



Steadfast

In the Word and Faith



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What Luther Says About —

The Lord's Supper



Naturally, This Sacrament Is Not Absolutely Necessary. Of course, that [saving our souls] may take place without the Sacrament. It is true, it may also take place without the body of Christ sitting at the right hand of God. Should Christ, therefore, not be at the right hand of God? Again, it may take place without the Gospel; for who would hinder God if He had willed to save us by some act and had decided not to have it preached and not to become man? He created heaven and earth and to this day makes everything without external preaching and without becoming man to do it. Should the Gospel for this reason be nothing? But now, since it is His will to give salvation to you through the humanity of Christ, through the Word, through the bread in the Lord's Supper, who are you, conceited, unthankful devil, to ask why He does not do it in a different way and without these means? Will you choose and prescribe ways and means to God? You should leap for joy that He does it in whatever manner He chooses, if only you get it. (SL 20, 882)

Close Communion a Necessity. Christ addressed His sermon to all, as did the apostles later on. All heard it, believers and unbelievers. He who accepted it, accepted it. This we, too, must do. But we must not cast the Sacrament to crowds of people in this way...When I preach the Gospel, I do not know upon whom it makes an impression; but in the case of the Sacrament I should hold that it has made an impression upon him who comes to it. (SL 11, 615)

Lutheran Altars for Lutherans Only and Lutherans at Lutheran Altars Only. It terrifies me to hear that in one and the same church or at one and the same altar both parties are to find and to receive one and the same Sacrament and one party is to believe that it receives nothing but bread and wine, while the other is to believe that it receives the true body and blood of Christ. And I often wonder whether it is credible that a preacher or shepherd of souls can be so hardened and malicious as to say nothing about this and to let both parties go on in this way, receiving one and the same Sacrament, everyone according to his own faith, etc. If such a person exists, he must have a heart harder than any stone, steel or adamant; he must, in fact, be an apostle of wrath...Whoever,

therefore, has such preachers or suspects them to be such, let him be warned against them as against the devil incarnate himself. (SL 17, 2016)

The Best Preparation for Communing. Not by any preparation or work of your own do you become worthy and fit to partake of the Sacrament. This takes place through faith alone. For only faith in the Word of Christ justifies, quickens, makes a man worthy and well prepared. Without this faith all other efforts beget either presumption or despair. For the just shall not live by his preparation but by faith. Therefore you must not hesitate at all because of your unworthiness; for you, an unworthy person, come to be made worthy and righteous by Him who seeks to save sinners and not the just. (SL 15, 580)

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Devotion — John 16:23,24 – Part 3

(continued from March – April 2019)

The prayer that never fails:

v.23 And in that day ye shall ask Me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.

v.24 Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

It is with a great power that Christ has equipped His Church—the right of prayer, direct petition with the Father through Christ’s Name.

Christian prayer is powerful, because as Christ affirms with a double oath, Amen, Amen, “Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My name, He will give it you.” So let us in true faith employ this privilege. John 16:24: “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name. Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.” Expanded translation: “Up to this time you requested not even one thing in My Name. Be constantly requesting, and you shall receive, in order that your joy, having been completely full, might persist in that state of fullness in present time.”

It is generous and gracious of our dear Lord to give to us the right of prayer, but it is a right that must be used, and used constantly, to be effective. The force of the Greek in verse 24 is really: “Be constantly praying”, a command. Pray without ceasing, Paul exhorts us (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

What are we to pray for? Whatever we desire. With this distinction—He promises to give us whatever we ask for in Jesus Name, in true faith and in conformity to His will. We call this

prayer in spiritual matters. In earthly matters, where we have been given no promise in His Word, we ask, “Thy will, not mine, be done.”

Having been saved by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have peace with God. Romans 5:1: “Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” And this wonderful truth grants to us this gracious privilege, “by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:2). And to those who, through faith, exercise their privilege of access to the grace which Christ has promised, stands this promise: “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.”

Joy (chara) is a deep and abiding inner rejoicing which was promised to those who abide in Christ, “These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11).

It does not depend on circumstances because it rests in God’s sovereign control of all things, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the

called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

The true joy that Christ promises is a feeling of inner gladness, delight or rejoicing. Joy in the Lord is joy that is based on spiritual realities (and independent of what “happens”). Joy is an inner gladness; a deep seated pleasure. It is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful heart. It is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful behaviour. Joy is not an experience that comes from favourable circumstances but is God’s gift to believers by grace through faith. In Acts we see a beautiful illustration of joy that abides in spite of physical circumstances, the example of the Apostles who had just been persecuted, beaten, and threatened, “And they departed from the presence of the Council, rejoicing (*present tense, continually rejoicing*) that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the Temple and in every house they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:41, 42).

And despite being persecuted, beaten, and put in the stocks, what do we find Paul and Silas doing in Philippi? Acts 16:25: “And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God.”

How can we as believers “maximize our joy”? Fellowship with the Father and Son brings joy, “That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father,

and with His Son, Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you that your joy may be full” (1 John 1:3,4). The Lord’s Word brings joy, “These things have I spoken unto you that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full” (John 15:11). Repentance brings joy, “I say unto you that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons which need no repentance” (Luke 15:7,10). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

The hope (absolute assurance) of future glory brings joy, “but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings, that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:13). Prayer brings joy, “Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24).

Although joy is a gift of God through His Spirit to those who belong to Christ, it is also commanded of them, Philippians 4:4, “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!” May we in faith seek to grow in joy through prayer and in submission to Christ, remembering His words of promise, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28).

—TJW

By God’s Grace strive to have and maintain a Christian and Biblical Marriage

(This devotion was prepared by Pastor Bryce Winter and delivered by _____ at the 50th
Wedding Anniversary of _____ . Printed by request.)

“As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (Joshua 24:15).



God in His grace joined you together in marriage in Joshua 24:5 was the text that you chose on the basis of which with God’s help you desired to base your married life. Those were difficult times. We were only a small church. The falling away from God’s Word in doctrine and morals was intense. If there ever were turbulent days, those were. Yet with the Lord at your side, clinging to Christ as your Saviour

in your hearts and united in God's Word, you stepped forward confidently in Christ's Name to declare before the world, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Background to the text

Joshua was 110 years old when he spoke these words. He looked back and saw the spiritual laxity of the Israelites in Egypt. Repeatedly he experienced their rebellion in the desert. He was astounded at their detestable worship of the golden calf and the wickedness that went with it. With a heavy heart he saw the hundreds of thousands of those who disobeyed the Lord die in the desert. Yet in God's grace Joshua had seen the wonderful and amazing acts of God's grace: the wonderful comfort to their faith of the first Passover, the incredible mighty power of God in the 10 plagues, the dividing of the Red Sea and their rescue from the Egyptians as God had foretold, how the Lord wonderfully provided for them with manna, protected them from their enemies, gave them the written Word of God in the first five Books of the Bible, and especially how amazingly the Lord led them through the Jordan into the promised land.

But now the time had come for Joshua to go home to His Lord. He had faithfully taught the people God's Word and was particularly concerned about the heathen who worshipped idols and committed abominable acts near them. So after prayerfully weighing everything up in the light of Christ's Word and having discussed these things with his family he held out before them a challenge: "Choose you this day whom ye will serve!" In steadfast faith in the promised Coming Saviour, Jesus Christ, both Joshua and his family **declared their determination**, no matter what the others did, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

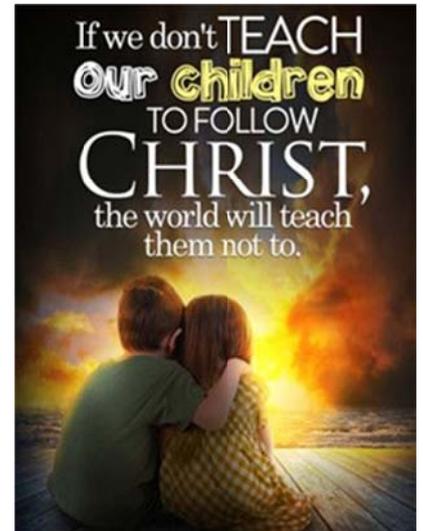
In today's culture it is indeed **a rare, yet precious privilege that a Christian husband and wife can celebrate 50 years of married life together**. When we see how Christian marriage is under attack by Satan, when Christians experience and endure many hardships during their life's journey together as husband and wife and when we see the devastating results of the lack of Christian homes both in the church and in our country, we learn **how important it is for Christian homes, for husband and wives**, more than ever before, to declare in faith: "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." May we use this occasion not only to thank our Saviour, Jesus Christ, for all the rich blessings that He has graciously bestowed upon you, Evan and Glenys, but also **to renew our determination** that with Christ's help we will do our utmost to encourage and promote **Christian homes**.

Christian Husband and Wife, Base Your Marriage on Christ and His Word

These words of Joshua, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD," are spoken by true Christians and are addressed especially **to true Christians**. Christ wants to **be invited into every home**. Unbelievers don't want Him there. They are only delighted with sin. All trouble that occurs in the world is as a result of sin. Sin brings strife, arguments, separates us from true happiness and does not want us to have a blessed Christian home. But in His great love Christ came into the world and gave His life as the ransom payment on Calvary's cross to pay for all sin. In His Gospel Jesus invites both husband and wife to receive Him as their only Saviour by faith alone, without any works of ours. As with Joshua and his family when **Christ lives in the family by dwelling in the hearts of all by faith then each person cannot help but want to live in accordance with His Word**. That is why the Lord tells us in Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the Church, and gave Himself for it." This is what happiness in a home where a redeemed blood-bought husband regards his wife so valuable that he sacrifices himself for her welfare according to the example Christ set. What blessedness there is in a home where it can be said, "Whoso findeth a (Hebrew: a true and faithful) wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour (Hebrew: and approval) of the LORD." (Proverbs 18:22)! In other words such blessedness comes from faithfully following Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

What is True Love according to the Bible?

True love which unites the hearts of husband and wife and **finds its source in the great sacrificial love of Christ**, moves husband and wife and everyone in the family **to cherish and nurture each other with the precious truths of God's Word**. This is truly **"serving the LORD"** by the power of Christ's cross. That is why it has been a blessed thing that the Lord has moved you both **to maintain the family altar in your home**. Our chief responsibility to each other is **lovingly to help each other on the narrow road of Christ's redemptive work to eternal life in heaven**. Our greatest joy ought to be that with the power of God's Word and prayer we have sought to do everything to help each other stay with Christ. Many visitors, friends, children, members of the church and non-Christians have through the Word dwelling richly in your home had an opportunity to be influenced by Jesus for their salvation. Ah, what a different world and a far more blessed world it would be, if families would lovingly hear and embrace the precious truths of Scripture. This love for each other is like a small plant which needs to be nurtured and constantly cared for.



Oh, how much strife and trouble could be avoided if in Christian homes true children of God in love forgive one another! What a difference it would make if they seek to resolve difficulties "with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Ephesians 4:2,3). A good translation of this according to the Greek reads that they are to act "with all humility [forsaking self-righteousness], and gentleness [maintaining self-control], with patience, bearing with one another in [unselfish, self-sacrificial] love, making every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit (which is founded on God's Word) in the bond of peace [as each individual works together in faith to bring this about]." If the sinful world wanted to obtain a glimpse of what heaven was like, wouldn't it be wonderful if we could point to such a Christian home where Christ loves to dwell and say: "There is a brief glimpse of heaven!"

Edify and encourage each other with God's Word

Finally, the Lord so ordained that husband and wife **encourage each other with God's Word**. Many times sorrows, sicknesses and heart-aches occur which attempt to rob the Christian home of the joy Christ wants us to have. Then let us put our trust in the Lord's good and gracious will, knowing that He will never fail or forsake us, and in faith in Christ truly stand side-by-side with each other knowing that "all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). That is why we read in Ecclesiastes 4:9,10,12: "Two are better than one;... For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up... And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken."



Dear friends, isn't it worth it to go about all matters in our lives **God's way**? In spite of Satan's attacks on marriage and the Christian home, ought we not to continue regarding Christian marriage as something **of great value and worth**? Ought we not as true believers in Christ to be even more determined with Christ's **help to regard marriage as precious**? How does it stand with us? Can we truly say, by God's grace, "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15).

it is due to the Lord's grace alone that He has brought you to this special milestone, protected and helped you. As you thank Him for the greatness of the blessings you have received from Him, be determined in faith

to continue to hold the words of your wedding text before your eyes while the Lord still has work for you to do for Him in this world. Whatever may occur in the future, let this be the joyful confession of your heart: “Sinners though we be by nature, yet redeemed by Christ’s blood, it is our firm desire to follow Joshua’s example in Joshua 24:15, ‘As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.’” Never forget what you prayed and promised in your wedding hymn:

O blessed home, where Thou are loved the dearest,
O Saviour, Jesus Christ, the soul’s true Friend,
And where among the guests no other cometh
To whom all hearts such loving cheer extend,
Where all with joy to Thee are fondly turning,
Where every eye for Thee with pleasure speaks,
Where all to know Thy will are truly yearning,
And every one to do it promptly seeks.

O blessed home, where Thou are not forgotten
When joy is overflowing, full and free;
Where every heart and sorely wounded spirit
Is brought, O great Physician, unto Thee.
Until, at last, the day’s work fully ended,
All meet Thee in the blessed home above,
In that blest home, to which Thou hast ascended,
Thy everlasting home of peace and love. Amen.

—BLW

The Lord’s Prayer—Part 8 – Seventh Petition

The seventh petition of the Lord’s Prayer instructs us to pray, “But deliver us from evil.” Luther says, “We pray in this petition, as the sum of all, that our Father in heaven would deliver us from every evil of body and soul, property and honour, and finally, when our last hour has come, grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven” (*Luther’s Small Catechism*, 1943, p166).

There is some debate as to whether this petition should be taken as “deliver us from evil” or “deliver us from the evil one”, referring it to Satan personally. Both are grammatically correct, depending upon whether the Greek word (*poneron*) is to be understood as a neuter or a masculine noun (which look the same in Greek). Our Lutheran Church regards it as a neuter noun, referring it to all evil of this world, including the devil. One commentator writes, “The neuter construction, “the evil,” makes the petition more inclusive, is in better accord with the characteristic terseness of the Lord’s Prayer, and gives the Lord’s Prayer a fitting conclusion... The Lord teaches, then, to conclude the prayer with the petition for deliverance from the devil, the sum total of all the evil in the world, of body and soul, coming as it does from him who is the source of sin and the father of falsehood” (Johannes Ylvisaker, *The Gospels*, p281-282).

Luther also translated the petition as “deliver us from evil.” He explains, “In the Greek text this petition reads thus: Deliver or preserve us from

the Evil One, or the Malicious One; and it looks as if He were speaking of the devil, as though He would comprehend everything in one, so that the entire substance of all our prayer is directed against our chief enemy. For it is he who hinders among us everything that we pray for: the Name and honour of God, God’s Kingdom and will, our daily bread, a cheerful, good conscience etc. Therefore we finally sum it all up and say: Dear Father, pray, help that we be rid of all these calamities [evils]. But there is nevertheless also included whatever evil may happen to us under the devil’s kingdom—poverty, shame, death, and, in short, all the agonizing misery and heartache of which there is such an unnumbered multitude on the earth” (*Concordia Triglotta, The Large Catechism*, p729-731).

The Greek word for “*deliver*” is “*ruomai*,” and means to “*break the chains*,” “*loose the bands*,” “*pluck us away* ” from evil. It signifies two things. First it means to defend, protect, keep, and preserve us from falling into evil. Second, it means to rescue us out of the evil into which we have already fallen. The Septuagint (Greek Old Testament) often uses the word to mean “to deliver out of the enemy’s hands.” The word is also commonly used in the New Testament. Paul says that Jesus “*delivered* us from the wrath to come” (1 Thessalonians 1:10). Again, Paul writes, “There shall come out of Sion the *Deliverer*, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” (Romans 11:26). Paul also asks that prayers be made so “that I may be *delivered*

from them that do not believe in Judaea” (Romans 15:31). He adds, “what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord *delivered* me” (2 Timothy 3:11). While Jesus was on the cross, the Jews chided, “He trusted in God; let Him *deliver* Him now, if He will have Him: for He said, I am the Son of God.” (Matthew 27:43). Finally, Peter affirms, “The Lord knoweth how to *deliver* the godly out of temptations” (2 Peter 2:9).

As long as we are in this world, we will have to endure many evils. In this seventh petition, (1) we pray that God would mercifully defend, preserve, keep, save, and protect us from the devil and all of his skills, snares, temptations, and cruelty. If the devil has entangled and caught us in his snares and temptations, we pray that God would rescue us from the consequences of our own sins. (2) We pray that God would keep us from falling into future sin. (3) We pray that God would keep us from the sorrows of the life to come, that is, from everlasting pain. (4) We pray that God would protect us from things that we have asked of Him which He knows would be harmful to us. (5) We pray that if God chooses not to deliver us from some evil, that He would give us patience, obedience, consolation, and hope so that we may endure the evil in a godly way. (6) Because we know that we can never have perfect and complete deliverance from all evils in this world, we pray that we would someday be taken out of “this vale of tears” and given everlasting life. (7) We pray that God would keep us from an evil death.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelations 14:13). “Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy Word: For mine eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:29-32).

We, Christians, experience the powers of evil, both in the world and in ourselves. We look to God for help. We ask that He either spare us from these evils or give us the strength to bear them and turn them to our benefit. And daily He does spare us and does deliver us from so many evils. He snatches us away from the roaring lion, so that we ever sing of Him “who redeemeth thy life from destruction.” Paul prepared the early church for such evils. He said, “We must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Let us, therefore, look to the goal—the Kingdom of God. Let us pray that God would “grant us a blessed end, and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Himself in heaven.” The last hour is the hour that will seem to be the blackest of all evils; but through it we Christians enter into the Kingdom of Glory. “And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (2 Timothy 4:18).

—S Wood

The Faith That Justifies

The Lutheran Church stands four-square on the doctrine of justification by faith. By this our Church teaches that a person is made just and perfect, righteous and holy in God’s sight solely and alone by faith in the redemptive work of Christ wrought on Calvary’s heights for sinful man. Any doctrine which conflicts with this teaching is cast aside and rejected. Our Church will have none of it. Only one glance into the confessional writings of our Church will convince anyone that this doctrine is the keynote of the whole. In fact, when Dr. Martin Luther nailed his Ninety-five Theses to the church-door at Wittenberg, he brought to light again this cardinal doctrine, long held in obscurity during the Dark Ages.

Our Church, let it be known, is standing on solid ground when it makes this confession. Its fiercest enemies have tried their utmost to tear it down, but without success. And the reason why their efforts were futile is evident. Our Church has as its foundation God’s holy Word. In other words, this cardinal doctrine is taught in many clear statements of Scripture. St Paul writes: “Therefore we conclude that a man is *justified by faith*, without the deeds of the Law” (Romans 3:28). Again: “Knowing that a man is

not justified by the works of the Law, *but by the faith of Jesus Christ...*” (Galatians 2:16). And to the church at Ephesus, St Paul wrote: “For by grace are ye saved, *though faith*” (Ephesians 2:8). Moreover, the statement “The just shall live by *faith*” is found three times in the New Testament and once in the Old Testament.

But what does this mean, that faith justifies us? It was not so long ago that a young man who had not been reared among Christian environments read this statement of the Apostle Paul in a Bible placed in his room at a hotel. He asked the writer what was meant by the word “faith”. And no doubt others have had similar experiences. Suppose the man working next to you at the office asked you, “What does the Lutheran Church mean when it teaches that it is faith that justifies a person? What is faith?” What would be your answer?

The Bible itself answers our question; for we read in the 11th chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews: “Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” In these words we are told that by faith we are sure of things which we do not perceive through our senses. Jesus pointed out the same truth when He said to Thomas: “Blessed are they that have not seen and yet have believed!” Faith, therefore, in its widest sense, is the confident assurance, based upon the Word of God and created in our hearts by the Holy Spirit, that whatever God tells us is the truth, upon which we may rely with all our hearts. Before we can have such faith, we must first have knowledge of what God tells us; “How shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard?” (Romans 10:14). Knowledge of what God says is a prerequisite of faith. No one can have true faith in Christ if he has never heard of the Saviour and knows nothing of Him; much less can a person be said to have faith when he openly rejects what the Word of God says about Christ. The Pharisees and the scribes, in the days of Jesus, knew much about Christ, but they did not have true faith, for we are told that they would not assent to what Jesus said. These men boasted that they believed Moses, but Jesus told them: “Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed Me” (John 5:46). One who does not know what God says, or, if he knows it, does not assent to it, certainly does not believe the Word of God.

It is likewise important to remember that such acceptance must not merely be a process of the mind or a moving of the lips. We must accept Jesus as our Saviour with our whole heart. Merely to recite the Apostles’ Creed with our lips does not constitute faith. For that matter a parrot can be taught to say, “I believe in God the Father Almighty...” and yet no one will say that faith is present. The acceptance which the Bible requires of a person is found in the incident of the nobleman who came to Jesus filled with anxiety for his son who was at the point of death. We are told: “He believed the word which Jesus had spoken.” His anxiety was quieted because he accepted with his heart what Jesus had spoken.

Let us now apply this to justifying faith in Christ. The sinner who has heard of the wrath of God because of his sin and is alarmed and troubled hears that there is a Saviour from sin, Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. The Holy Spirit, through this Word, both creates hunger for this Bread of Life and satisfies this hunger. The Holy Spirit fills his heart with the confident conviction: the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanses me from all sin. This faith of the repentant sinner in the Saviour is justifying faith.

This justifying faith must be nourished in order that it may not wither, grow weak, become sickly and die. For this purpose God has given us His Word and Sacraments. If a Christian begins to feel doubt in God’s gracious forgiveness, he should pray to God to give him full assurance of this forgiveness. It is a wretched thing for a Christian to be troubled with doubts, and it is not necessary. A Christian should wish to be spiritually rich and full of spiritual life and joy. God has told us: “Covet earnestly the best gifts.” And there is no better gift than a joyous, victorious faith, a certainty of God’s grace in the forgiveness of sin and the joyous hope, therefore, of heaven and its happiness. Having prayed for this gift, we should then also go where God gives it to us.

He gives it to us in His Word and in the Sacraments. When we confess our sin and the pastor pronounces absolution, then and thereby God bestows upon us again the forgiveness of our sins and strengthens our faith. For in absolution God Himself says to each of us: “Be of good cheer, my son, my daughter, thy sins be forgiven thee.” When we attend the Sacrament of the Altar, there God tells each one of us: “As sure as you receive with your mouth the body and blood of Christ, so sure you should be that by this very body and blood all your sins have been forever removed. You are righteous in the sight of God, you have been acquitted in the court of heaven.”

It is true, the sinner who has by faith accepted the forgiveness offered him in the Gospel and is justified has not thereby become perfectly holy in himself. He will daily feel sin within himself. He will confess: “I daily sin much and deserve nothing but punishment”, and therefore he always prays every day: “Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us.” But he will not wilfully and carelessly wallow in gross vices and sins against God’s commandments. He will also daily pray: “Lead us not into temptation,” and “deliver us from evil” and yet his life will be imperfect. But from God’s Word he daily accepts God’s pardon and rejoices in this truth, that “God daily and richly forgives all sins to me and all believers.” And by such faith he is justified and accounted righteous in the sight of God. And “if God be for us, who can be against us? ...Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even on the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Romans 8:31,33-39).

Walter Luebke (The *Lutheran Witness*, 1928, p89-90)

Soul, Seek Thy Saviour

“And when He was come near, He beheld the city and wept over it” (Luke 19:41).

See the great humiliation
Here the King of Glory shows;
While they scorn His free salvation,
Jesus weepeth for His foes.
Greater love was never known,
Richer mercy never shown.

Hardened and relentless city,
Doomed in misery to fall,
Hearing deafened to all pity,
Heir to bitterness and gall,—
Lo, the city hopeless lies,
With her peace hid from her eyes.

But am I, illuminated
With the holy Gospel word
And with saints affiliated,
Always faithful to my Lord?
No, His precepts I’ve not kept;
For my sins I should have wept.

Israel’s prophet, when foreseeing
All the crimes of Hazael,
Wept with saddened heart and grieving
For the fate of Israel.
He for others’ sins would cry;
For my own mine eyes are dry.

I recall the cold reception
Oft I gave Christ’s proffered love;
How in crosses and affliction
I did oft impatient prove:
Lord, like Peter, I want place
Where with tears to bathe my face.

But my tears work no exemption
From the debt I owe to Thee;
Nothing but Thy blood’s redemption
Can my soul from sin set free.
“Nothing in my hand I bring;
Simply to Thy cross I cling.”

L. M. Wagner (The *Lutheran Witness*, 1928, p89)

Notes and News

Hospital: Since the last *Steadfast*,
comfort in the following passage:

spent some time in hospital. May she find

Read: John 5:26-35

VERSE 30—"I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent me."

O CHRIST, Thou wondrous Son of God and Son of Man; Thou who art called the Lily of the Valley, and the Bright and Morning Star, because of Thy glorious beauty: wherever Thou dost meet us in the gospel story Thou dost, make us pause and marvel at Thy person and Thy work. Thou art the eternal Son of the Father, equal with Him in majesty, in power, in wisdom, one with Him in the Godhead—yet Thou dost subject Thyself to Him, dost make His will Thy law, dost permit Him to send Thee forth upon the errand of our salvation. The mystery of Thy two natures joined in one person is far above our understanding—yet we know that in this mystery our eternal hope is bound up. Accept our praise, our reverence, our worship, for Thy Saviourhood. There is none like Thee, there can be none to displace Thee in our faith and in our love. O Master, do Thou so employ our thoughts with the sublime vision of Thyself as Thou art, that we may never heed the voices of those who will not bow the knee of their proud reason before Thee as the Mediator and Redeemer. Defend us from the temptation to place Thee lower than the exalted station which is Thine and Thine alone. Make us valiant champions of Thy gospel truth. Bend our wills to Thine; and, when Thy great day hath come, let us be among those who worship before Thine eternal throne. Amen.

(Moments with God, p14)

