Lord, the other's wasn't. Why?

'V. 8, I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices, or thy burnt offerings, to have been continually before Me,' God says in verse eight of our chapter. The offerings themselves were what God had prescribed. Even the Pharisees in Jesus day brought offerings to the Temple, offerings that far exceeded what the Law required. The Jews have been meticulous in bringing to God the sacrifices the Law demanded.

But does God need them? Were they doing Him a favour in offering to Him what was already His? Was God hungry, and did need the flesh of bulls, of sheep, the grain of the field? Does He need

great temples to live in, and protect Him from the elements? Is there anything man can buy for God with His money?

So what is true worship, what service does God want when He is Creator of all things?

True worship of the Lord involves three things:

1. Call upon Me in the day of trouble;
2. I will deliver thee;
3. Thou shalt glorify Me.

1517-2017: 500th Anniversary of Luther Nailing the 95 Theses

Reformation Meditation

Why Must We Not Allow Ourselves to be Moved to Defect From our Evangelical Lutheran Church?

Because faithfully remaining by this Church brings inexpressible blessings, but falling away from the same brings an inescapable curse.

GOD'S BLESSING

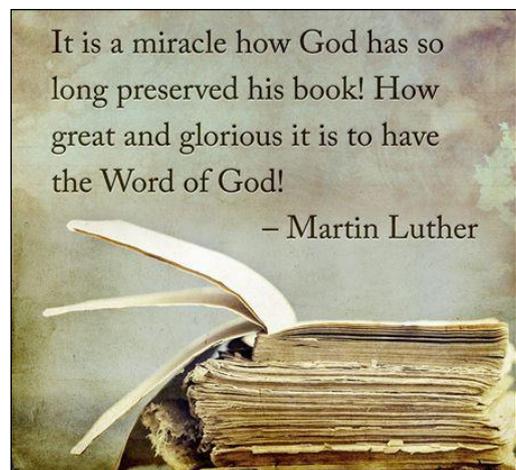


Those who remain with the orthodox Lutheran Church and her pure Truth, as purely confessed, and who fearlessly battle for that confession, are blessed beyond expression until death! To them, as it says in our text, 'is given an open door that no one can close.' (Rev.3:7). Their war in the midst of the temple seems so futile, yes, destructive, – yet they conquer! – Their opponents must finally, as the LORD promises the Christians in Philadelphia: 'Come and worship at your feet and acknowledge that He has loved you.' (Luther's Translation of Rev.3:9). They are the light of the world that utterly, powerfully dispels the intruding darkness of human doctrine once more. They are the salt of the earth who preserve indifferent and lazy Christians before they become completely spiritually corrupt. They are the walls who still stand in the breach. They are the pillars who bear and support the heavenly vault of the holy Church.

Here below the warriors for purity of doctrine will certainly be regarded and hated as loveless, quarrelsome, and destroyers of peace, indignity and persecution are their reward which they here reap. But, someday, these true warriors will wear the crown of victory. Christ gives them the great promise in our text: 'Whoever overcomes, I will make as a pillar in the temple of my God and he shall never depart from it. And upon him I will write the Name of my God and the name of the new Jerusalem, the city of my God, which comes down from heaven from my God, and my Name, the new one.' (Luther's Translation of Rev. 3:12). What a blessed prospect. –

It is a miracle how God has so long preserved his book! How great and glorious it is to have the Word of God!

– Martin Luther



GOD'S WRATH

..... But what must those anticipate who either have been instructed in the truth from their youth or who have even often heard the truth, and deny the truth that they have learned, forsake their orthodox church against better knowledge and, thereby, intentionally break the precious vow they have sworn to her?

What can they expect when they, either for the sake of their earthly goals, or out of hatred and indifference to their fellow believers, or indifference to the truth, or in spiritual pride and curiosity turn to a fanatical or unionistic or obviously false teaching church body? What can such defectors, who break their vows, anticipate?

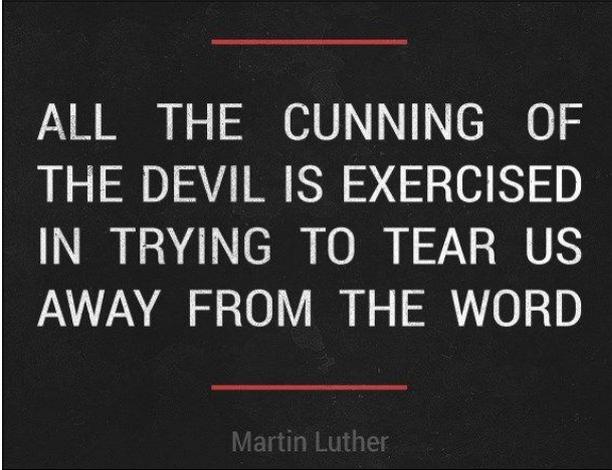
God's Word tells us. It says: 'But whoever yields, on him My soul will take no pleasure.' (Luther's Translation of Heb.10:38). Terrifying threat! What can be more terrifying than if God no longer takes any pleasure in a person? Of such a person it says: 'If God is against him, who can be for him?' He is banished always and forever. But it says further in Psalm 68: 'God delivers the prisoner at the appointed time, but leaves the defector in a dry land.' (Luther's Translation of Psalm 68:6). Finally, Christ himself says: 'Whoever is ashamed of Me and My Words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man will also be ashamed, when He will come in the glory of the Father with His holy angels.' (Luther's Translation of Luke 9:26). Oh, what terrible prospects for souls who have defected! Here they must be in 'dry lands,' that is, without true comfort. The grace they thought that they had was only self-deception. Some day, when they appear before Christ, the LORD will turn His gracious countenance away from them and they will be shut out of the Church Triumphant, even as they here have excluded themselves from the Church Militant. –

Or do we question this threat of God in his Word? Back in the time of the Reformation a Roman priest of Bautzen in the Upper Lusatia of Saxony, by the name of Urban Nicolai, came to the knowledge of the truth of the Lutheran doctrine and also confessed it publicly. But, after a brief period of time, he fell away, turning back to the fleshpots of Egypt, and the confessor became a blasphemer.

Once on Trinity Sunday, in the year 1537, he mounted the pulpit, blasphemed, as usual, and, finally, spoke these parting words: 'If Luther's doctrine is right, may I be struck by lightening!' So what happened? On that very evening a frightful storm arose. Bolt after bolt of lightning criss-crossed the sky, and thunder rolled like a thousand shouts of God's wrath. The miserable man, reminded of his summoning God's justice, quickly rang all the church bells, ran into the church and cast himself, trembling and shaking, before the altar and prayed. But behold! A bolt of lightning descended upon the kneeling man and struck him dumb to the ground. The citizens of the village ... ran in and carried him out as a dead man. Yet a second bolt of lightning descended and struck him dead on the spot, whereupon those carrying his body ran away, greatly alarmed, but unscathed....

Why did God do this?

For this: To warn all Lutherans, whom God has given the jewel of pure doctrine, before they fall away. Oh then, let us not play games with our salvation! 'Do not be deceived,' the holy apostle cries out, 'God is not mocked!' (Gal.6:7). Let us heed His voice which calls out to warn us with thundering Words and terrifying judgements: 'Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown' (Rev.3:11). Let us remember: If those who remain steadfast with the Truth must also (as already said) bear the thorny crown of rejection, mockery and hatred, so what? – They, thereby, become like the One who, because of his confession that He Himself is the truth, had to bleed on the cross. But as that Man now sits upon the throne of His glory, so He will also, someday, bring His true confessors out of shame into eternal glory, out of strife to eternal triumph. He will also confess them before His Father and crown their heads with the impassable diadem of heavenly glory. For He says: 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.' (Rev.2:10). He who remains faithful to the end will be saved. Amen! Amen!¹



ALL THE CUNNING OF
THE DEVIL IS EXERCISED
IN TRYING TO TEAR US
AWAY FROM THE WORD

Martin Luther

¹ (Walther's Sermon on Rev.3:7-13. Brosamen. Translated by Rev Baseley. Adapted; paragraphs and emphases added).

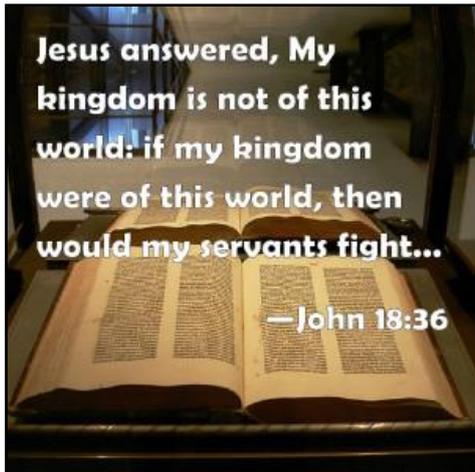
Blessed Fruits of the Reformation - Part 5

(Taken from 'The Reformation and Its Blessed Fruits' by M. L. Gotsch)

VII. Effects of the Reformation on Civil Government.

47. *What was the condition of civil government before the days of Luther?*

The Pope asserted that kings and other rulers were his subjects and owed him obedience in all matters. If any ruler objected to this, he was excommunicated, and his subjects were told that they need obey him no longer.



48. *How did Luther meet these arrogant claims?*

Luther declared that the powers of Church and State are **separate**, because Christ says: '**Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's.**' He showed that the Pope and his bishops and priests are **subject to the secular government**. He also **opposed** those who, on the contrary, wanted the State to govern the Church.

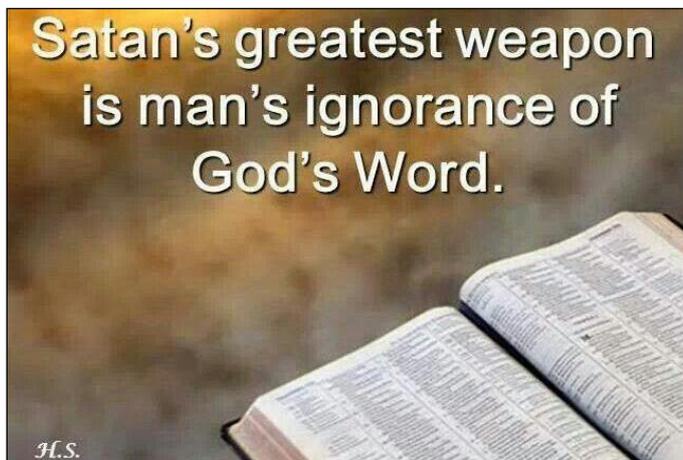
49. *What did Luther teach regarding civil government?*

The **rulers** were told to guard the peace, seek the welfare of their subjects, grant them liberty of conscience, erect schools, and see to it that all their people received at least a common school education. The **subjects** were admonished to obey '**the powers that be**' in all matters that were not contrary to the Word of God, '**for the Lord's sake.**' These and other Bible-truths gradually had a good effect upon both rulers and subjects, and **the people were gradually given their civil rights and liberties.**

50. *What has our country to thank the Reformation for?*

In our country **Church and State are separate**. All citizens enjoy religious and civil liberty under a constitution which is **based on the principles of government laid down by Luther.**

VIII. Effects of the Reformation on the Life of the People.



51. *Describe civil life in Europe before, and up to the time of, the Reformation.*

Ignorance was quite common, indeed, almost universal, among clergy and people. But **few of the common people could read, and the Bible was a closed book** even to those who had learned to read. The masses were kept in bondage and poverty. Moral conditions were generally bad.

52. *What great changes in this respect were brought about by the Reformation?*

By translating the Bible into German Luther gave all his countrymen opportunity to read it and ponder its truths. He called upon **all Christians to be the judges of the doctrine preached to them.** In his **Small Catechism** he explained the Ten Commandments, and in the 'Table of Duties' he gave special lessons to pastors and laymen, to rulers and subjects, to husbands and wives, to parents and children, to masters and servants, etc. He favoured liberty of speech for the citizen and education for boys and girls.



53. Name some of the effects of the Reformation on the life of the citizens.

Because the people received a better education than before, **they learned to know and demand their civil rights**. Labour faithfully performed for the family or for the community was given proper reward. Civil estates and family life again came into their own.

54. What reason have we to thank the Lord also for these blessed fruits of the Reformation?

Freedom of speech and religious liberty, which we enjoy in this country, our educational system, popular government, etc., as a result of Luther's activities, are indeed a blessed fruit of the Reformation.

IX. Effects of the Reformation on Music in General

55. Tell of Luther's interest in music.

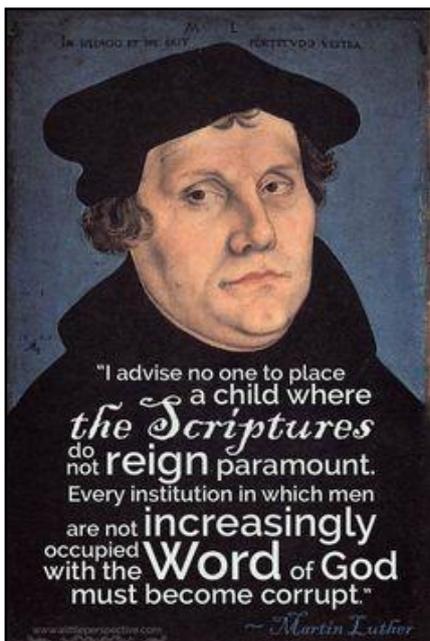
Luther studied music and the rules for composing as a student in Erfurt. **Music was a favourite pastime in the circle of his family or friends**. When congregational singing was introduced in Wittenberg, **only hymn tunes and choruses of first quality found favour with him**. Luther's own tune to 'A Mighty Fortress Is Our God' still holds its own as music of the highest order.

Music As Servant of the Text

"Music is the handmaiden of theology."
Martin Luther

56. What was the influence of the Reformation on the art of music?

Whenever young and old sang the hymns and devoutly listened to chorus music in church, **a taste for good music was cultivated among the people**. Many beautiful hymn tunes and choruses were written by the best composers.



57. Tell more of the development of the art of music after the period of the Reformation.

The pipe-organ and the various instruments we have in orchestras were improved and used to accompany and embellish hymns and choruses or in pieces written exclusively for these instruments. The development of music for two centuries after the Reformation was greater than during the fifteen centuries previous to the Reformation.

58. Why have we reason to be thankful for 'this gift of God,' as Luther calls it?

We may well say that we could not **enjoy congregational singing** nor the wonderful oratorios, cantatas, symphonies, and other concert music if God had not ushered in the glorious Reformation of the Church by His chosen vessel, Dr. Martin Luther.

The Chief Gift of the Reformation

The Psalmist wrote, ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.’ (Psa. 119:105).

Without the Word of God we walk in darkness, ‘strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world’ (Eph. 2:12). The way of life is unknown and unknowable. The testimony of nature and conscience is not enough. The Word of God is the one and only fount of saving truth and faith. ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.’ (Rom. 10:17).

Without faith we cannot be saved, ‘for whatsoever is not of faith is sin’ (Rom. 14:23), and ‘without faith it is impossible to please him’ (Heb. 11:6). Thus, without the Word of God, the soul sinks into despair and everlasting destruction. This was largely the situation before the Reformation. There was ‘a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord.’ (Amos 8:11). But a little remnant cried to God, ‘O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles.’ (Psa. 43:3).

Before the invention of printing, few people owned or had access to a Bible. Bibles were very rare and costly to produce. They had to be transcribed by hand, and it took a skilled penman about ten months to create one copy. A single copy could cost nearly \$2000 in today’s currency. One often had to pay a considerable sum just to be able to read the Scriptures for one hour. Even if read, most people could not understand it as most Bibles were written in Latin or other ancient languages. Luther understood the great need of the people, and he was deeply concerned with removing the obstacles that prevented access to the Word of God. Ever since he had first discovered a precious Bible chained to a wall at the University of Erfurt, he wished that others, too, could come to read for themselves these most wonderful truths. As he battled the Roman Antichrist, he longed for the day when people could judge for themselves from the Scriptures whether they could be justified by faith in Christ alone or by their own works.

After his great confession at Worms before the Emperor Charles V and the Roman Catholic world, Luther was put under the imperial ban. This meant that anyone could now capture and deliver Luther to the authorities, dead or alive. Frederick the Wise thus feigned a kidnapping of Luther and confined him for his own safety at the Wartburg Castle for nearly a year. While he was there, Luther visited Wittenberg in December, 1521. His friends, especially Melanchthon, urged him strongly to undertake a new translation of the Bible. After his return to the Wartburg, he immediately went to

work. Equipped with only a handful of commentaries and helps, Luther completed the entire New Testament in three months. Despite the incredible speed with which it was done, this Bible proved to be one of the clearest, most concise, and most accurate Bible translations ever produced. Soon, about 3,000 copies were made available to the public. Three months later a second edition was made necessary, and subsequent editions followed after that. Luther had opened the world to the contents of the Word of God. People of all ranks of life could now read it for themselves in their own German language to their eternal benefit.

Soon Luther began work on the Old Testament. He and his colleagues at Wittenberg took great pains to be accurate. Luther recalled, ‘With Philip [Melanchthon] and Aurogallus I sometimes pondered full fourteen days upon the meaning of a word or line before the proper idiomatic phraseology was discovered.’ In order to ascertain the correct terms for the Jewish sacrifices, he once invited a butcher to come and give the proper names for the various parts of a sheep. On another occasion he and his colleagues borrowed the court jewels to better understand the precious stones described in the Book of Revelation. The Old Testament was finally finished in 1532, and the entire completed German Bible was first published by Hans Lufft in 1534.

Luther later described the effort it took to translate the Bible. ‘In translating Job, Master Philip, Aurogallus, and I laboured so, that sometimes we scarcely handled three lines in four days. Now that it is translated and finished, everybody can read and criticize it. One now runs his eyes over three or four pages and does not stumble once – without realizing what boulders and clods had once lain there where he now goes along over a smoothly-planed board. We had to sweat and toil there before we got those boulders and clods out of the way, so that one could go along so nicely. The ploughing goes well when the field is cleared. But rooting out the woods and stumps, and getting the field ready – this is a job nobody wants.’ On another occasion Luther described the qualifications one must have to do the work of a translator. ‘Ah, translating is not every man’s skill as the mad saints imagine. It requires a right, devout, honest, sincere, God-fearing, Christian, trained, and experienced heart. Therefore I hold that no false Christian or factious spirit can be a decent translator.’ (*Luther’s Works*, Vol. 35, pp.188, 194). Many in that day sought to criticize and discredit Luther’s translation, but his work has stood the test of time. For almost five hundred years, Luther’s Bible has been the standard Bible of German-

speaking people. As to his own work, Luther wrote, 'This I can testify with a good conscience – I gave it my utmost in care and effort, and I never had any ulterior motives. I have neither taken nor sought a single penny for it, nor made one by it. Neither have I sought my own honour by it; God, my Lord, knows this. Rather I have done it as a service to the dear Christians and to the honour of One who sitteth above, who blesses me so much every hour of my life that if I had translated a thousand times as much or as diligently, I should not for a single hour have deserved to live or to have a sound eye. All that I am and have is of His grace and mercy, indeed of his precious blood and bitter sweat. Therefore, God willing, all of it shall also serve to His honour, joyfully and sincerely. Scribblers and papal [fools] may blaspheme me, but real Christians – and Christ, their Lord – bless me! And I am more than

plentifully repaid, if even a single Christian acknowledges me as an honest workman.' (*Luther's Works*, Vol. 35, p. 193).

The chief gift of the Reformation, among many other great gifts, was the opening of the Word of God to the common man. It showed men the true and only way to salvation. It disclosed to them the false doctrines of the Roman Catholic religion. It allowed them to compare and weigh the decrees of popes and councils. And it preserved to posterity the chief doctrines and principles that had been reclaimed for the kingdom of God. What had been dark was now illumined, and the Antichrist and his hosts could no longer deceive the world. 'The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.' (1 Peter 1:24-25). Amen. —S Wood.

Parents and Children

The tie between parents and children is a very close one.

There is every reason in the world why they should be and remain the best of friends. The very thought that they are one flesh should unite them and should endear them to each other.

Moreover, God has also given to parents and children a mutual, natural affection which normally makes the one precious to the other. Does not the weakness and inexperience of the child make its appeal to a right-thinking parent? And should not the consideration of the kindness, the care, the service, the devotion, of a parent for son or daughter fill the child's heart with gratitude and attachment?

And yet! — and yet! — we find estrangement creeping in between parents and children. At times there is an open breach. At other times this may not appear on the surface, but, after all, there is inner estrangement, lack of affection, and coldness. There may be a secret grudge or contempt or ill will. Why is this? What is the cause? We hear it stated that parents have antiquated ideas, that they fail to understand youth. And again we hear it said that the youth of our day is rebellious and intractable.

But why conjecture and guess? We know the reason of estrangement between parents and children. We know what it is that troubles them and disunites them and mars the peace of the home and produces disharmony where there should be the sweetest cooperation. It is sin. The very sin which drove our first parents from Paradise now drives Paradise from our homes.

Perhaps some one will tell me that I am saying nothing new, that he has heard that over and over again, that he is tired of hearing it, that it does not solve the difficulty. And whoever says that says the truth, in part. It has often been said that sin is the cause of all evil. And it is also true that the mere knowledge of this fact will not help much. But to know this and to keep it in mind is one step in the right direction. Thus we recognize the cause of the disorder. And knowing it, we may seek the proper remedy for it, for God has told us what to do with and against sin. He has given us the antidote for sin.

In order to deal with this evil, we should also remember that sin lives in parents and in children and that, if these are to live in peace together, they must be on their guard against the disturber of the peace. Sin is in all of us and may crop out at any moment. And right here we find one aid against sin's harm: neither parents nor children should expect sinlessness in the other. Indeed, parents should remember that their child's most serious struggle is the struggle with his own sin. And children should not forget that no child has a perfect father and mother. If children recognize in their parents Christian devotion to the temporal and spiritual welfare of the child, they ought to thank God for such parents.

And now the next step. Let each remember that sin produces sin. The persistent disobedience of a child, its disrespectful behaviour, its loveless selfishness, will cause a reaction in parents. Sinful behaviour in the parents, self-indulgence, carelessness, and neglect will cause resentment and wilful selfishness in the child. Parents and children must both fight against their sinful nature. And this must be a prayerful fight. That, prayer, is a real power against the monster that would destroy the home. Let parents and children pray together and separately just as Jesus taught us to pray. If they sincerely and from the heart pray together: 'Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us,' then they

will certainly bear and forbear. And that will make for peace in the home.

Let the parents, as the older, more experienced and wiser, lead the way. What a power for good the father may be by practising proper family devotion with his children! When parents and children read God's Word together, the devil flees, and angels enter. When parents and children pray together, Jesus is there to hear and to bring them, not the fruits of the flesh, but the fruits of the Spirit, which are joy, peace, long-suffering, faith, gentleness.

And now let us go a step farther. Parents cannot always be with their children. Children will associate with others; they go to school, they are instructed by others, they hear and read many things, and through these associations, instructors, and books and magazines sin may either be fostered, or sin may be driven out. It is for parents to do what they can to provide proper schools and instructors for their children, to provide good books, to provide, as far as possible, proper, helpful companionship.

Let parents especially keep in mind what the Scripture teaches us:

'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,' Prov. 22, 7; and this: 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life,' Prov. 4, 23. Look to your own and to your children's thoughts, convictions, hopes, and desires. Therefore parents should be greatly interested in all the things which fashion their children's characters. The time and money, care and trouble, expended in looking after the children's reading and association are worth all that they cost.

Let me add a word concerning companionship. All sin is not learned from companions, because sin is in the children themselves. But just because we are so easily tempted, we should be careful in making the selection of close friends. Indeed, concerning this matter of friends it is our duty to pray for new daily strength, so that we may not be an offense to others and may not be offended by them.

Our Church provides Christian schools; it provides entertaining Christian literature and periodicals; it provides young people's societies, the Walther League; it provides summer camps. Some believe that these social activities of the Church are actually overdone. True, some may overdo social indulgence; but that does not prove social and entertaining features sinful in themselves. Let us use them for needed recreation and then return to our serious occupations. And let us do all that we do in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks unto God and the Father by Him.

Thus our gracious Lord will, according to His promise, grant to such parents and children that wisdom of which James writes: 'But the wisdom that is from above is first and pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace,' Jas. 3, 17.18. (*Lutheran Witness*, 1930, p 257-258)

The Training Ground of Sound Doctrine

[Editor: We recently were given the following article by a Reformed author. Without endorsing his Reformed doctrinal position, the article makes some very fine points, GLW]

For over a decade, I have been reviewing books that are of particular interest to Christians. While the vast majority of the titles I have reviewed are solid works founded on biblical principles, I am far better known for those occasional reviews of the very worst books in the Christian world. Sadly, these books that teach the worst are often the books that sell the best.

I do not relish writing such reviews. That's partly because they meet plenty of backlash. But it's mostly because I find writing them very sorrowful. It's sorrowful to witness the church's widespread theological ignorance exposed by these books' popularity. Because Christians are not trained in sound doctrine, they wholeheartedly embrace error, often finding it more satisfying than God's revealed truth.

We have attempted to make Christianity palatable by making it simplistic.

There are many reasons that ignorance pervades today's church. For decades, Christians have focused on felt needs rather than doctrinal truth. We have focused on immediately-applicable topical sermons rather than verse-by-verse exposition that unleashes the whole truth of God's whole Word. We have ceased catechizing our children, building within them a solid, systematic foundation for their faith. We have emphasized Christianity as a relationship with God at the expense of Christianity as an established body of truth. In so many ways, we have focused on feelings rather than facts. We have attempted to make Christianity palatable by making it simplistic.

While the Christian faith is much more than facts, much more than doctrines, it can never be less. Christianity is dependent upon truths that are taught by God's Word and received by God's people. Every Christian is responsible to learn sound doctrine, to be in trained in the truth in order to discern error. Here are three means God has provided for us to train ourselves in sound doctrine.

Train Yourself in Sound Doctrine

Every Christian is individually responsible to study sound doctrine and learn it for themselves. Paul told Timothy, ‘If you put these things before the brothers, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, being trained in the words of the faith and of the good doctrine that you have followed’ (1 Timothy 4:6). Paul wanted Timothy to know that this training would be hard work: ‘Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth’ (2 Timothy 2:15).

To know sound doctrine, we must know the Word of God, for ‘all Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work’ (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Every Christian must read, study, and know the Bible and the truth it contains. King David models an appropriate love for God’s Word when he exclaims, ‘Oh how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day’ (Psalm 119:97). By day and by night he read the Bible, he learned the Bible, and he applied it to his life.

Christian, you must know the truth of the Christian faith. And to know the truth of the Christian faith, you must know the Bible. You must sit under the teaching of God’s Word week by week in the local church. You must ensure a habit of regular, consistent Bible intake, reading the Word, pondering the Word, and ensuring you are living consistent to it. You have access to myriad resources to help you in this—books and commentaries and web sites that will help you further understand, embrace, and apply the truths of God’s Word. Commit your life to the pursuit of the sound doctrine by a deep commitment to God’s Word.

Train in Sound Doctrine With Your Family

Parents have a sobering, God-given responsibility to instruct their children in the Word.

Every Christian is responsible to personally know and embrace sound doctrine. Every Christian parent is also responsible to teach sound doctrine within the home. Moses commanded this from the very beginning when he said, ‘And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates’ (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).

Parents have a sobering, God-given responsibility to instruct their children in the Word. This involves reading the Bible to their children, but also explaining it in age-appropriate ways and applying it to specific situations.

We see this beautifully modelled in young Timothy. Paul commended Timothy’s mother and grandmother for the way they had raised the lad to know, understand, and treasure the Word of God. Paul was able to say, ‘But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus’ (2 Timothy 3:14-15). Timothy had the inestimable privilege of spending his whole life being taught the Word and the sound doctrine it contains.

Parents, it is your solemn responsibility to instruct your children in the Word of God and in its doctrine. Familiarize them with the Word, with the story it contains and the characters it describes. But also ensure that you also familiarize them with its pattern of sound doctrine. Take advantage of the many devotionals, creeds, and catechisms Christians have created for just this purpose. Instruct your children so they, too, will know the truth.

Train in Sound Doctrine With Your Church

Just as parents bear the responsibility of teaching sound doctrine with the home, pastors bear the responsibility of teaching sound doctrine within the church. As Paul writes to his colleagues Titus and Timothy, he pleads with them to teach sound doctrine, to guard it faithfully, and to ensure its preservation by entrusting it to others (Titus 2:2, 2 Timothy 1:13, 2:2). Paul himself taught sound doctrine by instructing believers both ‘in public and from house to house’ (Acts 20:20). In public ministry and private ministry, in big groups and small groups, Paul actively taught the people the Bible’s key truths. Paul’s most solemn charge of all was for Timothy to preach the Word and its every truth: ‘I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching’ (2 Timothy 4:1-2).

But it is not just pastors who bear the weight of training in sound doctrine. Every church member must be rooted in truth. Paul commanded all believers in Ephesus, ‘Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom.’ God has provided fellow believers in the local church to admonish us in sound doctrine and to guard us against falling away from it.

When Paul spoke the word to the Jews in Berea, they ‘received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so’ (Acts 17:11). Likewise, all Christians are called together to test all things according to the Scriptures. This is a noble calling in God’s sight.

Train in Sound Doctrine for a Lifetime

Training ourselves in sound doctrine cannot happen without diligence. But even as we use all of the means God has given us, training in sound doctrine cannot happen overnight. It requires small, daily investments of mornings in private study, evenings of worship with the family, and weekly faithfulness in gathering with the church. Over time, these small seeds of training will yield the fruit of righteousness.

Christian, start training in sound doctrine today. Make daily investments of faithfulness in private, with your family, and with your church. Then you will be ‘equipped for every good work,’ ready to hold God’s unchanging truth and reject any deadly doctrine.

Tim Challies, March 6, 2017 <http://www.challies.com/articles/the-training-ground-of-sound-doctrine>

Report 2017 ELCR Convention, Toowoomba

Notes and News

Hospital:

Both are spending some time in hospital. Both continue to have some serious health concerns and very much appreciate everyone's thoughts and prayers. They both continue to look to their Saviour for strength and help, and have found much comfort in His holy Word. S Wood

The Believing Christian Prays God to Implant in His Heart the Love of His Neighbour

EXHORTATION

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother, whom he hath seen, how can he love God, whom he hath not seen? And this commandment have we from Him that he who loveth God love his brother also. 1 John. 4, 20. 21.

"A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13, 34. 35) —with these words Christ describes by what mark

His true disciples shall be known, namely, by the love which they show to their neighbour. No one should imagine that it is possible for him to dwell in the love of God while he hates his neighbour. This can never be.

However, we are to regard as our neighbour (1) our friends, our benefactors, and relatives. When loving these persons we indeed fulfil our duty, but this is not an exclusively Christian virtue; for the unbelieving also love their friends, benefactors, and relatives, as long as these do nothing to injure them. We are to regard as our

neighbour (2) the person living next door, our fellow-citizens, and strangers, yea, even persons who envy us, take advantage of us, and hate us.

It is especially towards this second class of our neighbours that we are to manifest our love, and that, (1) not only by wishing them no harm, by not reviling them, by not returning evil for evil, but rather by wishing them everything good, by showing them love and friendship, and by loving them as we love ourselves.

(2) As regards our enemies, we must banish from our heart all bitterness, revengefulness, hatred, and malice;

and, on the other hand, we must show by word and deed that we bear them no grudge and hatred, but only cherish love for them in our hearts. We must do, really and truly, what Jesus says: "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven." Matt. 5, 44. 45 (*Starck's Prayer Book*, pp187-188.)

Baptism:

May God grant that these two lambs of God may be kept safe in the Saviour's arms through the Word of God.

Birthdays:

40th Anniversary of Church Building, Woombye

On Sunday July 16, Trinity Congregation, Woombye celebrated the 40th anniversary of the dedication of their church building. The congregation formerly worshipped at a church on Nambour Connection Road. Land had been purchased and a church was built at 29 Back Woombye Road, Woombye. It was dedicated on 4 July, 1977, Pastor Bryce Winter conducting the service, and preaching on Eph 2:19-22. Pastor Kleinig officially had opened the church building and unveiled the dedication plaque.

At the 40th Anniversary service, Pastor Gavin Winter took the confessional address, based on Acts 26:29, and opened the service.

Pastor Bryce Winter, as the dedicating Pastor, was asked to take the sermon, based on the same text on which the church was dedicated, Eph 2:19-22. A special event for the congregation was the completion of a planter box at the front of the church, which was set aside to remember the Hoger family who had been faithful members of the congregation for many years.

a former member of the congregation, was present to represent the family.

After the service, a Community lunch was enjoyed by all. The proceedings continued outside, with Pastor Gavin Winter presenting a devotion on Luke 24:29.

then presented a photo history of the church, including its building, baptisms, Confirmations and weddings.

May God grant to the congregation His blessings, always to remain faithful to His Word.