



Steadfast

In the Word and Faith



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What Luther Says About —

Languages



Hebrew and Greek Compared. The Greeks used the best and most delightful words. But the Hebrew language shines in such simplicity and majesty that it cannot be imitated. John, the evangelist, almost imitates it; for what do you think of these words: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God,” etc. (John 1:1)? With the simplest words he expresses the greatest majesty. (SL 22, 1540, No.1)

“Holy Languages” Necessary for Preachers. I am sure that he who is to preach and expound Scripture and has no help from the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages but is to do his work solely with his mother tongue will certainly make many a pretty mistake. St Augustine felt that too and held that there ought to be men in the church especially those who are expected to deal with the Word — who are conversant with Greek and Hebrew, since the Holy Spirit has written the Old and the New Testament in these two languages! (SL 19, 1336 f)

The Thorough, Exact Theologian Needs These Languages. But, you say, many of the fathers were saved and even became teachers without knowing the languages. That is true. But how do you account for the fact that they so frequently erred in the Scriptures? How often St Augustine errs in the Psalter and in other expositions, just as did Hilary and, in fact, all who ventured to expound Scripture without knowing the languages! And even though what they said was true, they nevertheless were not sure that the thought really was found in the passage to which their exposition had credited it... St Augustine himself has to confess, as he writes in his *De doctrina Christiana*, that a Christian teacher who is to expound the Scriptures needs to know, in addition to Latin, also Greek and Hebrew; otherwise it is impossible not to stumble constantly; yes, labor and toil remain even though one is well versed in the languages. There is a great difference, therefore, between a simple preacher of the faith and an expositor of Scripture, or, as St Paul puts it, a “prophet.” A simple preacher, it is true, has so many clear passages and texts from translations that he can know and teach Christ, lead a holy life, and

preach to others. But he is too poorly equipped to interpret and treat Scripture independently and to dispute with those who quote it falsely. This cannot be done without knowing the languages. Yet there must always be such “prophets” in Christendom, men who treat and expound Scripture and are also fit to engage in theological controversy. (SL 10, 471 ff)

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Devotion — 1 Timothy 6:6 — Part 3

(Continued from January – February 2021 edition)

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.” 1 Timothy 6:6

Contentment is a fruit of faith, and as such it needs to be learned. As World War II was drawing to a close, the Allied armies gathered up many hungry orphans. They were placed in camps where they were well-fed. Despite excellent care, they slept poorly. They seemed nervous and afraid. Finally, a psychologist came up with the solution. Each child was given a piece of bread to hold after he was put to bed... This particular piece of bread was just to be held—not eaten. The piece of bread produced wonderful results. The children went to bed knowing instinctively they would have food to eat the next day. That guarantee gave the children a restful and contented sleep.

Paul explains in Philippians 4:11–13: “**Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.**

Having been redeemed by Christ, as part of our Sanctification, we will be **learning and growing** in contentment for the rest of our lives. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, we should be able to say more and more confidently every day that indeed we “**can do all things through Him Who (continually) strengthens**” us.

How can believers be content in any circumstance? The point is that we cannot just “grit our teeth” so to speak and say “I’m going to be content no matter what happens.” As children of God we learn through grace to renounce our

self-reliance and choose to rely on the truth that His “grace is sufficient for (us), for His power is perfected in (our) weakness.” Then we can with confidence proclaim: “When I am weak, then I am strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:9) Note: 2 Corinthians 12:10.

Contentment is not based on passively accepting the status quo, but by positively accepting by faith God’s assurances that He will always provide. Paul reminds us, “**Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.**” I can always be content with what happens, for God is the one Who provides us with the strength to be satisfied under His love and care.

Christians can be contented, satisfied that they possess adequate resources, because they have been satisfied by the grace of God. 2 Corinthians 12:9: “**My grace is sufficient for thee; for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me.**”

Contentment is a state of mind in which one’s desires are confined to one’s lot whatever it may be (1 Timothy 6:6; 2 Corinthians 9:8). It is opposed to envy (James 3:16), avarice (Hebrews 13:5), ambition (Proverbs 13:10), anxiety (Matthew 6:25, 34), and repining (1 Corinthians 10:10). It arises from the inward disposition flowing from faith, and is the offspring of humility, and of an intelligent application of the righteousness and graciousness of divine **providence** (Psalms 96:1–2), by reflecting on the greatness of the divine promises. (2 Peter 1:3–4): “**According as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and**

godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue; whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”

It requires surrender, which is not a very popular word. We use it in reference to the humiliation that accompanies defeat. When a nation loses a war, it may be forced to surrender unconditionally, and has no say in the terms of defeat.

Yet there is a type of surrender that is dignified and appropriate. Paul understood it in two aspects. First, it means surrendering our desires and will to the heavenly Father. Jesus is our example, for He did the Father’s will in everything. (John 6:38), **“For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.”**

The second aspect is our acceptance of God’s will. This is marked by our realization that things

do not always go our way as God works out His will on earth. Our life as Christians goes through good times and bad. Our health may suffer. Loved ones will hurt us, or leave us, or even die. Our fondest dreams may never be realized. In the spiritual sense, to surrender means that we trust God to do what is best.

That kind of faith is not easy. But it’s the only way to overcome dissatisfaction and anger about uncontrollable circumstances.

Perhaps it’s time to say “I surrender” to the Lord and to His perfect will and plan.

Take my love – my God, I pour
At Thy feet its treasure store;
Take myself– and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.

–Havergal

Surrender is victory when we yield to God.

—TJW

God’s Spiritual Blessings

(Continued from March – April 2021)

[Faithfulness in the midst of Satan’s attack on the doctrine of Election characterizes this section of the overview of Hochstetter’s *History of the Missouri Synod in North America and Her Doctrinal Controversies* (translated by [Ron Lah](#)). May we, by God’s grace alone, imitate these faithful Lutheran Christians in not departing from God’s Word in spite of Satan’s vicious attacks in these last days. This has been submitted to and approved by Pastor Bryce Winter who requested to compile it.

BLW]

Election Controversy

The Missouri Synod had to battle against the Ohio Synod in this controversy. The old Missouri Synod were also opposed to the **Calvinist doctrine**, “that **God created and** elected a number of people **for salvation out of sheer** arbitrariness, the other portion also **for damnation out of sheer** arbitrariness... As for those created and chosen for damnation, God decreed to leave them in their perdition, **not to have mercy** on them, and to **pass them** by, **not to let them be** redeemed, ...but to cast them out to hell without any mercy... for the sake of their unbelief and their sin, from which, **however, He did want to save them.**”

Concerning this the faithful old Missouri Synod taught: “We **reject and condemn** this Calvinist doctrine as **blasphemous** from the bottom of our hearts and, on the contrary, teach with all seriousness that **God has loved all men from eternity**...and that, therefore, all those who... are eternally lost, (are so) **only for the sake of their wanton and obstinate opposition.**” At the same time the old Missourians believed that those who are chosen are chosen **by pure grace alone and not** “for the sake of **their foreseen faith or for the sake of any good thing that God would have foreseen in them, but solely because of His mercy and for the sake of Christ’s merit acquired by all men.**”

The errorists among the Ohio Synod and their supporters falsely claimed that salvation and therefore the Election of Grace “be based on faith in such a way that this finally becomes a **work of man**, which man should only accomplish **with the help** of divine grace. This makes it appear that we are elected **in view of faith**, and interpret it as if the Lord Christ had not chosen His own from the world, as He says in John 15:19, but from the state of faith.” But Christ says in John 15:16, “**Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you!**” Finally in relation to this doctrine **Dr Walther** said, “If it is asked, did not God really choose all those **of whom** He foresaw that they would culminate in faith and remain in it until the end?” He answered, yes, “we have never rejected teaching in this way,” but approved of it. “What we have **rejected** is that the election was made in ‘view of faith,’ in the sense that **God chose us because He had foreseen our faith or even our good ‘conduct’** (conduct of man) against grace.”

At the 1882 Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference it was declared that this terrible false doctrine of the Ohio Synod “not only falsifies and nullifies the doctrine of election by Grace but also overturns the **doctrine of justification** by grace alone, solely for the sake of Christ and solely by the faith worked by God.” There is more about this doctrine on pages 405–409 in Ron Lah’s translation of Hochstetter’s book.

Cling to the Word and Commit your Cause to Christ

In conclusion here is a summary of the book. “When our Synod appeared with the then unheard-of slogan ‘**God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine pure shall to eternity endure,**’ it was not only the anti-Christian papacy, not only the syncretistic, unionistic evangelical fellowship, not only the fanatical sects, but above all the local so-called **Lutheran Church**, which fought our synod as a new Old Lutheran sect leading to Rome with the greatest bitterness and...confidently prophesied its inglorious demise in the near future.” While the prospects were bleak the Missourians were not distracted by this, but asked, “**What must we do to be found faithful before the Lord of the Church?**” **They committed themselves and their undertaking to God.**

They did not proclaim any new doctrine, but preached nothing but what they had learned from the Small Catechism of Luther. The preachers brought to the parishioners the certainty of God’s grace and of their salvation; they did not want to dominate the parishioners like a papal bull but rather sought to teach of their glorious Christian freedom in matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God and their sacred congregational rights. The congregations saw how important their immortal souls were and that the ministers would suffer anything rather than “give way in one letter to God’s Word and Luther’s doctrine.” So, like a mustard seed that took root a mighty tree emerged. The Old Lutheranism, at first despised, spread unstoppable over the country.

They had fought many battles and certainly realized and believed that you “**must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.**” The Missourian’s enemies, led by Satan, did what they could to disturb the peace, but God protected them. In one way they had peace. As they were children of God, they had “peace not only with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, not only with their own conscience, but also among each other.” On God’s Word they held firmly to each other in “one sense and one opinion against all attempts of the enemy.” **What a tremendous lesson there is in that for us!** Many Christians yearn for peace, but that is a false delusion. Sitting peacefully in the pew thinking that all is well **ignores the fact that Satan is at work doing his utmost to destroy God’s Church.** If there is to be peace it is only possible if Satan ceases to be Satan and God’s adversary. **We must fight to preserve the treasures given to the Church.** “The crown is robbed from the one who does not hold what he has and does not defend himself...Those err grievously who think that it is best for the Church to live peacefully, without struggle. **God’s Word and experience tell us otherwise.** How can the church be in a happy state when truth and error are peacefully reconciled, when the wolves are not prevented from tearing the sheep apart?” So there is “no peace with those who make war.” **These people must be enemies while they fight against the truth.** The Missourians survived many temptations and kept their faith and the Lord blessed them.

Their opponents appeared to the simple, humble Missourians as knights in shining armour who thought their “common sense” would be sufficient. What they taught fitted perfectly with “natural human thoughts and feelings.” They appeared as perfectly respectable people who could quote a number of “fathers” to support their positions. “Indeed, they were able to present the Holy Scriptures themselves to **unsuspecting and untrained Christians here and there,**” with some success. However, the congregations of the Missouri Synod “turned their backs on their supposed saviours and liberators in such an overwhelming way that they themselves stood there dismayed...Congregations which had previously paid little special attention to the doctrine in question are now, to their amazement, firmly opposed to all the attempts of our opponents.” **All credit for this miracle belongs to the Lord.** The Lord used His weak, humble vessels to defeat strong enemies. The Missourians also remembered that in rejoicing, “He who rejoices must rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in the power of His strength,” and only boast in the Lord. At first sight the history of the Missouri Synod “is a story full of Church battles, but in which victory is not lacking. **‘Where there is faith, there is also victory’** Revelation 15:2.” If there is a battle it must be fought, as Hochstetter states: “Although it is something very distressing that there is so much strife in Christianity. Many push themselves against it and go astray. Many fall in battle or are wounded at least. It is also, let us say with Luther, the greatest and most harmful annoyance of the Church, the dissension and division in doctrine, which even the devil drives to the highest, and is generally brought about by a number of arrogant, stubborn and overambitious heads, who want to be something special, to fight for their honour and glory; they cannot be compared with anyone else, thinking it would be their disgrace if they were not of a more learned and greater spirit, others do not give honour to anyone, even if they see that he has greater gifts than they. Therefore it must be fought against the false spirits, **it requires the honour of God.**”

“Where the Word of God is taught clearly and more purely, where the doctrine is diligently pursued, that we are justified without works by faith alone, there the Name of God is sanctified. But Satan does not like this; he wants us to teach and live differently than the Word of God teaches; he tries to lead us away from the Word in every way, in a crass way so that we reject it, in a finer way so that we allow ourselves to be lead astray from the right meaning of it. And Satan never lacks tools. The world is an enemy of the Word, for it takes all glory from the haughty hearts of men and disturbs them in their lust for sin.

“Are we to stand by and watch Satan rob God of His glory, when he wants to deceive us that we do not give God his due glory? Are we to watch idly when the Pope, as the real Antichrist, fights against Christ with his servants? – when the rationalists want to put blind reason over God’s Word and take away the sole dominion of the divine Word? Shall we let the United ‘evangelicals’ have their way, who betray the heavenly truth, and consider error equal to truth? Shall we be silent when the doctrine of grace is obscured by innumerable people?” **“No, we cannot do this!”**

The Blessing of Early Missouri Trained Pastors in Australia

As time progressed the Missouri Synod consolidated its educational facilities and the number of candidates graduating increased in number so that many places in north America were provided with pastors and teachers for the first time. But not only that – the Missouri Synod was able to give assistance to our old Synod here in Australia, the ELCA, originally the ELSA.

Prior to approximately 1885 the ELSA had close contact with the Hermannsburg Mission Society in Germany and secured at least twenty-nine pastors from there. However, as Pastor Gavin Winter states: “Around the 1880’s the ELSA began to have contact with the Missouri Synod in America. This sound Lutheran group had as its leader Dr Walther, an orthodox and courageous theologian, who not only taught in its seminary, but was President for many years and influenced this body much with his Scriptural teaching. At once leading men of the ELSA were impressed with the solid Lutheran material (church papers) and letters which arrived from America. After seeing that this Church held foursquare to the teachings of the orthodox Lutheran Church, they began to consider the chances of obtaining

pastors from their seminaries. A number of men were sent over for training and numerous men who became pastors and seminary professors left their home countries to come to Australia.” (Quotation from *How Are The Mighty Fallen*, by Pastor Gavin Winter, p3)

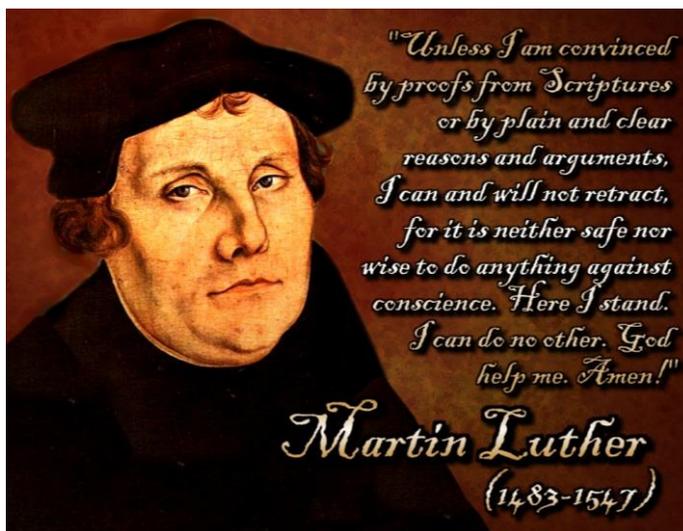
It is hoped that these articles will stimulate an interest among *Steadfast* subscribers to read in detail Ron Lah’s translation of Hoshstetter’s book dealing with the history of the Missouri Synod from 1841 until 1884. It is also hoped that the concluding section on our own Australian history might bring back memories for older members. For those who are younger and interested in historical facts and/or places it would be a good exercise to see if they can locate where the towns and places are (or were) that are mentioned. It would also be a profitable exercise to examine family histories and see what links you have with any of these deceased ministers. Remember, what the late Professor George Koch stated: “History is a good teacher. Whoever fails to learn from the mistakes made in history is doomed to repeat them.”

[Next time we will view a list of 35 men who either went to the old Missouri Synod in America for training or who trained in America and came to Australia together with photos of them – BLW.]

Remember Luther’s Testimony before Pope and Emperor at the City of Worms 17–18 April 1521

The 49-page essay by Dr F Pieper entitled: *What do we learn from Luther at Worms?* which was translated and illustrated in Morsels by Pastor Bryce Winter is now available in digital form. It was translated from the German Report of the North Dakota–Montana District Convention of the old Missouri Synod, 1921, pages 9–47.

How instructive it would be and what a power for promoting the pure doctrine of God’s Word which every faithful Lutheran desires in faith to uphold, if every true believer in Christ studied this excellent essay by Dr Pieper! What a wonderful way it would be to celebrate **the 500th Anniversary** of this very important occasion!



The actual building has been destroyed and only a plaque remains to commemorate this courageous testimony to the Truth of God’s Word. Please contact the Editor of *Steadfast* for a copy.



Letting Scripture Speak for Itself – Part 8

Church Fellowship

*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*¹

*For one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.*²

*I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*³

*Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.*⁴

*Let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.*⁵

*Can two walk together, except they be agreed?*⁶

*We are of God: 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.*⁷

*My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.*⁸

*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth... that they may be one, even as we are one.*⁹

*Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*¹⁰

*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.*¹¹

*If a house be divided against itself, that house cannot stand.*¹²

*Stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.*¹³

*Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure.*¹⁴

*A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject; knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself.*¹⁵

*Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?*¹⁶

*Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.*¹⁷

*Purge out therefore the old leaven, that ye may be a new lump, as ye are unleavened.*¹⁸

*Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.*¹⁹

*If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine the doctrine of Christ, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds.*²⁰

*To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.*²¹

*For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.*²²

*For the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.*²³

*Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous.*²⁴

*Receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.*²⁵

Him that is weak in the faith receive ye.²⁶

And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.²⁷

Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.²⁸

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all,

who is above all, and through all, and in you all.²⁹

The God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.³⁰

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.³¹

¹Psa 133:1; ²Matt 23:8; ³1 Cor 1:10; ⁴2 Cor 13:11; ⁵Phil 3:16; ⁶Amos 3:3; ⁷1 John 4:6; ⁸John 10:27; ⁹John 17:17,22; ¹⁰Phil 2:2; ¹¹Rom 16:17; ¹²Mark 3:25; ¹³Phil 1:27; ¹⁴1 Tim 5:22; ¹⁵Tit 3:10-11; ¹⁶2 Cor 6:14; ¹⁷2 Cor 6:17-18; ¹⁸1 Cor 5:7; ¹⁹1 Cor 5:8; ²⁰2 John 10-11; ²¹Isa 8:20; ²²1 Cor 11:19; ²³Deut 13:3; ²⁴1 Pet 3:8; ²⁵Rom 15:7; ²⁶Rom 14:1; ²⁷Heb 10:24-25; ²⁸Eph 4:3; ²⁹Eph 4:4-6; ³⁰Rom 15:5-6; ³¹Eph 4:13

–SW

Fellowship Day Greetings

Dear Brothers and Sisters of the ELCR,

The Bible Lutheran Church of Los Angeles wishes you God’s grace and peace as you gather for your Fellowship Day. The word “fellowship” is a very beautiful Christian word, meaning “to share something in common.” Fellowship is something more than unity. All true Christians have a certain unity in many things. Paul says: “There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:4–6). However, only orthodox Lutherans have true fellowship. Fellowship involves interaction within our unity. It is a sharing, an active partnership in the truth and purity of God’s Word. We have fellowship only because we have a common and correct understanding of God’s Word. “With one mind and one mouth (we are able to) glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:6). That is very unique because it implies a unity of doctrine, the understanding of which can only be given by the Holy Spirit. “How can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Only orthodox Lutheran brethren can have true fellowship because only orthodox Lutherans have the true doctrine.

The Scriptures further tell us that our fellowship is not just with one another, but it is also with the Triune God. John writes, “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” (1 John 1:3). Our fellowship with God again has to do with the truths found in Christ as recorded in God’s Word. “In (Him) are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Colossians 2:3). The Holy Spirit’s ministry is to take these treasures of wisdom and knowledge found in Christ, and to show them to us. Jesus said of the Holy Spirit: “When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth... He shall glorify me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you.” From the Holy Spirit we receive these treasures, these spiritual gems of God’s Word, and share them with one another. This sharing is in fact fellowship, and results in much joy and increased love among the brethren, who in turn raise their voices in thanks and praise to God. This then is the means by which the Holy Spirit glorifies Christ. This is the way that we have fellowship with one another and with the Triune God.

Finally, want to send you all our warmest greetings.

very comforted by that wonderful truth that God either responds

to our prayers with a “yes,” or He intends to give us something better. Those are the only two options God employs for His beloved children in Christ.

Again, may God bless and keep you all, and grant you a joyful Fellowship Day.

God’s blessings to you,

Pastor Wood and the Bible Lutheran Church of Los Angeles
21 March 2021.

Ask Ye What Great Thing I Know?

Ask ye what great thing I know,
That delights and stirs me so?
What the high reward I win?
Whose the name I glory in?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

What is faith’s foundation strong?
What awakes my lips to song?
He who bore my sinful load,
Purchased for me peace with God,
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

Who is He that makes me wise,
To discern where duty lies?
Who is He that makes me true,
Duty, when discerned to do?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

Who defeats my fiercest foes?
Who consoles my saddest woes?
Who revived my fainting heart,
Healing all its hidden smart?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

Who is life in life to me?
Who the death of death will be?
Who will place me on His right,
With the countless hosts of light?
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

This is that great thing I know
This delights and stirs me so:
Faith in Him who died to save,
Him who triumphed o’er the grave –
Jesus Christ, the Crucified.

– *The Australian Lutheran*, October 1914, p3–4

The Benediction

“The Lord bless thee and keep thee; The Lord make His face shine upon thee and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” This is the so-called Aaronic blessing – the benediction with which God commanded Aaron to bless the people.

A “benediction” is strictly the expression of a blessing. In usage the term is often applied to the blessing itself, as when this or that is called “a benediction.” The Gospel is a benediction, since it is the proclamation of God’s grace, which is the greatest blessing a sinner can experience. Moreover the Bible is full of benedictions: it has maledictions, or curses, too. It is the prerogative of God, as the Supreme Being and Judge of all, to bless and to curse; but to man it is said: “Bless, and curse not.” In this article we speak not of benedictions in general, but of what is known in our church service as “The Benediction.”

1. What is it? It is not an empty form. If it were, we would want none of it as a part of the service of God. It is, it is true, unfortunately treated by some people as if it were an empty form, as if it were merely so many words serving to dismiss the congregation. If that were its meaning, it could be no part of holy service.

The benediction is a part of the holy service of God, and has a spiritual content of great value and not to be overlooked. In olden times patriarchs, prophets and priests pronounced benedictions, privately and publicly. Noah blessed his sons Shem and Japheth (Gen 9:26–27); Isaac blessed Jacob (Gen 27:27–29); Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manasseh (Gen 48:8–20) set forth as an example of faith in Heb 11:20, and, later, all his sons. Balaam blessed Israel (Num 22:23), though for pecuniary reasons he was anxious to curse them. Melchizedek blessed Abraham (Gen 14:18–20, commented on in Heb 7:7). The priests blessed the people (2 Chron 30:27), and had a divinely prescribed form, given originally to Aaron and his sons (Num 6:22–27), for constant use.

Anyone who looks up these references, and many others that might be instanced, will see that these blessings were not mere forms, but had in them the content which they represented. They were forms full of what they professed to convey.

In like manner now, the Benediction is a form of the Word of God, conveying the blessing of God. It acts no more by an “opus operatum” (the outward work by itself effecting the result, GLW) than any other portion of divine service, but must be received by faith. Like the sermon and the absolution, it offers grace; but, like every other offer, it must be accepted, received by faith, to complete the transaction between God and Man. Grace is not given by chance, by magic, or by compulsion. There must be a believing recipient as well as a faithful offeror. The Benediction is not a prayer or the empty expression of a pious wish on the part of the minister. “They are not wish blessings, but are actual benedictions, wherewith such good things are handed and given to us,” says Luther.

2. For whom is it? Clearly, from what has been said above, it is for believers and can be given to none others. So we find it throughout the Bible. Throughout the Epistles, whether in the salutation, at the beginning, or with the doxology at the close, it is offered “to the saints and faithful in Christ Jesus,” to the “beloved of God, called to be saints,” “to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ,” and so on. Unbelievers do not receive the sermon and the offered forgiveness of sin. Indeed a study of 1 Cor 16: 23–25, with what precedes and what follows shows that the whole course of divine service in the church is for believers, with the prospect that outsiders coming in will be converted to God.

3. By whom is it? As it is God’s offer, it may be made in His Name by any of His royal priesthood of believers; but for the sake of order in the church, it is ordinarily pronounced only by the regularly called minister, just as the word is preached and the sacraments are administered by him. Usually, with us, the administration of the sacraments and the pronouncing of the benediction are restricted to ordained ministers.

4. What is the form of it? This implies that there is a form, and for the form we go to the Scriptures. There we find the divinely appointed form of words for it in Num 6:23–26. God said to Moses, “Speak unto Aaron and unto his sons, saying, On this wise ye shall bless the children of Israel, saying unto them, The Lord bless thee and keep thee; The Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; The Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” It is added: “And they shall put thy name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them.” What is sometimes called the New Testament benediction is found in 2 Cor 13:14, and reads thus: “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all.” There are found also other forms of benediction, either longer or shorter, such as, “Peace be unto you.” Whilst any one of these affords a good form and is admissible, it is desirable, for every reason, in the usual Lord’s Day services, to adhere to the form given above.

Some of the benedictions in use in non-Lutheran churches are a wonderful conglomeration of words and a great trial to taste, both aesthetic and spiritual. We count all forms of the benediction faulty that do not adhere exactly to the words of the Scriptures.

5. The manner of it? The benediction should be considered of the same importance as the other acts of public worship and be given and received with the same reverence. This is over against undignified, negligent, purely formal utterance, as if there was nothing in it but a dismissal of the congregation. And over against the censurable custom or habit of leaving the church before the benediction is pronounced. Let the pastor make the pronouncement – for it is not merely a prayer or a wish, but a declaration – with all gravity, deliberation and earnestness, speaking as the Ambassador of the Great King, and let the people reverently take the offered blessing, with a hearty response of “Amen,” once or thrice sung, in accordance with the custom in vogue in the congregation. We have said nothing about the gesture which, on the minister’s part, should accompany the pronouncing of the benediction. But there is something to be said, based upon propriety and Scriptural example. As the benediction is an offer by God’s representative, the hands of the offeror should not be held in a receptive posture, but lifted up in blessing, the palms turned towards the people. So did Aaron (Lev 9:22), when he “lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them.” Even this point is not unimportant. “Let all things be done decently and in order.”

– *The Australian Lutheran*, October 1914, p3–4

Notes and News

Hospital: Since the last *Steadfast*, as far as we are aware none of our members have been in hospital. May all our members find comfort in the following passage:

Read: 2 Corinthians 4:1–10

VERSE 6: God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in your hearts.

O CHRIST, who art the Image of God, what brightness shineth forth from Thy glorious gospel. When Thou didst come into our world, born at Bethlehem, it was because our God was again saying, “Let there be light.” How dark it was in this world before Thine incarnation. How terribly the god of this world had blinded men’s minds. It is with terror we think of this world deprived of Thee, under the rule of its own gods. What wretched masters this world’s gods are, without exception. How dost Thou shine in comparison with them. We thank Thee for laying bare to us their misery; for it is only when Thou dost shine in our hearts that we can rightly estimate their vanity. Thou art better than the god of sensual pleasure, the god of worldly gain, the god of bodily-passion, the god of idle ease, the god of intellectual pride. We know and understand, it is true, that in following Thee we must take up Thy Cross and bear it after Thee; but always, when our strength might fail and our shoulders yield, underneath are the everlasting arms. The severest troubles cannot distress us. The deepest perplexities cannot make us despair. Still dost Thou shine in our hearts; and we, bearing Thy treasures in weak earthen vessels, but magnify Thee the more because our weakness is so plain to view that the glory of our ministry is seen to be Thine and Thine alone. Thanks be to Thee, that Thou hast condescended to let us bear about in our bodies Thy dying. Amen.

(*Moments with God*, p30)

On 1 May 2021, the
took place via Zoom.

Pastor Gavin Winter conducted the brief service from Brisbane with family, friends and congregation members joining in. , conducted the baptism from their home in . A brief devotion was presented on 2 Corinthians 5:7. Sponsors for were , and witnesses . We wish God’s richest blessings and pray that the faith engendered in heart may remain with her until eternity.

2021 Sunday School Teachers' Conference – Kilcoy: The annual ELCR Sunday School Teachers' Conference was held at Kilcoy on 8 May 2021. Ten people were present to hear the presentation by our pastors. Pastor Gavin Winter conducted the opening devotion on Judges 13:8: "Then Manoah intreated the LORD, and said, O my Lord, let the man of God which thou didst send come again unto us, and teach us what we shall do unto the child that shall be born." He dealt with the theme: **Our Prayer for God's Help in the Education of Children.** Pastor Tim Winter then spoke on the topic: **Teaching Techniques of Jesus.** A demonstration lesson on video by _____ was then presented on the **Life of Timothy.** This was then discussed and evaluated by those present. After lunch Pastor Bryce Winter dealt with the topic: **The Importance of Individual Differences.** Finally, discussion was held, focusing on how each congregation's Sunday School handled the lockdown. We encourage more of our Sunday School teachers to take advantage of this excellent training conference. –GLW

_____ : On Sunday 18 April 2021, Federation Chairman _____ presented recently retired office assistant _____ with a Certificate of Appreciation for _____ many years of devoted service to the Federation. _____ employment commenced with the newly formed ELCR in 1968. Over the past 53 years, _____ has faithfully carried out _____ for our Pastors and worked with the Pastors to establish and maintain the publications of *Steadfast*, the *Luther League Messenger* and the *Children's Corner*, all of which we continue to be blessed with to this day. _____, having special interests in children and mission work, has led _____ to be heavily involved in Sunday School, the production of the Children's Christmas Program each year, and travel with the Pastors and other members to mission fields throughout Australia. Over the years, _____ has faced many changes in computing and printing technology and has managed to keep up to date, though being largely self-taught. _____ dedication and many hours of volunteer work behind the scenes have been of great benefit to the operation of our Federation. _____ . We wish _____ God's blessings for _____ future and thank _____ faithful service.

_____ : Sunday, 9 May 2021 was a special day of rejoicing when _____

_____, in faith promised to be faithful to Christ in _____ Confirmation vow in _____ and became a communicant and distant member of _____

_____. After three years of instruction in the Catechism, _____ gave an excellent testimony of _____ faith in a written exam beforehand. Pastor Bryce Winter preached the address based on Josh 1:5–9 from Kingaroy and the service was zoomed to _____ With Kingaroy Congregation's approval,

_____, assisted by asking the confirmation questions and taking the vow from _____ .

_____, zoomed in for the service with _____ making an excellent short address to _____. Many thanks to all who helped to make the Confirmation a blessed and memorable day. May our Saviour Jesus Christ, richly bless and keep _____ faithful to His Word and make a rich blessing to many. –BLW