



Steadfast

In the Word and Faith



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Contents:

Page 13: What Luther Says About—*Languages*
Page 14: Devotion— *Luke 22:39–44 – Part 2*—Pastor T Winter
Page 15: *God's Spiritual Blessings*
Page 18: *Letting Scripture Speak for Itself—Part 7*—Pastor S Wood
Page 19: *Luther Excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church, 1521*
Page 20: *An Excellent Inscription*
Page 20: *Practice the Biblical Institution of Family Worship*
Page 23: *Notes and News*

What Luther Says About — Languages



Language, God's Great Gift to Man. Among all the works or gifts of God the most outstanding is the faculty of speech, for by this activity alone man is set apart from all animals. Some excel man by their sense of sight, some by their sense of smell, some by their sense of touch, etc. But all lack the faculty of speech. Therefore this fact is itself a proof that the word is of a most exalted nature. (W-T 1, No 1148)

Learn a Language by Trying to Speak It. By imitating speech a subject is more easily learned than by study and books. You can see this in my little daughter. Although she is not four years old, she knows how to speak well and, indeed, clearly, about household matters. In ten years a boy cannot learn from grammar and by reading books a language which an infant learns in two years. So great is the power of speech and imitation. (SL 22, 1933, No. 1122)

The Value and Necessity of Knowing Hebrew. I have often advised you to learn the Hebrew language and not to neglect it so. For even if this language were useless otherwise, one should still learn it out of thankfulness. It is a part of religion and divine worship to teach or learn this language through which alone we can learn anything at all of the divine. In it we hear God speak, we hear how the saints call upon God and achieve the mightiest deeds; thus study directed toward learning this language might rightly be called a kind of Mass or divine service. Therefore I earnestly admonish you not to neglect it. There is a danger that God may be offended by this ingratitude and deprive us not only of the knowledge of this sacred language but of Greek, Latin, and all religion...I know how useful it has been to me against my enemies. For that reason I would not be without this knowledge however small it is for infinite sums of gold. You, too, as future teachers of religion, should apply yourselves to the task of learning this language, unless you want to be taken for dumb cattle and uninstructed rabble who somehow teach the Sunday Gospels and the Catechism with the help of books that have appeared in German. We need theological leaders; we must have fighters who stand on the battle front

against men of other nations and languages, men who are teachers, judges, and masters in this language. (SL 5, 342 f)

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Devotion — Luke 22:39–44 — Part 2

(Continued from March – April 2020 edition)

And He came out, and went, as He was wont, to the mount of Olives; and His disciples also followed Him. And when He was at the place, He said unto them, “Pray that ye enter not into temptation.” And He was withdrawn from them about a stone’s cast, and kneeled down, and prayed, Saying, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from Me, nevertheless not My will, but Thine, be done.” And there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in an agony He prayed more earnestly: and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. And when He rose up from prayer, and was come to his disciples, He found them sleeping for sorrow, And said unto them, “Why sleep ye? rise and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.” Luke 22:39-44

As brought out by the other Gospels, Jesus prayed three times. The third time, His anguish was such that an angel came from heaven and comforted Him. See the depths of humiliation to which the Son of God had entered for our salvation! His depths of suffering were so great that none of His disciples could provide Him with comfort – it was so great that they could not even stay awake under the strain, but were overcome by sleep through the sorrow and anguish of it. In the end, the mighty Creator of heaven and earth had to be comforted in His anguish by a creature from heaven – the Creator comforted by the created, a holy angel! As the Psalmist says (Psalm 8), for a short time He made Himself lower than the angels.

But even this was only a short break, a short rest. The angel came and strengthened Him, not to ease His suffering, but in order that He might face even more. Now we read that as He prayed, He sweated. And not just sweat, but blood oozed through His skin like drops of sweat which fall to the ground. The Greek brings out that these drops were large, thick drops. It was the misery and fervour of His soul, glowing in the unbearable heat of this tribulation, that caused this phenomenon.

Finally, we see the depth of His suffering from the prayer that He uttered. The very reason that He had come into the world was for this purpose, as the ransom payment for the sins of the world.

Yet He prays from the anguish of His soul: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me.” The humiliation of Jesus is so great that He begs the Father to find another way to work the redemption of the world. The very counsel of God which drove Him down from His throne of glory into this vale of tears was darkened before His eyes in this hour. What a depth of humiliation!

And yet, there was not the slightest murmuring against the decree of God. Always the will of God was to be carried out first. Jesus sacrificed His will to that of His heavenly Father. In suffering He learned obedience, and He practised submission, becoming obedient unto death, ending His pray, “nevertheless not My will, but thine, be done.” According to His human nature the struggle was so great that He prayed for some other way to redeem the world. Indeed, the next day, when He hung there on the cross, suffering the full torments of the damned in hell, He screamed: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!” No man, in this life, can possibly know what hell is like, to be forsaken by God. And yet, in humble submission, He nowhere murmurs against the holy, righteous will of God, ending His prayer, “Thy will be done.” As Isaiah prophesied (Isaiah 53): “He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not his mouth.”

It makes all the difference in what tone of voice

a man says: “Thy will be done.”

(i) He may say it in a tone of helpless submission, as one who is in the grip of a power against which it is hopeless to fight. The words may be the death-knell of hope.

(ii) He may say it as one who has been battered into submission. The words may be the admission of complete defeat.

(iii) He may say it as one who has been utterly frustrated and who sees that his desires can never come true. The words may be those of a bleak regret or even of a bitter anger which is all the

more bitter because it cannot do anything about it. (iv) He may say it with the accent of perfect trust. That is how Jesus said it. He was speaking to His Father; He was speaking to God whose everlasting arms were underneath and about Him even on the cross. He was submitting, but He was submitting to the love that would never let Him go. Life’s hardest task is to accept what we cannot understand; but we can do even that if we are sure enough of the love of God. Romans 8:28: “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.”

—TJW

God’s Spiritual Blessings

(Continued from January – February 2021)

[May we learn and treasure the lessons that are highlighted in this synopsis of Hochstetter’s “*History of the Missouri Synod in North America and Her Doctrinal Controversies*” (translated by _____). By God’s grace alone we owe so much to the great blessing of purity of doctrine which the LORD through Walther and the old orthodox Missouri Synod brought to Australia. Let us in true faith and with all our strength fight to uphold it. This article has been submitted to and approved by Pastor Bryce Winter who requested Phil Lienert to compile it. The bolded emphasis is _____ BLW]

In the previous article it was noted that the Missouri Synod remained faithful to God’s Word and the Lutheran Confessions (since they are based on God’s Word) and hence flourished. It is important to note that the Missouri Synod would not entertain any thoughts of entering into fellowship with those who did not base their confession solely on God’s Word. This meant that they kept apart from the Roman Catholics, Methodists, the sects, and other false teaching Lutheran Synods. It also meant that for this stance they were criticized and slandered.

The Missouri Synod and the ELSA in Australia both saw the importance of training pastors and teachers for positions within the Church. Both started in very humble ways but one advantage that the Missouri Synod had was in the larger numbers of immigrants that went to North America as compared to those who came to Australia. The Americans opened a magnificent new building for their Seminary in 1883, whereas in Australia at that time there was only the modest building in Lobethal. Pastor Peters only established a College at Murtoa in 1894, which was eventually shifted to Adelaide in 1904.

In the period of time that we are discussing (1847–1884) the error that was described as “Unionism” was widespread. This is where it is advocated that churches combine or become united without agreement in doctrine. Usually what happens is that differences are ignored, compromised, or swept under the carpet. When that happens truth is the big sufferer. In the July – August 1985 edition of *Steadfast*, Pastor Kleinig wrote regarding unionism: “Above all may we observe the **Scriptural Rule: No union without true and complete unity in Scriptural doctrine and practice.**” Pastor Kleinig had a profound knowledge of Church history and of the Scriptural doctrine of Church fellowship. The founding fathers of the Missouri Synod also understood this doctrine well.

Apart from those bodies mentioned in the first paragraph there were also the “secret societies” or the lodges. Pastor Wyneken in particular had to fight against them as some of his members belonged to lodges. The Saxon Lutherans, known as Old Lutherans, were thoroughly educated old-school people,

spotlessly orthodox. It was said by their opponents that they were so stiff that they kept away from the American Lutherans for that very reason. The Reformed, the Methodists and the General Synod (Lutheran) could not be said to be orthodox.

Wilhelm Sihler went to the United States in 1843, as a result of a call for help from Pastor Wyneken. In 1846, Sihler started a small seminary in the parsonage of St Paul's Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne. Walther had already opened a seminary in 1839 at Perry County for the Missouri Synod. This marked the foundation of Concordia Theological Seminary, which trains pastors for the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod). Later this Seminary at Fort Wayne became the practical seminary of the old Missouri Synod. Sihler encouraged zeal and love for the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. He especially criticized the **General Synod** (a false teaching Lutheran Synod) for lacking these, claiming the leaders were apostate, "open counterfeiters, Calvinists, Methodists, and unionists...traitors and destroyers of the Lutheran Church." (Quote from F. Bente in *American Lutheranism*, Volume 1.)

Sihler said among other things that, "surely no one is more sorry than we are that we cannot, with our hearts and good conscience, enter into fraternal fellowship, or even ecclesiastical relations, with all who bear the name of Lutheran here in America. For the Word of God, which alone is to determine our hearts and consciences in all our behaviour, forbids us to have any contact with such church fellowship or even only ecclesiastical relations, which causes division and scandal in addition to the doctrine we have learned, Romans 16:17, and which persistently opposes this doctrine, whether in one or several points. 'Avoid such,' it says. Among these, however, are not only the papists and enthusiasts, but also the false brethren, that is, the so-called Lutheran General Synod."

The General Synod had been founded in 1820 and said that although they had examined Luther's doctrinal structure according to God's Word and found it to be essentially correct, nevertheless they were on common ground with the **United Church of Germany**. As a result of this, only essential agreement in **opinions** on doctrine and life was required of them. They did not regard differences between the Old Lutherans and Reformed Church as essential. They regarded the Old Lutherans as behind "our modern age."

Luther's view of the real presence of Christ's true body and blood in Holy Communion had long since been abandoned by the United Church of Germany, and hence the General Synod in America, although they did not endorse the Reformed doctrine on Holy Communion with their rationalistic emphasis. The Missouri Synod believed that their response had to be that the, "Word of the Holy Scriptures as the truth inspired by the Holy Spirit will also agree with the Lutheran Symbols with respect to the form of the saving doctrine, in the correct understanding of the Bible," – that the "confession of the Church is the voice of...her heavenly Bridegroom."

True Lutherans claim that the Lutheran Symbols are in complete agreement with God's Word, "in terms of their content," and so when, "Church servants take up their office they commit themselves to the Symbols as their own confession." These servants are not free to, "interpret the truth of salvation for themselves and to take the words of the Sacraments in a figurative way." For adhering to this line of thought the Missourians were criticized for being very rigid and their ceremonies very uniform. But in spite of such criticism there was flexibility in matters where adiaphora were present.

There is quite a lengthy segment dealing with the General Synod, the Ohio Synod and the translation of the Lutheran Catechism, which makes very interesting reading but space in this article precludes any comment on it. However, a few words about the **Michigan Synod** are in order because they had become lax in doctrine and there was a danger that this would lead to souls dying spiritually. One of the side effects of this was that this worked to the advantage of the sects, especially the Methodists. Those who were trained in Basel (Switzerland) came with some erroneous opinions, especially in the mission field. One of these were that **the confessional differences between the existing churches must be dropped**. When the Lutherans wanted to preserve the truth revealed in Word and Sacraments, they were told,

“You want to quarrel about words!” This opened the field to the Methodists who became so powerful that, “they found their way from there to Germany. The **Methodists** did not place their faith on the Word but rather placed their Christianity in a courser or finer (form of) **works righteousness**.”

Some called themselves Evangelicals, but Dr Walther said they should be called **legalists**, “Because they want to base the consolation that the sinner, who has been crushed by the Law, (and who) can (alone) obtain (salvation) through faith in God’s grace given in the Gospel alone, on emotional impressions, heartfelt sorrows, prayer exercises, wrestling, fighting and seeking sanctification. Instead of right conversion, this rather causes **excitement**, and in the fire of temptation such stubble is soon consumed.” And so in the very early years the Missouri Synod had to battle Methodists, Baptists and other similar enthusiasts.

Der Lutheraner reached a readership of 15,000 within the Missouri Synod in 1884. It was asked how it was possible in the Missouri Synod to arouse such a lively interest in a church **Doctrinal Paper**, whereas in Germany you only get such numbers for religious **entertainment** publications. This was answered by, “whoever stands in the true faith, and now has interest in the pure doctrine, which had been completely eradicated in this country had become alive again.” **People were fighting for the restoration of the Lutheran Church in its original form**. Their numbers were still extremely small compared to those who were fighting them, and in spite of the lies and slander aimed at them, they were undaunted because they believed that **the Lord** had set out to restore His Church and that nothing could stop Him. “He will carry out His work with almighty power. The truth will triumph, and the enemies of the truth will be brought to shame. Amen.”

The fifteenth Convention of the General Synod in 1872 celebrated the 25th anniversary of the existence of the Missouri Synod. The main theme was: “What issue do we have to resolve, so that the blessing which God has poured out on us over the last 25 years will not be spoiled by us, but will be inherited by our descendants?” It was pointed out that in a time of almost general apostasy (the desertion from one’s belief) from the Lutheran faith there was unity among the Missourians in purely Lutheran doctrines and fraternal harmony and collaboration among those that made up the Missouri Synod.

There was talk about the dangers of spoiling the blessing, and Scripture was quoted to help point this out. They were warned of showing ingratitude to God, of complacent boasting which provokes God to anger, of satiety (becoming sick and tired of being fed with God’s pure Word), stinginess towards God’s Kingdom and godless living. But particular emphasis was placed on the fact that:

- a. Pastors were to watch not only over their congregations, but also over themselves; to carefully prepare their sermons and practice pastoral care conscientiously.
- b. The churches were to receive the Gospel not only in Word, but in power and in the Holy Spirit, establish and promote Christian schools, practice fraternal punishment and discipline in a truly evangelical spirit.
- c. The theological publications were to continue to present and defend the pure Lutheran doctrine.

It was emphasized that, “it is much more difficult to preserve the treasure of pure doctrine and right faith and godly life than it is to pass over it...for whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance! But whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath” (Matthew 14:12). Only then do we really preserve the treasure, when we also advance.

The Word of God is and always will be a power of God. Every sermon a pastor preaches must first be a sermon addressed to himself. “The pastors should not be mere light bearers, but lights; they should not be mere salt vessels but salt themselves. He who preaches repentance to others is condemned tenfold when he does not repent himself.” They were warned of the dangers of complacency, apostasy appearing suddenly, the unfounded hopes of some who hoped that the Lutheran Church would attract large numbers from other Churches and so end up being the ruling Church in America. This was prophetic,

“because seven years later the Missouri Synod was involved in a serious battle,” when the “controversy over the Election of Grace (or Predestination) broke out in 1879.”

[Next time in the concluding article we look at the controversy on the doctrine of Election and the wonderful Biblical help the old Missouri Synod gave to our old faithful ELSA here in Australia. BLW.]

Letting Scripture Speak for Itself – Part 7

Internal witness of the Spirit

When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth.¹

He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you.²

In [Christ] are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.³

The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.⁴

The things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God.⁵

Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.⁶

They have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.⁷

Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.⁸

They do always err in their heart; and they have not known [His] ways.⁹

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.¹⁰

If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which he hath testified of his Son.¹¹

He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.¹²

We have the mind of Christ.¹³

He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.¹⁴

If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God.¹⁵

We know that his testimony is true.¹⁶

Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.¹⁷

It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven.¹⁸

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.¹⁹

The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.²⁰

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.²¹

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.²²

One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see.²³

I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.²⁴

Whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him.²⁵

And hereby we do know that we know him.²⁶

We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding.²⁷

Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you?²⁸

We know that he abideth in us, by the Spirit which he hath given us.²⁹

He that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth, and the spirit of error.³⁰

I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it.³¹

These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life.³²

¹John 16:13; ²John 16:14; ³Col 2:3; ⁴1 Cor 2:14; ⁵1 Cor 2:11; ⁶John 14:17; ⁷Rom 10:2; ⁸2 Tim 3:7; ⁹Heb 3:10; ¹⁰1 Cor 2:12; ¹¹1 John 5:9; ¹²1 John 5:10; ¹³1 Cor 2:16; ¹⁴John 3:33; ¹⁵John 7:17; ¹⁶John 21:24; ¹⁷1 John 2:20; ¹⁸Matt 13:11; ¹⁹John 8:31–32; ²⁰Eph 1:18; ²¹John 10:27; ²²2 Cor 4:6; ²³John 9:25; ²⁴Phil 3:8; ²⁵1 John 2:5; ²⁶1 John 2:3; ²⁷1 John 5:20; ²⁸2 Cor 13:5; ²⁹1 John 3:24; ³⁰1 John 4:6; ³¹1 John 2:21; ³²1 John 5:13

–SW

Luther Excommunicated from the Roman Catholic Church, 1521*

[*2021 marks the 500th anniversary of Luther’s excommunication from the Roman Catholic Church GLW]

Soon hereafter (after Luther’s debate with Eck in Leipzig in 1519 – GLW) Eck journeyed to Rome and persuaded the Pope to threaten Luther with excommunication. And indeed, in 1520 the papal bull appeared which began: “Arise, O Lord, judge Thy cause, for a boar has broken into Thy vineyard, a wild beast is destroying it.” Luther’s doctrine was condemned, and his books were to be burned that his memory might perish among Christians. He himself was commanded to recant within sixty days, on pain of excommunication as a heretic. As a dried limb is cut from the trunk of the tree, they threatened to cut Luther from the body of Christ. Triumphantly Dr Eck carried the bull about in Germany. In Erfurt the students tore it to pieces and threw it into the water saying: “It is a bulla (bubble), so let it swim upon the water.” Luther wrote a pamphlet: “Against the Bull of the Antichrist,” and had it distributed, broadcast among the people. In it he said: “if the Pope does not retract and condemn this bull, and punish Dr Eck besides, then no one is to doubt that the Pope is God’s enemy, Christ’s persecutor, Christendom’s destroyer, and the true Antichrist.” He wrote to a friend: “I am much more courageous now, since I know that the Pope has become manifest as the Antichrist and the chair of Satan.”

And now when Luther even learned that in accordance with this bull his writings had been burned in Louvaine, Cologne and also in Mayence, his purpose was fixed. On the 10th of December he had the following announcement published on the blackboard in Wittenberg: “Let him who is filled with zeal for evangelical truth appear at nine o’clock before the Church of the Holy Cross without the walls of the city. There the ungodly books of the papal statutes will be burned, because the enemies of the Gospel have dared to burn the evangelical books of Dr Martin Luther.” When the students read this notice they gathered in crowds in the street and marched out through the Elster Gate, followed by many citizens. At nine o’clock Luther appeared in company with many professors and scholars, who were carrying books and pamphlets. A pile of fagots (bundles of sticks GLW) was erected. Luther with his own hand laid upon it the papal books, and one of the masters set fire to the pile. When the flames leaped up, Luther’s firm hand threw in the papal bull, and he cried: “Since thou has offended the Holy One of God, may everlasting fire consume thee!” On the next day he said to his audience: “If with your whole heart you do not renounce the kingdom of the Pope you cannot be saved.” In a pamphlet he pointed out the reasons which induced him to take this step, and at the same time he called attention to the impious statutes contained in the popish jurisprudence. Some of these read: “The Pope and his associates are not bound to obey God’s commandments. Even if the Pope were so wicked as to lead innumerable men to hell, yet

no one would have the right to reprove him.” – On the third of January 1521, another bull appeared in which the Pope excommunicated Luther and his adherents, whom he called “Lutherans” and issued the interdict against every place where they resided. –*Life of Luther*, G Just, p53–55

An Excellent Inscription

[Recently, I was notified of the excellent words written by parents, from the heart, that were placed as an inscription into the wonderful commentary on the book of Revelation by Pastor Peters, *The Judge is at the Door*, which was presented as a gift to their son. I commend it to our readers. BLW.]

“To dear M.,

We give you this book, not because there is contained in it any new doctrines not found in other parts of Scripture, but for your comfort as a believer in the last days.

L found this book to be of great value to him. He was of the opinion that he would live to see Christ return. Fortunately for him God had other plans. Whether we live to see Christ return only God knows, but in the days ahead we can be sure that we will be tested as never before.

Many people find the book of Revelation to be mysterious. Many, like the enthusiasts, particularly found in the Assembly of God, get carried away with its figurative language and enthusiastically embrace such things as “the rapture” and the Millennium, both of which are doctrinally wrong.

Pastor Peters has interpreted Revelation the way in which Scripture must be interpreted and that is by explaining Scripture with Scripture. You cannot explain Scripture by using human reason, otherwise the end effort will be wrong.

So may the reading and applying of this book bring you comfort and strengthen your faith in these last days. Watch and pray without ceasing so that the pure Word of God is not taken from you.

With love from Mum and Dad.”

Practice the Biblical Institution of Family Worship

“As for me, I will call upon God; and the Lord shall save me...Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud: and He shall hear My voice. He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.” Psalm 55: 16–18.

In that beautiful hymn, the 119th Psalm verse 54, David says of God's Word: *“Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.”* From a child David learned and loved the statutes of the Lord, and they remained the chief treasure of his heart throughout his youth and manhood and even unto old age. **Every day he occupied himself with the Word of God.** David was so great a lover of the Word that it was sweeter to his soul than honey to his lips, and he said: **“The law of Thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver”** Psalm 119:72. The statutes of the Lord were the chief and the most pleasing subject of his thoughts. **On them his heart inscribed many a hymn; of them he thought, of them he sang, of them he spoke, by them he walked.**

Dear friends, **in the days of your youth begin to learn and to love the Word of God.** Youth is the time when the mind is receptive and the memory strong. Solomon says: **“Train up a child in the way he should go; and when he is old, he will not depart from it”** Proverbs 22:6. Accustom yourself to a thing when young and it will cling to you when you are grown. Therefore, make yourselves acquainted with the Scriptures while young, and **in the Bible, you will have a guide through life, a guide which will warn you against many a danger and will preserve you from many an evil and will lead your**

steps in the way of godliness and salvation. Begin early to make the Bible your song and your guide, and you will never regret it. As soon as you establish your own household, let a Bible be one of the very first things which you provide. A copy which is handy for everyday use – and **it should be placed where you must often see it**, and where it invites you to open it and read. Sadly, there is many a house whose inmates are professing Christians and who say that the Bible is their guide, but what kind of a Bible have they?

In some houses you meet with a fine new copy, kept nice and clean, but when you open it you find the leaves are sticking together at the edges. The book is just as it came from the binder's hand; the leaves have never been turned over. In other houses you can find a copy of the sacred volume blackened by age, well-worn and thumb-marked throughout, but it is placed up somewhere high and when you take it down the dust flies into your face. It was grandfather's or grandmother's Bible, and in their day, it was their song, but their descendants have departed from the ways of their forefathers and they now sing a different song. **Make it your custom to read in the Bible every day.** In addition to personal reading and private study, the Bible should daily be read in the family circle; for certainly no Christian house should be without family worship.

Therefore: **PRACTICE THE GOOD OLD CUSTOM OF FAMILY WORSHIP: Because it is God's will and command, and because it brings many benefits.** Family worship, or family prayers, is not the same as private devotion or secret prayer – when a Christian reads the Scriptures or prays for himself alone. Private reading of the Scriptures and secret prayer should be practiced by every Christian, after the example of David who said: **“I remember Thee upon my bed and meditate on Thee in the night watches”** Psalm 63:6. Family worship is when the family is gathered together, a chapter from the Bible or an extract from a book of devotion is read, prayer said and, perhaps, a hymn sung, and certainly no house, making any pretensions to being a Christian household, should be without the practice of family worship.

Now if you come to a house where the parents are professing Christians and regularly go to church, but you see and hear no praying there, perhaps not even at meals, **what will you think of that house?** You see that the family takes a church paper, and it is read; you occasionally see individual members of the household read the Bible or other good books, but you never see the family gather for the reading of the Scriptures and for common prayer. You make the best of it and think that each member of the family prays for itself in secret. Perhaps they do, but it is not likely. **If they do not pray in common, they will hardly do it in secret**, especially not the children, because the mother never gathered them to her knees and had them say their little prayers before putting them to bed.

Where will you class the house where you hear neither Scripture reading nor prayer? Will you class it with the dwellings of the righteous, or with the houses that have no religion? **Surely, every Christian house should be distinguished by its family worship.** For this it is necessary to have stated times of the day. Here David says: **“Evening, and morning, and at noon, will I pray, and cry aloud.”** We must not construe the words as meaning that David prayed only three times a day, he was often in prayer, but he had his certain times when he did not omit prayer. Pray in your heart and in your room, but if you are a housefather then pray also aloud in your house so that your wife and your children may hear you and may know that you do pray, and **by your example teach them also to pray.**

Now an excellent time to read or speak a prayer in and with and for your family is at the breakfast table and before bedtime. But **what if a man has not the time to spare? That is an excuse which is as handy as it is empty.** In our busy age, when men are after the dollar as perhaps never before, there are multitudes who **never find time for prayer.** It is as true now as it ever was – that those who are so steeped in earthly pursuits as never to find time to turn their mind to heavenly things, are of the world and will be condemned with the world. **The rule should be to have family worship every day, if possible both morning and night;** so that when once omitted it becomes an exception to the rule. Family worship belongs to the good old customs. It was practiced by our forefathers. After the time of

the Reformation, it became an almost universal thing in Lutheran lands. Though in our modern times many have abandoned this good old custom, yet **we should never relinquish it**. We should rather do according to the Word of the Lord, saying: **“Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein.”** Jeremiah 6: 16. Retain this good old custom, or return to it again. Be not ashamed of the old way. Family worship is as necessary and as beneficial now as it was in old time.

Always remember that **Jesus Christ is Himself present in the midst of a family gathered for prayer in His name**, and He is there to do what David here says: **“And he shall hear my voice.”** The united prayer of a Christian family is **a mighty power**, particularly the prayer of the little ones in the family circle, as the 8th Psalm says: **“Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.”** You mothers, early teach your little prattlers to pray. Their prayers are a stronger protection to the house than the sinewy arms of the husband. If the arm of the father can prevent the thief from breaking in, the prayer of the child may prevent him from ever approaching the house.

If the husband is not a Christian, the mother should, if possible, introduce daily worship, but ordinarily the husband and father is to be the priest in his house. To that jailer at Philippi Paul said: **“Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house”** Acts 16:31. How could his family have been saved by his believing unless he performed the office of a priest in his house, instructing his family and teaching them to believe on Christ?

Does a housefather perform the duties of a priest if he never prays with his family? You fathers, read not only for your own benefit, but gather your family and let them hear the voice of the Gospel and of prayer. **Are you a priest in your house?** Then remember that you, as such, have duties towards and a responsibility for your wife and your children. Therefore, as far as it can be done, the whole household should be assembled for devotion.

Do not think it out of place to invite any visitors in your home to be present at the reading of a chapter as you may have excellent opportunity to do some mission work. **Remember they all have a soul to save.** Home worship exerts a great influence on the mind of a child, and the very remembrance that father's house was a house of worship and prayer, may preserve a son or daughter from infidelity and sin, or may cause one that has gone astray to turn to repentance.

Another benefit of family worship is indicated in the last verse of this text: **“He hath delivered my soul in peace from the battle that was against me: for there were many with me.”** Family worship, when carried on in the right spirit, contributes greatly unto peace – peace of the heart with God, because there is the reading of the Word of peace; and peace among the members of the household, because **those who daily engage in united prayer will not hate one another or long remain at enmity with each other.** Family worship serves to fortify the Christian against temptations and to strengthen him for the battle which he must fight every day.

My dear friends, have you ever considered that in the home where the Word of God is taught in its truth and purity – in the home where the Family Altar and family worship and prayer and love for your Lord and Saviour is first and foremost in your hearts and minds – that home may be the only home in your street – your neighbourhood, your suburb or even your city where the heavenly messengers go in and out and encamp round about it – and every morning that father and mother and the inhabitants of that house can truthfully say: **“There were many with me.”** Oh, what a truly blessed home that really is!

However, if there are any among you who have hitherto neglected family worship – **neglect it no longer!** Introduce it into your home. Short and simple is to the most advantage – especially with smaller children and it should not be so long or so arranged as to become tiresome to them. Whether you read

yourself or have a child read – whether you pray sitting or standing or kneeling is something optional, but let your house be a house of prayer; and let the Word of Christ dwell in it richly.

Blest such a house, it prospers well,
In peace and joy the parent's dwell,
And in their children's lot is shown
How richly God can bless His own. Amen.

[This excellent article was prepared by Alun Noll at the request of Pastor Bryce Winter. Bolded emphasis added]

– Summary of a sermon by Pastor F Kuegele from *Country Sermons on Free Texts*, Volume 5

Notes and News

Hospital: Since the last *Steadfast*,

have been in hospital. May they find

comfort in the following passage:

Read: Romans 13:8–14

VERSE 14: Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

O Lord, Thou who dost never sleep, whose watchful eye is ever open, how sorely we need Thy warnings. How greatly we need Thine admonitions that we be watchful, that we arm ourselves for the certain attacks of our foes, the devil, the world, the flesh. We are so much inclined to slumber. We love ease, and it is our habit to be free of thoughtfulness for our souls. So indolent do we grow that we often delude ourselves into the belief that danger is far away, that the enemy hath lost his cunning, that he will come against us no more. Do Thou rouse us from our stupor, even though Thou must deal vehemently with us. Send us whatever visitations we may need to make us watchful. When Thou hast aroused us, grant that we may not put our trust in our own craft and courage. Make us humble enough to know that we must put on the armour of Jesus; yes, that we must put Him on, for in Him alone is our salvation and our strength. Give us the will to crucify our own flesh with its pampered desires. Deaden in us the lusts of our corrupt nature. Show us that to be minded as Jesus was, with perfect trust in Thee and with unselfish love for all our fellow men, is our only escape from the unprofitable works of darkness. Lord, we know that it is day. Thou hast brought light into the world. Make us true children of the day. And in the end, save us from the horrors of the eternal night through Christ Jesus. Amen.

(*Moments with God*, p29)

Changes to ALHB Hymn 80

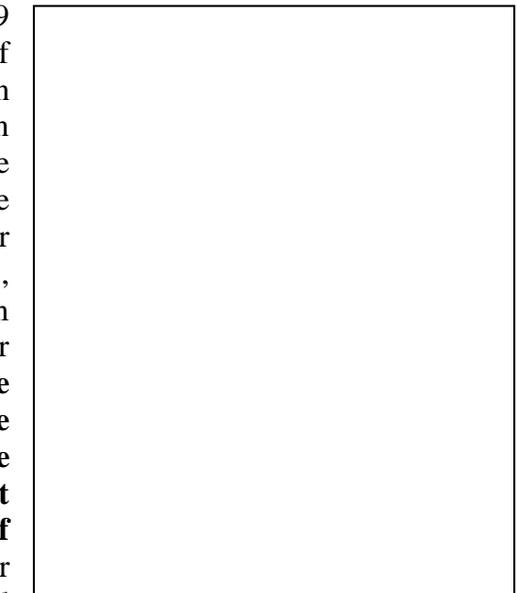
Since the following changes have been accepted by Congregations, please take your hymnbook and make the following changes:

1. Verse 2, line 2 be changed from: “To the lowly manger-bed;” to “Saviour, to Thy lowly bed.”
2. Verse 3 line 2 be changed from: “At that manger rude and bare;” to “At Thy cradle rude and bare.”

: It is with joy that we report that another faithful member of the Federation, , celebrated on . On that day, the Chairman of and his wife passed on the greetings and congratulations on behalf of the congregation to , together with flowers and a card with the message: “God’s richest blessings on your , may He continue to keep you in His loving care, best wishes from .” They added the special message contained in 1 Cor 2:9: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.” It is an excellent thing, especially in these days when little Godly respect is shown to elderly Christians, that we recognize how graciously He has used elderly Christians and the greatness of the blessings that He has bestowed on them in old age, especially that in

His grace He has protected, and cared for those who cling to Him in faith. May He keep steadfast in the faith, and in His grace take her to her heavenly home when her life's work is finished. In Ruth 4:15 we learn that the Lord will nourish and sustain His children in old age. –BLW

Confirmation – : Having been delayed by COVID-19 lockdown for three weeks, the confirmation of took place in on 31 January 2021. Pastor Gavin Winter held an examination of about 1½ hours in the morning, in which the confirmees gave an excellent confession of their faith. The confirmation ceremony took place in the afternoon, where Pastor preached on the confirmation text for the , John 15:5: “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.” Using as his theme: **Christ the Vine, His Children the Branches**, the preacher stressed **1. The close relationship between Christ and the Believer; 2. If we are truly Christ’s branches, it will be shown by the life that we lead; and 3. Our total reliance on God and His Grace if we are to remain faithful.** After this, the confirmees took their vow of loyalty and faithfulness to God and His Word. May God grant a rich measure of His grace to their Saviour throughout their lives.



that they continue to remain faithful to

: On 20 February 2021, family and friends gathered at to celebrate the . Pastor Gavin Winter conducted a devotion on Psalm 23. We congratulate them God’s continued blessings. on this milestone and wish

: Following celebration, gathered with her family and friends to celebrate . The gathering was marked by attendees dressing up as something beginning with the letter . Pastor Gavin Winter conducted a devotion on three texts chosen by – 1. Laminations 3:22–23: “It is of the Lord’s mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness;” 2. Psalm 90:12: “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom;” and 3. Isaiah 40:31: “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” These three texts give a fine summary of Jamie’s faith. May God grant His blessings as continues life with the Lord’s presence.

2021 Fellowship Day – Kingaroy: The annual ELCR Fellowship Day, which was postponed last year, was held on 21 March 2021 at Kingaroy. Due to COVID-19 rules, only about people were able to attend, so congregations and families across the Federation joined in via Zoom. Pastor Gavin Winter based his Confessional address on Ephesians 6:19–20, explaining the point: **Boldly Confessing the Gospel.** Pastor Bryce Winter preached on the text John 19:38–42 showing from the story of the burial of Christ: **In the Crises of these Last Days, 1. Above everything else: hold fast to salvation by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ alone; 2. Stand on the Word and boldly confess it without fear; 3. Entrust the Church to God’s powerful protection and wise government.** The afternoon essay was presented by Pastor Tim Winter. It dealt with the topic: **Steadfast, abounding in the Lord: standing firm on Christ in the midst of a hostile world.** He dealt with six parts: 1. Know who God is; 2. Know you are purchased by God through Christ; 3. Know you are led by God; 4. Know God is leading you to your eternal home; 5. Know God by daily devotion and prayer; and 6. Find the blessings of God in trial. Copies of this essay are available from our pastors. –GLW