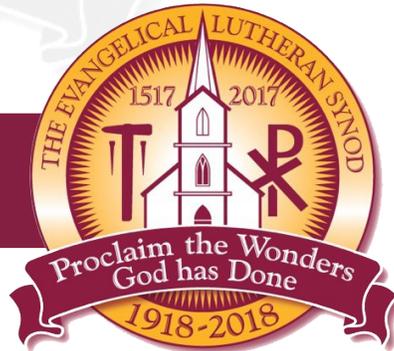


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to which also you were called in one body; and **be thankful.**

A Sermon Study for Reformation Sunday

Romans 3:19-28

Michael K. Smith
Presented at the Great Plains Conference of
The Evangelical Lutheran Synod
May 24, 2017

A Sermon Study for Reformation Sunday
Romans 3:19-28
Michael K. Smith

Introduction

Grace. Salvation is not by works. *Sola fide*. No works-righteousness! *Sola gratia*. Do not listen to anyone but God for your spiritual information. *Sola Scriptura*.

What do all these have in common? These are typical thoughts or themes that may be running through our heads as we consider the general emphases of a celebration of the Reformation.

Since this year is a landmark anniversary of the Reformation, perhaps we feel the pressure to make such celebrations in our parishes “pop” a little more than usual. Perhaps you have already joined in on a community-wide screening of the new Luther movie. Maybe you plan on a presentation of the “Ninety-Five Theses for the Twenty-First Century” to be put out by the CELC. You may be gearing up for another push for the two-year anniversary offering of the synod.

One thing you are sure to include when you observe the special day is a sermon on a “Reformation” text. Thus the purpose of the sermon study that follows. The text to be considered, Romans 3:19-28, happens to be in (most of) the three-year series of lessons, not in the Historic series. However, for those who make use of the Historic series, this passage exemplifies the typical Reformation themes so well that it still could be considered for use, akin to one of the alternate preaching texts.

Paul’s letter to the Christians at Rome covers quite a bit of ground. He touches on a number of doctrines, but at the center is *justification*. Romans 1:16-17 expresses the theme of the letter: “For I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation for everyone who believes, to the Jew first and to the Greek. For the righteousness of God is revealed in connection with it out of faith to faith, just as it is written, ‘The righteous by faith shall live.’”¹ The theme of justification is especially expounded in the portion of the letter in which the text under consideration is central.

After the introductory portion of the letter, Paul states the theme of the letter (1:16-17). He continues in chapter 1 with an explanation of how degraded man became in spite of their natural knowledge of God. While this description can be applied to all, Paul especially focuses on the Gentiles at this juncture. Beginning in chapter 2, he details how the Jews, God’s own people, had followed their own path of degradation, self-righteously claiming to be better than the Gentiles. But the Jews still held an advantage over the Gentiles: they had God’s revelation, his Word. Paul then cites a number of passages from Scripture in the middle of chapter 3 (vss. 9-18) to show how Jews and Gentiles alike are guilty of breaking God’s law. The section under consideration, 3:19-28, comes at the beginning of an explanation of how one is justified in God’s courtroom.

A possible outline of the entire letter to the Romans is:

1:1-15	Introduction and greeting
1:16-17	The theme: Salvation for all is justification by faith
1:18-32	Gentiles need righteousness before God
2:1-3:8	Jews also need this righteousness before God
3:9-20	This is also the testimony of Scripture
3:21-5:11	Justification by faith expounded
5:12-21	Sin’s origin and salvation’s origin
6:1-7:6	The only true way to sanctification

1. Author’s translation. All Scripture cited is the author’s translation unless noted otherwise.

7:7-8:39	Redemption in Christ gives us life and brings certainty of a coming glory, with which the present sufferings cannot compare
9:1-11:36	Whether Jew or Gentile, righteousness by faith is the only universal way to salvation; these are Abraham's true spiritual descendants
12:1-15:13	The admonitory and practical part of the epistle; an explanation of what the new life in Christ entails for everyday living
15:14-16:27	The conclusion and personal greetings

Middendorf lists the following as the primary sections of the letter:

- I. The righteousness of God (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ; 1:18-4:25)
- II. Life in and through our Lord Jesus Christ (5:1-8:39)
- III. The righteousness of God and Israel (9:1-11:36)
- IV. Living in response to the mercies of God (12:1-16:27)²

The Text

Romans 3:19 – οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι ὅσα ὁ νόμος λέγει τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ λαλεῖ, ἵνα πᾶν στόμα φραγῆ καὶ ὑπόδικος γένηται πᾶς ὁ κόσμος τῷ θεῷ.

Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to the ones {within/in connection with} the law, in order that every mouth may be closed and the entire world may be(come) answerable to God;

*Lexical/Syntactical Notes*³

ὁ νόμος – art. + nom. m. sg.; *the law*; article makes this law specific

λέγει . . . λαλεῖ – pres. act. ind. 3 sg. (twice); *says . . . speaks*; whether there is a slight distinction to be made between these or Paul uses them for variation's sake is debatable.

τοῖς ἐν τῷ νόμῳ – art. dat. pl. + prep. + art. + dat.; *to those within/in connection with the law*; indirect object; τῷ is an article of previous reference

πᾶν στόμα – nom. neut. sg. adj. + nom. neut. sg.; *every mouth*; synecdoche for an entire person

φραγῆ – aor. pass. subj. 3 sg. from φράσσω; *may be stopped, closed* (so that the person must remain silent)

πᾶς ὁ κόσμος – nom. m. sg. adj. + nom. m. sg.; *the entire world*; note the parallel with πᾶν στόμα

ὑπόδικος – nom. m. sg. adj. (hapax); *answerable, accountable* (pertaining to being liable to judgment/punishment)

Text Notes

Paul's δέ continues what he began in v. 9: a section in which he quotes numerous verses from the Old Testament. These verses emphatically make evident the universal sinfulness of mankind. God's moral law, the law that applies to all people of all time, comprises ὁ νόμος in this verse. That this is true is also

2. Michael P. Middendorf, *Romans 1-8*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 29. See 29-31 for his complete outline.

3. All definitions, unless otherwise noted, are from Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, ed. Frederick W. Danker, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10.

clear from the present tenses of λέγει and λαλεῖ (God is still speaking), the ἵνα clause that follows, and verse 20b. It is not just the mouths of Jews *or* Gentiles that need to be stopped; it is the mouths of all. In addition, πᾶς ὁ κόσμος is held accountable to God, not just the Jews *or* Gentiles.

Note the judicial tone with which Paul continues (see 3:4ff.) with his use of ὑπόδικος. Any of the words with a δικ- stem pertain to *righteousness* or *acquittal* of some sort. This hapax also carries the connotation of “a legal technical term, of one who has lost all possibility of disproving a charge against him and thus has already lost his case.”⁴ Standing before God the judge on our own, we can offer no words of defense because his (moral) law has so completely condemned us. On our own, we are doomed.

Romans 3:20 – διότι ἐξ ἔργων νόμου οὐ δικαιωθήσεται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον αὐτοῦ, διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας.

{because/for/consequently} from law-works all flesh will not be {declared righteous/justified} before him, for through law is knowledge of sin.

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

διότι – conj.; *because, or consequently* (a marker used to introduce an inference)

ἔργων νόμου – gen. neut. pl. + gen. m. sg.; *works of law* or *law-works*; νόμου is descriptive genitive (works characterized by law) or subjective genitive (the works the law demands)

πᾶσα σὰρξ – nom. f. sg. adj. + nom. f. sg.; *all flesh*

δικαιωθήσεται – fut. pass. ind. 3 sg. from δικαιόω; *will be acquitted*; agent of the passive is God; durative future (always [not] true); especially viewed eschatologically⁵

Text Notes

Based on what Paul stated in v. 19, he now concludes the line of thought about the relationship of the law to being declared righteous in God’s eyes. To do so he begins with a restatement or “very loud echo”⁶ of Psalm 143:2b (“...for no one living is righteous before you” [ESV]). God does not acquit people of their sin based on their actions, even their actions of trying to abide by his law. The law cannot produce righteousness; it cannot put anyone into good standing with God. In God’s courtroom, it only condemns.⁷

Note the universal nature of whom the law condemns. Πᾶσα σὰρξ could be rendered “every person,” and thus “not even one person will be declared righteous” by trying to do what the law demands. This echoes what Paul stated in v. 19: the law condemns everyone. The use of σὰρξ to describe the individual condemned by the law stresses the sharp contrast between man and his God: man is fleshly and base while God is the one who judges (and is thus perfect and holy).

It must be maintained that δικαιόω is a forensic term relating to the courtroom. When the judge declares an accused person innocent, he does not *make* the person innocent. So also, when God declares a person

4. Timothy Friberg, Barbara Friberg, and Neva F. Miller, *Analytical Lexicon to the Greek New Testament*, Baker’s Greek New Testament Library (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2000), BibleWorks, v.10, s.v. ὑπόδικος.

5. Middendorf, 244.

6. *Ibid.*, 256.

7. Middendorf (266) explains Paul’s exclusion of “works of the law” from man’s salvation: “He does so because some of his contemporaries assert that an action *from humanity toward God* serves as a component of a righteous status in God’s sight. Paul counters that in reality, and as with Abraham (see 4:1-6), any righteousness that avails before God comes wholly and only *from him to us*. To insert our works into that realm is both flawed and fatal (3:10, 19-20; 9:31-32; 10:3).”

righteous, he does not *make* the person righteous. Thus, “will be acquitted” would be a suitable understanding for δικαιωθήσεται in this verse.

Διὰ γὰρ νόμου ἐπίγνωσις ἁμαρτίας is a good summary of what Paul stated in v. 19. The “knowledge” Paul specifies here is experiential, not just theoretical. Anyone attempting to obey God’s law soon realizes the impossibility of such a feat. The law, in its second use, reveals that we miss the mark in attempting to keep it.

Romans 3:21 – Νυνὶ δὲ χωρὶς νόμου δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ πεφανέρωται μαρτυρουμένη ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν,

But now apart from law the righteousness of God has been revealed by having witness borne (to it) by the law and the prophets,

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

χωρὶς – prep.; *without relation to, without connection to, independent of*

νόμου – gen. m. sg.; *law*; anarthrous emphasizes quality (definitely requires something)

δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ – nom. f. sg. + gen. m. sg.; *righteousness of God* (cf. 1:17)

πεφανέρωται – pf. pass. ind. 3 sg. from φανερόω; *has been revealed*; the perfect tense emphasizes the continuing results (bolstered by νυνὶ)

μαρτυρουμένη – pres. pass. ptc. nom. f. sg. from μαρτυρέω; *having witness borne to*

τοῦ νόμου καὶ τῶν προφητῶν – art. + gen. m. sg. + conj. + art. + gen. m. pl.; *the law and the prophets*; agent of the passive μαρτυρουμένη; shorthand for *the Old Testament*

Text Notes

Having expounded heavily on the law since 1:18, Paul indicates he is ready to change topics with νυνὶ δέ. Melancthon states, “Above he [Paul] made an approach to the principal proposition. . . . Now there follows the principal proposition which is the point at issue in the controversy. This must be diligently kept in mind also because of the greatness of the cause. For this proposition contains the real and chief statement of the Gospel about the benefit of Christ.”⁸ Thus Paul does not make a complete break with the foregoing, but switches from law to gospel. That justification by faith is the key thought of vss. 21-26 is evident from these verses being referenced in the Smalcald Articles (II I 1-3) as among those that present “the first and chief article” of the Christian faith.⁹

God’s declaration of “not guilty” (θεοῦ - subjective genitive) has nothing to do with the law. Note the emphatic position of χωρὶς νόμου. Paul wants his readers to know this fact about God’s acquittal very clearly. Indeed, that the righteousness of God and the law are poles apart has been made quite obvious by God (πεφανέρωται). Additional details of this revelation will be clarified in the coming verses; for now, it is enough to know that the Old Testament bore witness to (with μαρτυρουμένη keeping the legal tone) God’s action of grace. That his righteousness is not attached to the law is not a new message.

8. Philip Melancthon, *Romans*, tr. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992), 98.

9. See Middendorf, 277.

Romans 3:22 – δικαιοσύνη δὲ θεοῦ διὰ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας. οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή,

a righteousness of God through faith {in/of} Jesus Christ to all [and over all (see variant)] the ones who believe. For there is no distinction,

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

διὰ πίστεως – prep. + gen. f. sg.; *through/by faith*; expresses the means through which righteousness comes

Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ – gen. m. sg. + gen. m. sg.; *in Jesus Christ*; objective genitive (object of faith). If this is a subjective genitive, the phrase describes the “faithfulness of Jesus Christ.”¹⁰ Kuske remarks that some “suggest that Jesus Christ was faithful in completing his saving work for us and that this is the means by which God’s acquittal comes to us. While this does not teach anything that is contrary to Scripture, it is a meaning that . . . is doubtful . . .”¹¹

εἰς πάντας – prep. + acc. m. pl. adj.; *to all* (cf. 1:16)

[καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας] – This variant is supported by good manuscript evidence. Kuske: “God’s acquittal comes not only to (εἰς) those who believe but also comes upon (ἐπὶ) them. In this instance it has a meaning [of] . . . something coming upon a person/thing and having an important effect on him/it. To say it another way, the comfort of God’s declaration of acquittal is not only received intellectually (εἰς) but it affects the whole person (ἐπὶ).”¹²

διαστολή – nom. f. sg.; *difference, distinction*; used three times in NT (here, Ro 10:12, and 1 Co 14:7)

Text Notes

Rather than God’s righteousness coming through the law (v. 21), Paul says it comes διὰ πίστεως. If Paul is indeed juxtaposing these two means of obtaining the verdict of “not guilty” from God (something *I* do versus something worked *in* me [cf. 1 Corinthians 12:3b]), this lends support to the idea that Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ should be taken as an objective and not subjective genitive (see above). Such reflects a common emphasis in Romans and Galatians¹³ and fits the context better here also. This understanding also corresponds to FC SD III 43: “Faith justifies solely for this reason and on this account, that as a means and instrument it embraces God’s grace and the merit of Christ in the promise of the Gospel.”¹⁴

Does εἰς πάντας τοὺς πιστεύοντας teach that God’s declaration of acquittal is somehow limited? Yes and no. Only those who have been brought to faith in Jesus benefit from God’s righteousness, but his righteousness is not only for them. The upcoming verses will demonstrate the limitless nature of God’s forgiveness. In this verse, Paul is concentrating not so much on *who* receives God’s righteousness as much as he is on *how* it is received – through faith.

In chapter 2 and in 3:9 Paul had made the point that Jews were no different from Gentiles concerning sin. He begins his reiteration of that point with οὐ γὰρ ἐστὶν διαστολή. The present tense of ἐστὶν indicates

10. See Middendorf, 304-312, for a summary of the debate over the objective versus subjective genitive.

11. David P. Kuske, *A Commentary on Romans 1-8* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2007), 171. Daniel P. Wallace’s grammar devotes two pages to this discussion. Daniel B. Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 114-116.

12. *Ibid.*, 172.

13. Kuske, 171, maintains there are 38 such passages in Romans and Galatians.

14. Theodore G. Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 547. The reference just prior to this quotation is to Romans 3:28, focusing on “apart from works.”

that what Paul says is true at all times. He continues by explaining precisely how there is no distinction in the following verse.

Romans 3:23 – πάντες γὰρ ἥμαρτον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ

for all have sinned and are lacking the glory of God

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

γὰρ – conj.; *for*; explains why v. 22b is true

πάντες – nom. m. pl. adj.; *all*; parallels πάντας in v. 22

ἥμαρτον – 2aor. act. ind. 3 pl. from ἁμαρτάνω; *sinned*. Aorist emphasizes the fact of everyone having sinned. There may also be eschatological overtones expressed with the aorist; “the eschatological verdict from the viewpoint of the Last Day.”¹⁵

ὑστεροῦνται – pres. pass. ind. 3 pl. from ὑστερέω; *are lacking, are without, come short of* (to experience a deficiency in something desirable or advantageous); takes genitive object

τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ – art. + gen. f. sg. + art. + gen. m. sg.; *the glory of God*; τοῦ θεοῦ is possessive genitive. “The sense of ‘lack’ . . . recalls humanity’s, and particularly also Israel’s, exchange of God’s ‘glory’ (δόξα as a translation of the עֲבוֹרָה of Yahweh) depicted in 1:23 (ἠλλάξαν τὴν δόξαν τοῦ ἀφθάρτου θεοῦ).”¹⁶

Text Notes

No one is omitted: every person (πάντες) who has lived, does live, or will live is numbered with sinners.¹⁷ Paul had detailed this fact in chapter 1 regarding the Gentiles and in chapter 2 regarding the Jews. In this verse he appropriately generalizes the universal coverage of sin. That this universal sin is a fact is emphasized by the aorist tense of ἥμαρτον. No one escapes this “guilty” sentence, at least not on their own.

Paul adds a second fact about all people: they are all lacking something essential. The present tense of ὑστεροῦνται indicates that this lack is ongoing. Along with the fact of having sinned, this lack does not cease. Τοῦ θεοῦ is most likely a possessive genitive (see above), but a decent argument can also be made for taking it as a subjective genitive (thus, “the praise that God gives”). In the former case, the idea is that all people fall short of God’s glorious standard, his standard of perfection. In the latter, the idea is that ultimately (come judgment day) all people will need approval or praise from God. But with all people having sinned, no one receives such approval on their own.

Romans 3:24 – δικαιοῦμενοι δωρεὰν τῆ ἀυτοῦ χάριτι διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρώσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ·

being {declared righteous/justified} {undeservedly/freely} by his grace through the redemption which is in connection with Christ Jesus;

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

δωρεὰν – adv.; *as a gift, without payment, gratis* (pertaining to being freely given); modifies δικαιοῦμενοι

15. Middendorf, 283.

16. Ibid., 283-284.

17. Kuske, 173.

τῇ αὐτοῦ χάριτι – art. + gen. m. sg. + dat. f. sg.; *by his grace*; dative of means; emphatic placement of *his*; χάρις appears twenty-four times in Romans

ἀπολυτρόσεως – gen. f. sg.; *redemption, acquittal, state of being redeemed* (release from a captive condition)

Text Notes

It is vital to note the subject of this verse: πάντες from v. 23.¹⁸ This ensures that one does not slip into the false teaching of a limited atonement (ala Calvin). Rather, the Bible's teaching of objective justification¹⁹ is unmistakable in this verse.

The present tense of δικαιούμενοι corresponds to the present tense of ὑστεροῦνται in v. 23. That is, while at the same time all people lack God's glory (having sinned against him), all people are in a state of being declared not guilty. The passive voice of δικαιούμενοι reemphasizes God's action over against that of people's.

Δωρεάν adds an exclamation point to God's grace in carrying out his declaration of acquittal. That is, by definition χάρις means *favor, undeserved kindness, or gracious care/help*, something that is done or given without expectation of repayment or anything in return. So that no one misses the point that God acquits the world simply by his loving choice, Paul uses both *freely* and *by his grace*.

Paul then states precisely the means by which God acquitted the world: διὰ τῆς ἀπολυτρόσεως τῆς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ. There was a cost to God's declaration of righteousness, even though it is given by him without cost. The price paid (ἀπολυτρόσεως) to free all people from their slavery to sin is connected directly to Christ Jesus; note the article that connects the prepositional phrase to it. While in the next verse Paul will give more details about this *redemption*, to know it is the price paid by the work of Jesus is sufficient for now.

Romans 3:25 – ὃν προέθετο ὁ θεὸς ἱλαστήριον διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι εἰς ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων

whom God displayed publicly (as) a means of expiation through [the] faith in connection with his blood for a proof of his righteousness on account of the passing over of the sins which had been done before

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

προέθετο – aor. mid. ind. 3 sg. from προτίθημι; *displayed publicly, made available publicly* (set forth publicly); used three times in the New Testament

ἱλαστήριον – acc. n. sg.; *means of expiation; the cover of the ark; thus Jesus is "the place where God's justice and mercy meet."*²⁰ Moo prefers "sacrifice of atonement" as a meaning.²¹

18. The NIV makes this clear by stating, "and all are justified freely by his grace . . ." (emphasis added).

19. Also referred to as *universal* or *general justification*. Some of our Reformed friends maintain that "all who believe" (v. 22) is the subject of v. 24. This, in their minds, guards against universalism (e.g., see Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1998], 189). Moo contends that "'all' in its connection with 'being justified' indicates not universality ('everybody') but lack of particularity ('anybody')." Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 227.

20. Kuske, 179.

21. Moo, 236.

διὰ [τῆς] πίστεως – prep. + [art.] + gen. f. sg.; *through/by faith*; indicates the means by which a person receives what Jesus did (cf. v. 22)

ἐν τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι – prep. + art. + gen. m. sg. + dat. n. sg.; *in his blood*; included because of ἰλαστήριον

εἰς ἔνδειξιν – prep. + acc. f. sg.; *for a proof, demonstration* (something that compels acceptance of something mentally or emotionally); *proof* as a meaning fits the judicial context best;²² εἰς with a verbal noun = intended result

πάρεσιν – acc. f. sg. (hapax); *passing over, letting go unpunished* (deliberate disregard)

τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων – art. + pf. act. ptc. gen. n. pl. (from προγίνομαι) + gen. n. pl.; *of the sins which had happened before*; objective genitive; attributive participle stresses a key characteristic of the passing over

Text Notes

With a relative tie-on clause Paul draws close attention to some specific facts about Jesus.²³ The aorist tense of προέθετο emphasizes that God truly carried out this action of displaying Jesus publicly. The second accusative in this double accusative of object-complement construction²⁴ is ἰλαστήριον; thus the inclusion of “as” in the translation. The imagery of Old Testament worship is brought to the fore as Jesus is referred to as that which removed God’s anger. The annual blood sacrifice made on the Day of Atonement and the accompanying sprinkling of the blood on the mercy seat foreshadowed the one great sacrifice, the one great expiation for sin that the Messiah would accomplish.

In v. 22 Paul had stated that God’s righteousness is received “through faith.” Paul reiterates in this verse the necessity of faith as the receiving instrument. The object of faith is τῷ αὐτοῦ αἵματι, the very blood of the Lamb (note the emphatic placement of αὐτοῦ), brought to mind because of the mention of Jesus as the ἰλαστήριον.

Why did God display Jesus publicly as the expiation? In order to give proof (εἰς ἔνδειξιν) of his righteousness, just as God accepted the blood of lambs as a substitute for the blood of sinners, so also he accepted the blood of the Lamb for the blood of all sinners. His public display of Jesus as the final sacrifice necessary proved he was just; he had carried out the required punishment for sin. Up to that point, it appeared that God was not going to exact such punishment for sins that were committed (διὰ τὴν πάρεσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων); thus the necessity of the proof. Πάρεσιν is a hapax and makes clear that up until the time of Christ’s sacrifice, God was more precisely “passing over” sins instead of actually forgiving them (sending them away).²⁵

22. Middendorf, 274.

23. “This tie-on relative clause is a long one; it extends to the end of verse 26 . . . It adds information about the person who paid the ransom and highlights two things about him: (1) It is through faith in him that Jew and Gentile lay hold on the acquittal God declared, and (2) he is the key to the paradox that God could be both a just God and also provide a cleared status for Jew and Gentile totally apart from their doing anything to earn it (cf. v20).” Kuske, 178.

24. The object is ὄν; the complement is ἰλαστήριον. Wallace, 187.

25. Middendorf, 290. This is not to say, of course, that sins committed prior to Christ’s sacrifice were being held over the sinner’s head. Rather, God was not punishing penitent sinners for their sins with a view toward when they would be punished in Christ’s blood sacrifice. Lenski says, “Paul’s ‘passing over’ is used for the sake of exactness in the present connection. What actually took away the sins of the Old Testament saints was Christ’s blood. Until that blood was actually shed, all ἄφεσις [‘forgiveness’] was, to be exact, a πάρεσις; all ‘remitting’ a ‘passing over.’” R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), 261.

Romans 3:26 – ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ, πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ, εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτὸν δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.

in connection with the forbearance of God, for the demonstration of his righteousness in the present time, {in order/ with the result} that he might be {righteous/just} {and/ even} the one {declaring righteous/ justifying} the one of faith {in/of} Jesus.

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

ἀνοχῇ – dat. f. sg.; *forbearance, clemency, tolerance* (act of being forbearing); occurs here and Ro 2:4; ἐν τῇ ἀνοχῇ τοῦ θεοῦ modifies *πάρεσιν* in v. 25 (thus making *clemency* or *tolerance* doubtful for the meaning²⁶)

εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτόν – prep. + art. + pres. act. inf. + acc. m. sg.; *in order that he might be* (purpose); could be *with the result that he is* (result)

δίκαιον καὶ δικαιοῦντα – acc. m. sg. + conj. + pres. act. ptc. acc. m. sg. from *δικαίω*; *just and the one acquitting*; the fact that God acquits/declares righteous is an ongoing characteristic (present tense)

τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ – art. + prep. + gen. f. sg. + gen. m. sg.; *the one of faith in Jesus*; note the singular, pointing to subjective justification (see above for discussion on “faith in Jesus” vs. “faithfulness of Jesus”)

Text Notes

Here Paul parallels his thoughts from the previous verse, reiterating God’s patient forbearance for the purpose of demonstrating his righteousness. He adds ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ to show that God had decided that the (then) present age was *the* time for his plan of salvation to come to fruition.

It is preferable to take εἰς τὸ εἶναι αὐτόν as a purpose clause since it is connected to πρὸς τὴν ἔνδειξιν. It is not questionable whether or not this purpose will be achieved, because the entirety of Scripture makes it clear that God is δίκαιος. In fact, his just character has been shown quite clearly in verses 24-25. Paul adds here that God is not only just, but that he also is the δικαιοῦντα.²⁷ Since Jesus’ blood sacrifice expiated for all sins, God is continually (present tense) the one who declares people not guilty. Paul shifts, however, from speaking of universal justification as he did in v. 24 to that of the individual (τὸν ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ). Here again the receiving instrument of God’s declaration is faith, faith in the one who has satisfied God’s anger over sin.

Romans 3:27 – Ποῦ οὖν ἡ καύχησις; ἐξεκλείσθη. διὰ ποίου νόμου; τῶν ἔργων; οὐχί, ἀλλὰ διὰ νόμου πίστεως.

Therefore where is the boasting? It is shut out. {By/Through} what sort of {law/principle}? Of works? No indeed, rather {by/through} a {law/principle} of faith.

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

26. Ibid., 274.

27. Kuske (183) points out the parallel of Jesus as the expiation for sin to Old Testament times: “When Paul says that God is both δίκαιον and δικαιοῦντα, this gives us further insight into why Paul spoke of Christ as the ἱλαστήριον in verse 25. At the atonement cover in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, God was shown to be δίκαιον and δικαιοῦντα. Blood was brought as a symbolic payment for the people’s sins. On the basis of that payment (which pictured the real payment Jesus would make), God acquitted the people.” Middendorf (291) refers to the latter part of this verse as “the key theological affirmation of the letter.”

οὖν – conj.; *therefore*; conclusion drawn from vss. 21-26

καύχησις – nom. f. sg.; *boasting* (act of taking pride in something); “what a person has done to help earn God’s acquittal”²⁸

ἐξεκλείσθη – aor. pass. ind. 3 sg. from ἐκκλείω; *it is excluded, shut out* (to make no room for); aorist emphasizes the fact of this happening; agent behind the passive is Jesus (his work)

ποίου νόμου – gen. m. sg. interr. adj. + gen. m. sg.; *what sort of law?* “Law” in the sense of “principle” is a better understanding.

τῶν ἔργων – gen. n. pl.; *of works*; descriptive genitive; cf. vss. 19-20

νόμου πίστεως – gen. m. sg. + gen. f. sg.; *law of faith*; “law” in the sense of “principle”; “faith” as opposed to “works”

Text Notes

The conclusion (οὖν) at which Paul arrives is not a surprise but a good summation. Can anyone boast about accomplishing something so spectacular which will benefit them in God’s eyes? Any effort on a person’s part is completely excluded²⁹ because Jesus has done everything necessary (agent behind the passive of ἐξεκλείσθη) to give God a reason for pronouncing the world not guilty. That there is nothing anyone can do to deserve God’s acquittal is further emphasized by Paul’s second and third questions: no works can produce the beneficial verdict. What works cannot accomplish faith can. This principle was stated in verses 22 and 25 but it is appropriate for Paul to juxtapose faith and works here as he concludes this particular train of thought.

Romans 3:28 – λογιζόμεθα γὰρ δικαιῶσθαι πίστει ἄνθρωπον χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου.

For we believe a man to be {declared righteous/justified} by faith apart from law-works.

Lexical/Syntactical Notes

λογιζόμεθα – pres. m/p (dep.) ind. 1 pl. from λογίζομαι; *we think, believe, are of the opinion* (to hold a view about something); emphasis on having giving something thought and coming to a conclusion; “we” includes readers

δικαιῶσθαι – pres. pass. inf. from δικαιόω; *to be acquitted, pronounced righteous*; agent behind passive is God; present tense makes this axiomatic; ACI construction with ἄνθρωπον

πίστει – dat. f. sg.; *by faith*; dative of means; cf. διὰ πίστεως (vss. 22, 25, 30) and ἐκ πίστεως (vss. 26, 30)

ἔργων νόμου – see notes in v. 20

Text Notes

Paul concludes his juxtaposition of faith and works with words well known to many Christians. He explains (γὰρ) what he stated in v. 27: that the matter of faith versus works has been considered quite carefully and an appropriate realization has been reached (λογιζόμεθα). The realization is this: that no matter who the person is (anarthrous ἄνθρωπον), they have been declared not guilty by God. Here Paul

28. Kuske, 185.

29. Note that Paul’s exclusion of boasting ties to 2:17 (“Now if you call yourself (a) Jew and rely on law and boast in [connection with] God . . .”) and 2:23 (“You who boast in law, through the transgression of the law you dishonor God . . .”). Middendorf, 294.

uses the simple dative πίστει to indicate how this acquittal comes to the individual. To ensure that no one imagines anything else needs to be added to faith, he adds that the person's justification comes χωρὶς ἔργων νόμου, reiterating what he stated in vss. 20-21. Faith and works, in the matter of being declared righteous by God, have nothing to do with each other.³⁰

It was in this verse, of course, that Luther "added" a word to the text in his translation: *allein*. "For we believe a man to be justified by faith *alone* apart from law-works." While he was even in his day criticized for this addition, Luther maintained the integrity of his translation.

Here, in Romans 3[:28], I knew very well that the word *solum* is not in the Greek or Latin text; the papists did not have to teach me that. It is a fact that these four letters *s o l a* are not there. And these blockheads stare at them like cows at a new gate. At the same time they do not see that it conveys the sense of the text; it belongs there if the translation is to be clear and vigorous. I wanted to speak German, not Latin or Greek, since it was German I had undertaken to speak in the translation.³¹

While English does not require such an adverb when a juxtaposition is set forth, the German of Luther's day did. Luther was simply making Paul's point even clearer.

Homiletical Notes

Regardless of whether one follows the Historic or one of the ILCW/Three-Year pericopes, the theme of any Reformation celebration is brought out clearly in this section of Romans. Two of the three great *solas*—*sola gratia* and *sola fide*—are explicit in this passage. *Sola Scriptura*, while not explicit, is at least implicit because Paul's words comprise part of Scripture and because Paul alludes to the Old Testament to make his point.

One must be careful, therefore, not to imply that Scripture takes a back seat for the celebration of the Reformation. That is, many times the temptation is to center the sermon on Luther and how God brought him to the realization of God's righteousness not being something earned but freely given. Perhaps such a sermon would be a virtual summary of Luther's life, giving the appearance that the celebration of Reformation is a celebration of Luther. Μὴ γένοιτο! While vignettes from Luther's life can be beneficial in a Reformation sermon, God's Word and only God's Word should be the true focus of the sermon.

The other Scripture lessons for the day bear out the Reformation theme also. In Jeremiah 31:31-34 (Three-Year), God's new covenant with his people is prophesied. Unlike his old covenant with his people, a covenant that centered on the law, the new covenant will focus on God's grace, grace which is especially demonstrated by his forgiveness of his people's sins. The message of the Reformation was one of grace, especially in contradistinction to the law-based religion of the Roman church.

2 Chronicles 29:12-19 (Historic) explains how King Hezekiah ordered the cleansing and consecration of the temple for the worship of the Lord, which orders the Levites carried out. This took place following the reign of King Ahaz, during whose reign the Lord's temple had been neglected and fallen into disuse and disrepair. The concept of restoring proper worship parallels the state of the church in Luther's day, that true worship had been neglected under the Roman system of works-righteousness. Luther and the Reformers, by emphasizing God's grace alone, restored true worship to the church.

In the Gospel lesson (Three-Year), John 8:31-36, Jesus explains in what true freedom consists. His followers are not to find comfort in their heritage, that they do not descend from slaves in a worldly

30. See FC SD III 9-12 for an excellent summary of the essence of what Paul says in this verse.

31. Martin Luther, *Luther's Works, Vol. 35: Word and Sacrament I*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald, and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1999), 188-189. See also AC Ap IV 73 for an argument for understanding "alone" in this verse.

sense, but that they have been freed from spiritual slavery by the work of Jesus as revealed in his Word. This gospel freedom is the freedom proclaimed by the Reformers as they shined the light of God's gospel for everyone to see.

Matthew 11:12-15 is the Historic Gospel for the day. In this brief passage Jesus points out that his kingdom is opposed on this earth, especially as shown in the life and ministry of John the Baptist. Even so, John came as a fulfillment of God's prophetic Word, showing that this Word will indeed prevail. As God's Word prevailed in Jesus' and John's day, so also during Luther's.

Romans 3:19-28 encapsulates key elements of theology that Lutherans hold dear. The law makes us aware of our sins, condemning us – no matter who we are – before our holy God (vss. 19-20). God's declaration of "not guilty" has to come another way since it does not come via our efforts to maintain his law. That way is Christ Jesus, the benefits of whose salvific work come to us by faith (vss. 21-22, 25, 27). His work involved offering himself as a blood sacrifice, fulfilling the sacrifices of the Old Testament times (vss. 24-25) and bringing to completion the time of waiting for God to punish sin (v. 25). Thus we have no reason to boast in anything we have done or can do to attain a favorable verdict from God, because through Jesus he has taken care of working out our salvation (vss. 27-28).

Sample Sermon Theme and Parts

In order to keep the forensic idea of "righteousness" in the fore, a possible theme and parts would be:

- You're on Trial in God's Courtroom
- I. You stand convicted of your sins
- II. God declares you are "Not guilty!"

A possible means to emphasize the "not by works/by faith" juxtaposition of the text might be:

- Do You Want to Get Into Good Standing With God?
- I. Let go of your works
- II. Cling to Jesus in faith

As a way to stress the juxtaposition of law and gospel while keeping in mind the emphasis that "there is no distinction" (v. 22), a possible theme and parts would be:

- God Looks at You the Same Way He Looks at Everyone
- I. According to his law, you are seen as a sinner
- II. According to his grace, you are seen as forgiven

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Reformation Sermon Study #2

Preaching the Reformation

by

Rev. Christian Eisenbeis

Preaching the Reformation: An Exegesis of a Reformation Pericope
ELS Great Lakes Pastors' Conference, Eau Claire, Wisconsin, April 26, 2017

Introduction: The meaning of the 500th anniversary of the Reformation for the Lutheran

The papers and placards say that I am to deliver a Fourth of July Oration. This certainly sounds large.

Frederick Douglass moved to Rochester, New York in 1847. The move served a dual purpose: one public, one private. By day, Douglass was the editor of *The North Star*, an abolitionist newspaper. By night, his house—a “neighborless place,” as he described it—was a haven for fugitive slaves; one last stop on the Underground Railroad before the final push into Canada by wagon or by boat.

Five years later Douglass received an invitation from the Rochester Ladies' Anti-Slavery Society to speak on July 4 at Corinthian Hall. The Society was as friendly a group as an African-American abolitionist could meet at that time. Douglass accepted with one stipulation: he would not speak on the Fourth itself, but the day after.

On July 5, 1852, after greeting the ladies (and gentlemen) with the requisite pleasantries, Douglass began his speech, entitled “The Meaning of July Fourth for the Negro,” with the requisite definition of the Fourth:

It is the birth day of your National Independence, and of your political freedom. This, to you, as what the Passover was to the emancipated people of God. It carries your minds back to the day, and to the act of your great deliverance; and to the signs, and to the wonders, associated with that act, and that day. (1)

If anyone thought the profusion of second-person pronouns was not exactly striking the proper tone, the thought was quickly lost in the “demonstrations of joyous enthusiasm...banners and pennants...the ear-piercing fife...the stirring drum...the ascending peal of a thousand church bells” (5).

Douglass admitted that his audience did not require a history lesson from the likes of him; nevertheless, he was there to teach them a lesson:

I do not hesitate to declare, with all my soul, that the character and conduct of this nation never looked blacker to me than on this 4th of July! Whether we turn to the declarations of the past, or to the professions of the present, the conduct of the nation seems equally hideous and revolting. (7)

“At a time like this,” Douglass confessed, warming to his theme, “scorching irony, not convincing argument is needed” (9). Then he explained the meaning of the Fourth of July for the Negro:

What, to the American slave, is your 4th of July? I answer; a day that reveals to him, more than all other days in the year, the gross injustice and cruelty to which he is the constant victim. To him, your celebration is a sham; your boasted liberty, an unholy license; your national greatness, swelling vanity; your sounds of rejoicing are empty and heartless; your denunciation of tyrants, brass-fronted impudence; your shouts of liberty and equality, hollow mockery; your prayers and hymns, your sermons and thanksgivings, with all your religious parade and solemnity, are, to him, mere bombast, fraud, deception, impiety, and hypocrisy—a thin veil to cover up crimes which would disgrace a nation of savages. There is not a nation on earth guilty of practices more shocking and bloody than are the people of the United States, at this very hour. (9)

And this is how he spoke to people who were on his side!

For us, the relevance of Douglass's address is not the scorching irony, though we do find that in festival sermons; see, for example, young Bonhoeffer's meditation on Revelation 2:4-7, delivered in Berlin on November 6, 1932, which was not only Reformation Sunday, but a most ill-fated Election Day for the Weimar Republic (12.439-446). What makes Douglass's speech in Rochester relevant is its exposure of the root problems that had led to America's “hideous and revolting” conduct.

We enlightened, revisionist folks might think that the problem was in our country's founding documents themselves. Douglass disagreed. The Declaration of Independence was

the first great fact in your nation's history—the very ringbolt in the chain of your yet undeveloped destiny. (4)

The Constitution was no fossil, either, but a “glorious liberty document” (16).

Perhaps the defect was in the founders; e.g. the slaveholder Jefferson's “self-evident truth” that all men were created equal. Yet Douglass was not wanting in admiration for the fathers:

You may well cherish the memory of such men. They were great in their day and generation. Their solid manhood stands out the more as we contrast it with these degenerate times...They seized upon eternal principles, and set a glorious example in their defense. (5)

No, the “hypocrisy” of the fathers and their “defective” documents provided far too convenient a scapegoat. To blame the past was to ignore the present, an age characterized by lethargy masquerading as conservatism:

You have no right to enjoy a child's share in the labor of your fathers, unless your children are to be blest by your labors. You have no right to wear out and waste the hard-earned fame of your fathers to cover your indolence. (6)

The lethargy of a society content to claim “Washington as our father,” while trading in human flesh, had led to a great, nationwide apostasy not at all in keeping with the spirit of '76:

America is false to the past, false to the present, and solemnly binds herself to be false to the future. (7)

Unchecked, this apostasy would end in catastrophe. Douglass prophesied, nine years before Fort Sumter:

A horrible reptile is coiled up in your nation's bosom; the venomous creature is nursing at the tender breast of your youthful republic. (16)

What would save the youthful republic from its sins? Washing its hands of the founders and the founding documents? Bloody revolution? Redefinition of what it meant to be an American? Douglass avoided such radical hyperbole, even in the bleakest moments of his address:

From the round top of your ship of state, dark and threatening clouds may be seen. Heavy billows, like mountains in the distance, disclose to the leeward huge forms of flinty rocks! That bolt drawn, that chain broken, and all is lost. Cling to this day—cling to it, and to its principles, with the grasp of a storm-tossed mariner to a spar at midnight. (4)

Nat Hentoff, a libertarian, jazz critic and pro-life atheist (recently deceased), summarized the lesson Douglass taught that day in Rochester:

The American Republic was designed so that each succeeding generation would challenge its present government to abide by the Constitution's perennial promise of liberty.

Compare Hentoff's statement with the following from *Christian Dogmatics*:

The maxim that our heritage, once gained, must always be regained anew, must never be forgotten. (II.300)

The papers and placards say that we are to deliver a 500th Anniversary of the Reformation Sermon. This, too, certainly sounds large. We also have next year—the Centennial Year—to think about. Clearly the moon is in the seventh house and Jupiter aligns with Mars. We may be tempted to engage in a little scorching irony of our own: wringing our hands about the media’s inevitable mishandling of Luther and the Reformation, liberal Lutheran bishops pretending Trent never happened, or pews that aren’t as full as they used to be; while failing to address Satan’s three-pronged attack against the heirs of the Lutheran Reformation:

1. Lethargy: *“Being Lutheran—or at least growing up Lutheran—is all that matters. Dear God, I thank you that I am not like other men.”*
2. Apostasy: *“What’s in a name? Being Lutheran doesn’t matter anymore. The Confessions don’t matter anymore.”*
3. Hyperbole: *“Have you looked at the photos of the old confirmation classes? We used to have so many people here! We’d better start doing things differently around here or our church is going to die!”*

Lutherans are not immune to the spiritual maladies that Douglass so expertly diagnosed; but to cure them, there is no need for us to forget history, to change what it means to be a Lutheran, or to paint excessively dark pictures of “eleventh-hour Lutheranism.” The unchanging truth of Scripture alone will defeat every temptation and every challenge.

Our Worship Committee has been doing yeoman’s work this anniversary year. A member of the committee—I’ll call him “P. Faugstad” to protect his anonymity—encouraged us to preach on the historic pericope for the 500th anniversary service this year (2 Chr 29:12-19, Rev 14:6-7, Mt 11:12-15). The only problem was that this encouragement came a month into my work on this essay. So the pericope before us today is my own suggestion.

No matter the year, Reformation Sunday is always an occasion for remembrance. Just as the divine service is primarily God’s service to us, so the “remembrance” here is, first and foremost, God’s gracious remembrance of us. With that in mind, I offer this anniversary lectionary:

Old Testament: Genesis 8 – *God remembers His children in the midst of a corrupt, sinful world and promises that His Word will endure all the days of the earth.*

Epistle: 2 Peter 1:3-15 – *God richly gives us His means of grace to remind us of His promises and make us certain of our salvation.*

Gospel: John 17:20-26 – *On the night in which He is betrayed, the Lord Jesus remembers us in His High Priestly Prayer and confirms His Father’s promise that the Word will endure until the end of time.*

Genesis 8: “And God remembered Noah, and every living thing.”

8:1

וַיִּזְכֹּר אֱלֹהִים אֶת-נֹחַ וְאֶת כָּל-הַחַיָּה וְאֶת-כָּל-הַבְּהֵמָה אֲשֶׁר אִתּוֹ בַּתְּבֹהַ וַיַּעֲבֵר אֱלֹהִים רוּחַ
עַל-הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁכַּח הַמַּיִם:

[AND REMEMBER-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. GOD (DIRECT OBJECT) NOAH AND (DIRECT OBJECT) ALL-masc. sing. const. THE LIVING-fem. sing. AND (DIRECT OBJECT) ALL-masc. sing. const. THE BEAST-fem. sing. WHICH

WITH HE-masc. sing. IN THE BOX-fem. sing. AND PASS-vav cons. Hiphil imperf. 3rd masc. sing. GOD SPIRIT-sing. ON THE LAND-fem. sing. AND ABATE-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. pl. THE WATER-masc. pl.]

But God remembered Noah and everything living—all the animals that were with him on the ark. Then the Lord made a wind pass over the earth, and the waters abated.

Dying King Hezekiah turns his face to the wall. Hannah asks for justice against her adversary. In Overland Park, Kansas, five men with cognitive disabilities pray over the lasagne their caretakers have made. An Augustinian monk confesses he cannot please his angry Judge. The thief turns to his dying King. In one voice they cry out: “Remember me!”

Isaiah is told to go back with good news. Hannah names her son Samuel: “God hears.” The five disabled men have found shelter in a home operated by L’Arche—“The Ark”—International. The Gospel breaks through in Saxony. Jesus tells the thief the blessed truth.

The Lord remembers them all. After the devastation of the Flood, He proclaims this precious Gospel by causing His divine wind (only HCSB has the guts to suggest “spirit” in a footnote) to rush over the earth.

8:2

וַיִּסְכְּרוּ מַעֲיַנַת תְּהוֹם וְאַרְבַּת הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיִּכְלֹא הַנָּשִׁים מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם:

[AND SHUT-vav cons. Niphal imperf. 3rd masc. pl. SPRING-masc. pl. const. DEEP-common sing. AND LATTICE-fem. pl. const. THE HEAVEN-masc. pl. AND COMPLETE-vav cons. Niphal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. THE RAIN-masc. sing. FROM THE HEAVEN-masc. pl.]

Both the springs of the deep and the sluices of the heavens were stopped, and the rain from the heavens was restrained.

Along with the work of the divine wind, God’s reconciliation is portrayed with further signs of “effective restraint” (Keil-Delitzsch 147). NIV and HCSB translate וַיִּכְלֹא actively (“the rain [had] stopped”), which detracts from God’s merciful intervention. Both verbs are Niphal; the sources of rain submit to divine authority. In later years the psalmist will praise the Lord for His restraint:

At Your rebuke [the waters] fled; At the voice of Your thunder they hastened away. They went up over the mountains; They went down into the valleys, To the place which You founded for them. You have set a boundary that they may not pass over, That they may not return to cover the earth. (Ps 104:7-9 NKJV)

8:3

וַיָּשְׁבוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ הַלֹּךְ וְשׁוֹב וַיִּחְסְרוּ הַמַּיִם מִקְצֵה חֲמִשִּׁים וּמֵאֵת יוֹם:

[AND RETURN-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. pl. THE WATER-masc. pl. FROM ON THE LAND-fem. sing. GO-Qal inf. abs. AND RETURN-Qal inf. abs. AND LACK-vav cons. Qal 3rd imperf. masc. pl. THE WATER-masc. pl. FROM END-masc. sing. const. FIFTY AND HUNDRED DAY-masc. sing.]

And the waters went back from upon the earth and kept on going back, until the waters had decreased at the end of the 150 days.

The Qal infinitive absolute וְשׁוֹב הַלֹּךְ emphasizes the continual effectiveness of the Lord’s restraint, the undoing of 7:24, when the waters “prevailed on the earth (וַיִּגְבְּרוּ הַמַּיִם עַל־הָאָרֶץ).”

8:4

וַתֵּנַח הַתֵּבָה בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי בְּשִׁבְעָה-עָשָׂר יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ עַל הַרֵי אֲרָרָט:

[AND REST-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd fem. sing. THE BOX-fem. sing. IN THE MONTH THE SEVENTH-masc. sing. IN THE SEVENTEEN DAY-masc. sing. FOR THE MONTH-masc. sing. ON MOUNTAIN-masc. pl. const. ARARAT]

And the ark rested, on the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat.

The divine wind brings the Ark—and all its living contents—to rest at last. The verb **תָּנַח** (LXX ἐκάθισεν, < καθίζω, “to sit”; cf. Vulgate *requievit*) from **נָח**, reminds us of **נָח**, the builder of the Ark. We will see more of this wordplay before the end of the chapter.

God’s effective restraint results in reconciliation, restoration, and rest. Through the ministry of reconciliation, the means which proclaim the Gospel, the Holy Spirit gathers believers into the Church, into the sanctuary of the nave, and guides them through troubled waters until every soul finds its repose on the mountain of the Lord.

8:5

וְהַמַּיִם הָיוּ הִלָּךְ וְחָסָר עַד הַחֹדֶשׁ הָעֲשִׂירִי בְּעֲשִׂירִי בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ נִרְאוּ רֵאשֵׁי הַהָרִים:

[AND THE WATER-masc. pl. BE-Qal perf. 3rd masc. pl. GO-Qal inf. abs. AND LACK-Qal inf. abs. UNTIL THE MONTH TENTH-masc. sing. ON THE TENTH-masc. sing. ON ONE-masc. sing. FOR THE MONTH-masc. sing. SEE-Niphal perf. 3rd pl. HEAD-masc. pl. const. THE MOUNTAIN-masc. pl.]

And the waters kept on decreasing continually until the tenth month. In the tenth month, on the first day, the summits of the mountains were seen.

הִלָּךְ וְחָסָר is another Qal infinitive absolute, expressing duration. The revelation of the mountaintops is, to Luther, another clear sign of God’s grace to Noah (2:108).

8:6

וַיְהִי מִקֵּץ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם וַיִּפְתַּח נֹחַ אֶת-חַלּוֹן הַתֵּבָה אֲשֶׁר עָשָׂה:

[AND BE-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. FROM END-masc. sing. const. FORTY DAY-masc. sing. AND OPEN-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. NOAH (DIRECT OBJECT) WINDOW-sing. const. THE BOX-fem. sing. WHICH DO-Qal perf. 3rd masc. sing.]

So it happened, at the end of forty days, that Noah opened the window of the ark, which he had made.

8:7

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת-הָעֶרֶב וַיֵּצֵא יְצוֹא וְשׁוֹב עַד-יִבֹשֶׁת הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:

[AND SEND-vav cons. Piel imperf. 3rd masc. sing. (DIRECT OBJECT) THE RAVEN-masc. sing. AND GO OUT-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. GO OUT-Qal inf. abs. RETURN-Qal inf. abs. UNTIL DRY-Qal inf. const. THE WATER-masc. pl. FROM ON THE LAND-fem. sing.]

Then he sent a raven, and it went out, and it kept on going out and coming back until the drying of the waters from upon the earth.

Noah, the “preacher of righteousness” (2 Pet 2:5), sends out his “apostles.” Many have questioned his first choice. *Corvus corax* (< Greek κόραξ), an unclean bird in the Old Testament, has been maligned by church fathers from Augustine to Bede to Luther because of its black feathers and raucous voice. עֵרָב uniquely entails both attributes. Its name is derived from the same root—i.e. “darkness”—which also gives us עֶרֶב, “evening.” The two gutturals of the root, ע and ר, are onomatopoeic, as in Greek. As for its uncleanness, well, the Lord did command the ravens to feed His prophet by the Cherith Brook (1 Ki 17:4-6). Who are we as Gentiles to judge? Jesus Himself encourages us to “consider the ravens” who look to their Creator with complete trust (Lk 12:24), for He “gives to the beasts their food, and to the young ravens that cry” (Ps 147:9 NKJV).

8:8

וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַיּוֹנָה מֵאֵתוֹ לִרְאוֹת הַקָּלוֹ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ׃

[AND SEND-vav cons. Piel imperf. 3rd masc. sing. (DIRECT OBJECT) THE DOVE-fem. sing. FROM WITH HE-masc. sing. FOR SEE-Qal inf. const. IF SLIGHT-Qal perf. 3rd pl. THE WATER-masc. pl. FROM ON FACE-pl. const. THE GROUND-fem. sing.]

Then he sent a dove out from him, to see if the waters had lightened up from the face of the ground.

Our Savior also encourages us to be “harmless as doves” (Mt 10:16). He saved the doves from harm not once, but twice (Jn 2:14-15, Mt 21:12). In the Old Testament, the dove was a clean bird, fit for sin offerings, burnt offerings, and rites of purification for every kind of uncleanness, from childbirth to leprosy to a Nazirite’s chance encounter with the dead. The dove’s cry is the cry of God’s people for justice and restoration (Is 59:11); in their return flight—“like doves to their windows” (Is 60:8 KJV; see also Hos 11:11)—we hear God’s answer to His people’s cry and witness the Spirit’s gathering of the dispersed.

8:9

וְלֹא־מָצְאָהּ הַיּוֹנָה מְנוּחַ לְכַף־רַגְלָהּ וַתָּשָׁב אֵלָיו אֶל־הַתְּבָה כִּי־מַיִם עַל־פְּנֵי כָל־הָאָרֶץ וַיִּשְׁלַח יְדוֹ וַיִּקְחָהּ וַיָּבֵא אֹתָהּ אֵלָיו אֶל־הַתְּבָה׃

[AND NOT FIND-Qal perf. 3rd fem. sing. THE DOVE-fem. sing. REST-masc. sing. FOR PALM FOOT SHE-fem. sing. AND RETURN-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd fem. sing. TO HE-masc. sing. TO THE BOX-fem. sing. THAT WATER-masc. pl. ON FACE-pl. const. ALL THE LAND-fem. sing. AND SEND-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. HAND HE-fem. sing. + masc. sing. AND TAKE-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. AND COME-vav cons. Hiphil imperf. 3rd masc. sing. (DIRECT OBJECT) SHE-fem. sing. TO HE-masc. sing. TO THE BOX-fem. sing.]

But the dove did not find a resting place for the sole of its foot. So it returned to him, to the ark, since the waters were still on the face of all the earth. And he put out his hand and took it and brought it to him, into the ark.

While no translation can duplicate the pleasing sound of הַיּוֹנָה מְנוּחַ, ESV, NIV, RSV, and NRSV offer no “rest” for the dove; merely a place to “set” its feet, thus missing an opportunity to continue the wordplay of נַח in v. 1 and וַתִּנַּח in v. 4.

God warned His people that their apostasy would result in restless exile:

And among these nations you shall find no respite, and there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot, but the LORD will give you there a trembling heart and failing eyes and a languishing soul. (Dt 28:65, fulfilled in Lam 1:3 and Rev 14:11)

LXX ἀνάπαυσις (< ἀνάπαυσις) points us to the One who gives rest to souls burdened and heavy laden, who alone refreshes our hearts:

Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. (Ps 116:7 KJV; see also Mt 11:28-29 and Phm 20)

8:10

וַיִּחַל עוֹד שִׁבְעַת יָמִים אַחֲרָיִם וַיִּסֹּף שֶׁלַח אֶת־הַיּוֹנָה מִן־הַתְּבֵה:

[AND WAIT-vav cons. Niphal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. STILL SEVEN DAY OTHER-masc. pl. AND ADD-vav cons. Hiphil 3rd masc. sing. SEND-Piel inf. const. (DIRECT OBJECT) THE DOVE-fem. sing. FROM THE BOX-fem. sing.]

Then he waited another seven days and sent the dove out from the ark again.

וַיִּחַל (KJV “stayed”) marks Noah’s patience. יָחַל may be in Niphal, but the waiting is hardly passive or idle, in light of LXX ἐπισχῶν (< ἐπέχω). Jesus “marked” the guests scrambling for the places of honor in Luke 14:7. The beggar “fixed his attention” on Peter and John at the Beautiful Gate in Acts 3:5. In these last days, we, too, are encouraged to wait with our attention fixed on the Word:

Do all things without grumbling or questioning, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, *holding fast* (ἐπέχουτε) to the word of life. (Php 2:14-16a ESV)

Take heed (ἔπεχε) unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee. (1 Tim 4:16 KJV)

8:11

וַתָּבֵא אֵלָיו הַיּוֹנָה לְעֵת עֶרֶב וְהָיָה עָלֶיהָ־זֵית טָרַף בְּפִיהָ וַיֵּדַע נֹחַ כִּי־קָלוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ:

[AND COME-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd fem. sing. TO HE-masc. sing. THE DOVE-fem. sing. FOR TIME-fem. sing. const. EVENING-masc. sing. AND BEHOLD LEAF-fem. sing. const. OLIVE-masc. sing. TEAR-masc. sing. IN MOUTH SHE-masc. sing. + fem. sing. AND KNOW-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. NOAH THAT SLIGHT-Qal perf. 3rd pl. THE WATER-masc. pl. FROM ON THE LAND-fem. sing.]

And the dove came back to him in the evening, and behold! — a torn olive leaf in its beak! Then Noah knew that the waters had lightened up from upon the earth.

In 175 BC Cato the Elder returned to Rome from a fact-finding mission. He shook some figs from his gown to show the Senate that prosperity had come back to Rome’s mortal enemy: *Delendam esse Carthaginem!*

In AD 1974 Yasir Arafat finished his address to the United Nations with this message:

I come bearing an olive branch and a freedom-fighter’s gun. Do not let the olive branch fall from my hand. (Rubin and Rubin 72)

Arafat went on to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

God gives us the peace that the world cannot give. To Luther, every detail in this verse is miraculous. Clearly God directed the dove to pluck this leaf from this tree, which only grows at low elevations (2:110-111). The dove is a herald of salvation, bearing the first sign of the earth's resurrection in its beak (Keil-Delitzsch 149).

8:12

וַיַּחַל עוֹד שִׁבְעַת יָמִים אֲחֵרִים וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־הַיּוֹנָה וְלֹא־יָסְפָה שׁוּב־אֵלָיו עוֹד:

[AND WAIT-vav cons. Niphal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. STILL SEVEN DAYS OTHER-masc. pl. AND SEND-vav cons. Piel imperf. 3rd masc. sing. (DIRECT OBJECT) THE DOVE-fem. sing. AND NOT ADD-Qal perf. 3rd fem. sing. RETURN-Qal inf. const. TO HE-masc. sing. STILL]

Then he waited another seven days and sent the dove out, but it did not return to him again.

In Luther's allegorical interpretation, the dove is a minister of the Gospel, as opposed to the raven, the minister of the Law (2:157-164). Luther divides the doves according to their three "missions." The first dove is a figure of the holy prophets. The second dove, bearing the leaf of the evergreen olive tree, brings the Word of grace, the revelation of God's mercy in Christ. It is because of the second dove that the Holy Spirit appears as a dove in the Gospels. As a minister of the New Testament era, the third dove carries no new doctrine or revelation, but the *expectation* that what we have believed will be revealed. Its testimony will endure to the end. We look forward to our flight with the third dove into another life, never to return!

8:13

וַיְהִי בְּאַחַת וְשֵׁשׁ־מֵאוֹת שָׁנָה בְּרֵאשׁוֹן בְּאַחַד לַחֹדֶשׁ חָרְבוּ הַמַּיִם מֵעַל הָאָרֶץ וַיִּסַּר נֹחַ אֶת־מִכְסֵה הַתְּבֵה וַיִּרָא וְהִנֵּה חָרְבוּ פְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ:

[AND BE-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. IN ONE-fem. sing. const. AND SIX HUNDRED-fem. pl. YEAR-fem. sing. IN THE FIRST-masc. sing. IN ONE-masc. sing. FOR THE MONTH-masc. sing. DRY-Qal perf. 3rd pl. THE WATER-masc. pl. FROM ON THE LAND-fem. sing. AND TURN-vav cons. Hiphil imperf. 3rd masc. sing. NOAH (DIRECT OBJECT) COVER-masc. sing. const. THE BOX-fem. sing. AND SEE-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. AND BEHOLD DRY-Qal perf. 3rd pl. FACE-pl. const. THE GROUND-fem. sing.]

So it happened, in the six-hundred first year, on the first of the first month, that the waters had dried up from upon the earth. Then Noah removed the covering of the ark and looked, and behold! — the face of the ground was dry!

It is a new year—the year of the Lord's favor! The waters have not prevailed on the earth. LXX ἐξέλιπεν (< ἐκλείπω, "to cease") also carries the connotation of failure. Jesus prays that Peter's faith "may not fail" (μὴ ἐκλίπῃ; Lk 22:32). The gates of Hades will never prevail against the Church built on Peter's confession of Christ, the Church that proclaims His unchanging Word and hails Him as the Son of the Living God, begotten from eternity:

But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail (οὐκ ἐκλείψουσιν). (Heb 1:12 KJV, quoting Ps 105:27 LXX)

8:14

וּבַחֹדֶשׁ הַשֵּׁנִי בְּשִׁבְעָה וָעֶשְׂרִים יוֹם לַחֹדֶשׁ יָבִשָׁה הָאָרֶץ:

[AND ON THE MONTH THE SECOND-masc. sing. ON SEVEN AND TWENTY DAY-masc. sing. FOR THE MONTH-masc. sing. DRY-Qal perf. 3rd fem. sing. THE LAND-fem. sing.]

And in the second month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, the earth was dry.

הָרַב and יָבֵשׁ appear to be interchangeable. When paired together, Lawrenz and Jeske suggest that הָרַב implies no standing water, but that the surface was still saturated; יָבֵשׁ means the ground was now dry and firm, as in the following (270):

And the waters of the sea will be *dried up* (וַיִּבְשְׁתוּ), and the river will be *dry and parched* (וַיִּבְשֶׁ הַיָּרְדֵן), and its canals will become foul, and the branches of Egypt's Nile will diminish and *dry up* (וַיִּבְשְׁבוּ), reeds and rushes will rot away. (Is 19:5-6 ESV)

However, the distinction is reversed here:

Though he is fruitful among his brethren, An east wind shall come; The wind of the LORD shall come up from the wilderness. Then his spring shall *become dry* (וַיִּבֹשׁ), And his fountain shall be *dried up* (וַיִּיבֶרֶב). (Hos 13:15 NKJV)

In any case, both verbs are examples of divine agency.

8:15

וַיְדַבֵּר אֱלֹהִים אֶל-נֹחַ לֵאמֹר:

[AND SPEAK-vav cons. Piel imperf. 3rd masc. sing. GOD TO NOAH FOR SAY-Qal inf. const.]

Then God spoke to Noah, saying.

We might be tempted to pass over this verse and go directly to the quote, but not Luther. The presence of the Word (וַיְדַבֵּר) proves the effective reconciliation:

God comforts us far more effectively when to His works He adds the spoken word. (2:112)

8:16

צֵא מִן-הַתֵּבָה אַתָּה וְאִשְׁתְּךָ וּבְנֵיךָ וּנְשֵׁי-בְנֵיךָ אִתְּךָ:

[GO-OUT-Qal imp. masc. sing. FROM THE BOX-fem. sing. YOU-masc. sing. AND WOMAN YOU-fem. sing. const. + masc. sing. AND SON YOU-masc. pl. const. + masc. sing. AND WOMAN-fem. pl. const. SON YOU-masc. pl. const. + masc. sing. WITH YOU-masc. sing.]

“Go out from the ark, you and your wife, and your sons and your sons’ wives with you.”

Was it easy for Noah to leave the Ark after all this time? Did the Ark on Ararat foreshadow the mount of Transfiguration, where Peter wanted to stay forever?

God had closed the door in 7:16. Now He opens the door by His Word and gives creation back to Noah and his descendants. Here again we see the patience of Noah, patience greater than that of Job, according to

Zimmermann (90-91). Noah’s watchfulness and obedience to the Word give us a righteous example to follow; as Luther writes, we do nothing in worship unless the Word instructs us (2:117).

8:17

כָּל־הַחַיָּה אֲשֶׁר־אִתְּךָ מִכָּל־בֶּשֶׂר בְּעוֹף וּבַבְּהֵמָה וּבְכָל־הָרֶמֶשׂ הָרֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ הוֹצֵא אִתְּךָ
וּשְׂרָצוֹ בָאָרֶץ וּפְרוֹ וְרָבוּ עַל־הָאָרֶץ:

[ALL-masc. sing. const. THE LIVING-fem. sing. WHICH WITH YOU-masc. sing. FROM ALL FLESH-masc. sing. IN THE FOWL-masc. sing. AND IN THE BEAST-fem. sing. AND IN ALL THE CREEP-masc. sing. THE CREEP-Qal part. masc. sing. ON THE LAND-fem. sing. GO OUT-Hiphil imp. masc. sing. WITH YOU-masc. sing. AND SWARM-vav cons. Qal perf. pl. IN THE LAND-fem. sing. AND BEAR FRUIT-vav cons. Qal perf. pl. AND BECOME-MANY-vav cons. Qal perf. pl. ON THE LAND-fem. sing.]

Everything living, of all flesh that is with you — of birds, of beasts, and of every creeping thing that creeps on the earth — bring them out with you, that they may swarm on the earth, that they may bear fruit and become many upon the earth.

Some citizens of Nineveh may have thought the king had lost his marbles when he declared that the beasts, too, should fast and wear sackcloth. Yet God confirmed to Jonah that the king was right:

And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than 120,000 persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also much cattle? (4:11 ESV)

Here God also gives creation back to His creatures; the word order puts the emphasis on them. Luther reminds us that the animals in the Ark experienced the same fear and trembling as Noah and his family (2:104). The Creator graciously remembers them, too. He extends His original command to reproduce from the fifth-day creatures to the sixth-day, after adding וּשְׂרָצוּ, “that they may swarm,” as if to say, “Do this as soon as possible” (Kretzmann 20). God takes pleasure in the growth of what He has re-created (LW 2:117).

8:18

וַיֵּצֵא־נֹחַ וּבָנָיו וְאִשְׁתּוֹ וּנְשֵׁי־בָנָיו אִתּוֹ:

[AND GO-OUT-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. NOAH AND SON HE-masc. pl. const. + masc. sing. AND WOMAN HE-fem. sing. const. + masc. sing. AND WOMAN-fem. pl. const. SON HE-masc. pl. const. + masc. sing. WITH HE-masc. sing.]

Then Noah went out, and his sons and his wife and his sons’ wives with him.

He did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness, with seven others, when he brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly. (2 Pet 2:5 ESV)

All eight souls were “saved by water,” through God’s gracious remembrance alone (1 Pet 3:20). Now, as Clement writes, the “herald of righteousness” goes forth to proclaim a new birth to the world (Cor 9:2-4, quoted in ACCS I.124).

8:19

כָּל־הַחַיָּה כָּל־הָרֶמֶשׂ וְכָל־הָעוֹף כָּל רוֹמֵשׂ עַל־הָאָרֶץ לְמִשְׁפַּחְתֵּיהֶם יֵצְאוּ מִן־הַתְּבֵה:

[ALL-masc. sing. const. THE LIVING-fem. sing. ALL-masc. sing. const. THE CREEP-masc. sing. AND ALL-masc. sing. const. THE FOWL-masc. sing. ALL-masc. sing. CREEP-Qal part. masc. sing. ON THE LAND-fem. sing. FOR FAMILY THEY-fem. pl. const. + masc. pl. GO-OUT-Qal perf. pl. FROM THE BOX-fem. sing.]

Everything living—every creeping thing and every bird—everything creeping upon the earth, went out from the ark according to their families.

As in v. 17, the word order puts the emphasis on the living creatures and their families. God preserves the earth for the work of His Church, as we shall see in the next verse (Kretzmann 20).

8:20

וַיִּבֶן נֹחַ מִזְבֵּחַ לַיהוָה וַיִּקַּח מִכָּל הַבְּהֵמָה הַטְּהוֹרָה וּמִכָּל הָעוֹף הַטָּהוֹר וַיַּעַל עֹלֹת בַּמִּזְבֵּחַ׃

[AND BUILD-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. NOAH ALTAR-masc. sing. FOR LORD AND TAKE-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. FROM ALL-masc. sing. const. THE BEAST THE CLEAN-fem. sing. AND FROM ALL-masc. sing. const. THE FOWL THE CLEAN-masc. sing. AND ASCEND-vav cons. Hiphil imperf. 3rd masc. sing. ASCEND-fem. pl. IN THE ALTAR-masc. sing.]

Then Noah built an altar to the LORD. And he took of every clean beast and of every clean bird and offered them up as burnt offerings on the altar.

When the leper saw that he had been cleansed by the Word of the Master, he could see his whole future ahead of him. Imagine Noah's eagerness to resume normal life (Jeske 91-92). But just as the leper first returned to fall at the feet of Jesus and thank Him, so Noah first built an altar to the Lord—the first altar recorded in Scripture, constructed centuries before the Lord's command to His people:

An altar of earth you shall make for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, your sheep and your oxen. *In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.* (Ex 20:24 ESV)

Noah did not need an assembly kit with instructions. His excitement expressed itself spontaneously in obedience and gratitude to the God who remembered him (see FC Epit IV 10). True faith leads to true piety.

We, too, are to emulate the faith of Noah, the **אִישׁ צְדִיק תָּמִים**:

You also, as living stones, are being built up (οἰκοδομεῖσθε; cf. LXX ὀικοδομήσεν < **וַיִּבֶן** here) a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up (ἀνεύγκαι; cf. LXX ἀνήνεγκεν < **וַיַּעַל** here) spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 2:5 NKJV)

Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that confess his name. (Heb 13:15 NIV84)

The altar confesses the atonement of Christ from Genesis to Revelation; after the third bowl of wrath is poured out, the last altar in Scripture literally speaks the same message as the first:

Yes, Lord God the Almighty, true and just are your judgments! (Rev 16:7 ESV)

8:21

וַיִּרְחַב יְהוָה אֶת־רִיחַ הַנִּיחַח וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֶל־לְבוֹ לֹא־אֶסֶף לְקַלֵּל עוֹד אֶת־הָאָדָמָה בְּעִבּוֹר הָאָדָם׃

פִּי יִצַּר לֵב הָאָדָם רַע מִנְעָרָיו וְלֹא־אֶסְף עוֹד לְהַפּוֹת אֶת־כָּל־חַי כַּאֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתִי:

[AND SMELL-vav cons. Hiphil imperf. 3rd masc. sing. LORD (DIRECT OBJECT) SMELL-masc. sing. const. THE QUIETING-masc. sing. AND SAY-vav cons. Qal imperf. 3rd masc. sing. LORD TO HEART HE-masc. sing. const. + masc. sing. NOT ADD-Hiphil imperf. 1st sing. FOR SLIGHT-Piel inf. const. STILL (DIRECT OBJECT) THE GROUND-fem. sing. FOR-SAKE-OF THE MAN-masc. sing. THAT FORM-masc. sing. const. HEART-masc. sing. const. THE MAN-masc. sing. EVIL-masc. sing. FROM YOUTH HE-masc. pl. const. + masc. sing. AND NOT ADD-Hiphil 1st sing. STILL FOR SMITE-Hiphil inf. const. (DIRECT OBJECT) ALL-masc. sing. const. LIVING-masc. sing. AS WHICH DO-Qal perf. 1st sing.]

Then the Lord smelled the soothing scent and said within His heart, “Never again will I curse the ground for man’s sake, since man’s heart shapes itself around evil from his youth; and never again will I strike everything living, as I have done.”

הַנִּיחָח־רִיחַ shows how the Spirit (רוּחַ) had worked faith in the heart of Noah (נֹחַ). Alliteration is the best we can do in English (e.g. KJV “smelled a sweet savour”); the German comes closer to reproducing the poetic phonetics: *Und der HERR roch den lieblichen Geruch.*

Isaac delighted to smell the fields in “Esau’s” clothing (Gen 27:27). The Lord’s sense of smell shows His delight in us, His acceptance of offerings given in faith, and His reconciliation with us for the sake of His Son, the true רִיחַ הַנִּיחָח־ (LXX ὁσμὴ εὐωδίας):

And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (Eph 5:2 NKJV)

For all the changes the Flood wrought on the earth, man’s fallen spiritual condition remained the same. יִצַּר is beyond “intention” (ESV, NASB), “inclination” (NIV, HCBS, NRSV) or Vulgate *prona*. “Imagination” (KJV, NKJV, RSV) may come closest in English, for our character and nature is

far too energetic, vigorous, and active (*nimum sit potens, vivus, efficax*) in everything that is displeasing and repugnant to God. (FC SD II 17; see Epit I 21, LW 2:119-121, but also Chemnitz’s comments on “imagination” in *Examen* I.331-332)

Only the obedience of Christ delivers us. For His sake, God promises to delight in us:

As a pleasing aroma I will accept you, when I bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you have been scattered. And I will manifest my holiness among you in the sight of the nations. (Ezek 20:41 ESV)

8:22

עוֹד כָּל־יְמֵי הָאָרֶץ זָרַע וְקָצִיר וְקָר וְחֹם וְקִיץ וְחֹרֶף יוֹם וְלַיְלָה לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ:

[UNTIL ALL-masc. sing. const. DAY-masc. pl. const. THE LAND-fem. sing. SEED-masc. sing. AND HARVEST-masc. sing. AND COLD-masc. sing. AND HEAT-masc. sing. AND SUMMER-masc. sing. AND AUTUMN-masc. sing. AND DAY-masc. sing. AND NIGHT-masc. sing. NOT REST-Qal imperf. 3rd pl.]

For all the days of the earth, seedtime and harvest—whether cold or heat, whether summer or any other season, whether day or night—will not rest.

The “laws of nature” are really God’s order in creation. This translation treats זָרַע וְקָצִיר as the proper subject of לֹא יִשְׁבְּתוּ, with the times and seasons covering the full extent of the promise. Until the Last Day, there will be perpetual planting and harvesting—the work of the Spirit, who broadcasts the Word.

While קַיִץ, “summer,” is clear enough in Scripture, חֹרֶף (“winter” in every English translation) is amorphous. Jehoiakim sits in the “winter house” (בֵּית הַחֹרֶף) when he burns Jeremiah’s scroll in 36:22; perhaps this was his “off-season” residence (see also Am 3:15). Job longs for the days of his prime (בְּיָמַי חֹרֶף) in 29:4, when the friendship of God was upon his tent. Most of us don’t associate winter (or “autumn,” per BDB) with the prime of life.

LXX ἔαρ only confuses matters. In Ancient Greek, the word clearly means “spring”; e.g. Penelope calls her disguised husband’s attention to the nightingale, which sings at spring’s first warm rush (ἔαρ νέον ἱσταμένοιο, *Odyssey* XIX.518-519; see also *Iliad* VI.146-149; Herodotus V.31; Thucydides IV.117, VI.8; 1 Clement 20:9). ἔαρ also describes a season of fruitfulness; in Numbers 13:20, the spies were sent into Canaan during the season of the “first-ripe grapes” (הַיָּמִים יְמֵי בְּפֹרֵי עֲנָבִים < ἡμέραι ἔαρ προδρομοὶ σταφυλῆς). It seems that the best way to translate חֹרֶף is “not-summer.”

How can there be a harvest that lasts all year long?

Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. (2 Tim 4:2 NKJV)

The work of the Spirit shall never cease. The Gospel shall go forth and be fruitful:

Therefore everything in this Christian community is so ordered that everyone may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and signs appointed to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live on earth. (LC II 55)

Conclusion

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. (Rom 3:23-25 ESV)

God holds man’s history over for the purpose of man’s redemption (CSSB 17). He promises to delay the second—and final—judgment (Edersheim 37). Until then, the seasons are a time of grace, time for the Spirit to gather the elect, for Christ to build the Church, and for the Father to fit us for heaven:

For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust. (Ps 103:14 NKJV)

You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You (יִצָּר סְמוּךְ תִּצַּר שְׁלוֹם שְׁלוֹם),
Because he trusts in You. (Is 26:3 NKJV)

2 Peter 1:3-15: “Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance.”

Shobi, the son of Nahash, king of the Ammonites, should not have been on David’s side. David had sent an embassy with condolences to Shobi’s brother, Hanun, after their father had died. Hanun did not exactly put the best construction on David’s kindness:

So Hanun seized David’s men, shaved off half of each man’s beard, cut off their garments in the middle at the buttocks, and sent them away. (2 Sam 10:4 NIV84)

His reaction was, in retrospect, a tad excessive. This outrage inevitably led to a great battle, in which Joab and Abishai led Israel to victory against the Ammonites and their Syrian allies.

Machir, the son of Ammiel from Lo-debar, also should not have been on David's side. He had been keeping watch over Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan, since his father had died. Through every vicissitude, he had stayed loyal to the house of Saul.

Barzillai, the Gileadite from Rogelim, a wealthy man of eighty, was under no obligation to come to David's defense. He dwelled on the other side of the Jordan, away from the strife caused by Absalom's rebellion. He envisioned a serene retirement.

Yet these men helped the Lord's anointed when he fled from his son:

When David came to Mahanaim, [they] brought beds, basins, and earthen vessels, wheat, barley, flour, parched grain, beans and lentils, honey and curds and sheep and cheese from the herd, for David and the people with him to eat, for they said, "The people are hungry and weary and thirsty in the wilderness." (2 Sam 17:27-29 ESV)

These three men were not all talk. They were not content to give the king and his inner circle a mere taste. They lavished food on all David's people. They even provided utensils so the men didn't have to eat like animals. David received an abundance of generosity from men who owed him nothing.

Luther speaks of the abundant riches of God's undeserved love in the Confessions:

We now want to return to the gospel, which gives guidance and help against sin in more than one way, because God is extravagantly rich in his grace: first, through the spoken word, in which the forgiveness of sins is preached to the whole world (which is the proper function of the gospel); second, through baptism; third, through the holy Sacrament of the Altar; fourth, through the power of the keys and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters. (SA III [4])

In our epistle lesson, God promises to furnish us with everything we need for this life and the next.

1:3

Ὡς πάντα ἡμῖν τῆς θείας δυνάμεως αὐτοῦ τὰ πρὸς ζωὴν καὶ εὐσέβειαν δεδωρημένης διὰ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ καλέσαντος ἡμᾶς ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ,

[AS ALL-neut. acc. pl. I-dat. pl. THE DIVINE POWER-fem. gen. sing. SELF-masc. gen. sing. THE-neut. acc. pl. TO LIFE-fem. acc. sing. AND PIETY-fem. acc. sing. GIVE-perf. mid. part. fem. gen. sing. THROUGH THE KNOWLEDGE-fem. gen. sing. THE CALL-aor. act. part. masc. gen. sing. I-acc. pl. OWN GLORY-fem. dat. sing. AND EXCELLENCE-fem. dat. sing.]

Since His divine power has given us all things unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of the One who has called us by means of His own glory and excellence.

The power of Christ's divine nature (αὐτοῦ < Ἰησοῦ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν, v. 2) is given through means, which work salvation in us,

who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Pet 1:5 KJV)

The perfect middle participle δεδωρημένης demonstrates that the giving—not our earning—endures. We are "abundantly blessed to do good and live eternally" (LW 30:153). We lack nothing.

The primacy of the means of grace is our chief exegetical principle. Lenski calls the expression ἰδίᾳ δόξῃ καὶ ἀρετῇ "instrumental," not dative (259; cf. Vulgate *propria gloria et virtute*, ablative of means).

ἀρετή meant “moral excellence” in Classical Greek; in the Scriptures, excellence belongs to God alone. LXX ἀρετή corresponds to שִׁירֵי־יְהוָה, the “song of praise,” often paralleled—as it is here—with δόξα (דְּבָרָא):

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. (Is 42:8 KJV; see also Is 42:12, Php 4:8)

Hebraisms such as these influence Peter in both his letters:

That you may proclaim the excellencies (τὰς ἀρετὰς; cf. “praises” in KJV, NKJV, NIV, HCSB) of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:9b ESV)

1:4

δι’ ὧν τὰ τίμια καὶ μέγιστα ἡμῖν ἐπαγγέλματα δεδώρηται, ἵνα διὰ τούτων γένησθε θείας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως ἀποφυγόντες τῆς ἐν τῷ κόσμῳ ἐν ἐπιθυμίᾳ φθορᾶς.

[THROUGH WHICH-fem. gen. pl. THE PRECIOUS-neut. acc. pl. AND GREATEST-neut. acc. pl. I-dat. pl. PROMISE-neut. acc. pl. GIVE-perf. mid. ind. 3rd sing. THAT THROUGH THIS-neut. gen. pl. BECOME-aor. mid. subj. 2nd pl. DIVINE-fem. gen. sing. PARTNER-masc. nom. pl. NATURE-fem. gen. sing. FLEE-aor. act. part. masc. nom. pl. THE-fem. gen. sing. IN THE WORLD-masc. dat. sing. IN APPETITE-fem. dat. sing. DECAY-fem. gen. sing.]

Through these He has given promises, precious and exceedingly great to us, that through them you might become partakers of the divine nature; that is to say, having fled from the decay that is in the world, in the domain of lust.

As to the personal union in Christ (the “mystery” below), so to us—in a lesser sense; divine power communicates divine attributes:

For the apostle Peter [2 Peter 1:4] testifies clearly that even we, in whom Christ dwells only by grace, become “participants in the divine nature” in Christ because of this great mystery. (FC SD VIII 34)

Here the ἵνα clause is substantival: the *what* as opposed to the *why*. The clause tells us “what the promises are, not what they attain” (Lenski 261, Wallace 473-475).

The repetition of διὰ emphasizes the means of grace, by which Christ dwells in us and we become partners in His divine, imperishable nature. This partnership, defined exegetically by the aorist participle ἀποφυγόντες (found only in 2 Peter), is our escape from the decay of earthly desires, an escape made possible only by our Savior, for His desire for communion with us is stronger than the hold this world has on us:

With *fervent desire* I have desired (ἐπιθυμίᾳ ἐπεθύμησα) to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. (Lk 22:15 NKJV)

Truly, as Luther writes, 2 Peter 1:4 is a “verse without parallel in the New and the Old Testaments” (30:155).

1:5

Καὶ αὐτὸ τοῦτο δὲ σπουδὴν πάσαν παρεισενέγκαντες ἐπιχορηγήσατε ἐν τῇ πίστει ὑμῶν τὴν ἀρετὴν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἀρετῇ τὴν γνῶσιν,

[AND SELF THIS-neut. acc. sing. BUT ZEAL ALL-fem. acc. sing. EXERT-aor. act. part. masc. nom. pl. SUPPLY-aor. act. imp. 2nd pl. IN THE FAITH-fem. dat. sing. YOU-gen. pl. THE EXCELLENCE-fem. acc. sing. IN BUT THE EXCELLENCE-fem. dat. sing. THE KNOWLEDGE-fem. acc. sing.]

And also, for this very reason, having brought in all earnestness, in your faith furnish excellence, and in excellence, knowledge.

A *hapaxlegomenon*, *παρεισευέγκαντες* literally means “bring in besides.” Besides faith, the Spirit brings sanctified earnestness into the heart.

ἐπιχορηγήσατε is the first finite verb of this section. Besides this chapter, it appears three times in the New Testament (2 Cor 9:10, Gal 3:5, Col 2:9). God is always its subject. Here He is clearly the power behind our supplying. *ἐπιχορηγέω* is derived from *χορηγός*, the choral leader who supplied the chorus with everything they needed, assuming the cost (BAGD 305, Robertson 151, Lenski 264-265). God is the true *ἐπιχορηγός*, the choral master above us all, leading His people in the new song of salvation.

Thus begins the “golden chain of Christian virtues, seven jewels fastened to faith.” We do not supply the faith (*ἐν τῇ πίστει* is not the direct object of *ἐπιχορηγήσατε*); rather, says Augustine, *fides est mater et radix bonorum operum* (Lenski 264-266).

Lenski defines the difference between *ἐπίγνωσις* and *γνώσις* as “knowledge of salvation” and “knowledge of the Word” (268). The latter knowledge, writes Kretzmann, is the antidote to apostasy (545).

1:6

ἐν δὲ τῇ γνώσει τὴν ἐγκράτειαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ἐγκρατεία τὴν ὑπομονήν, ἐν δὲ τῇ ὑπομονῇ τὴν εὐσέβειαν,

[IN BUT THE KNOWLEDGE-fem. dat. sing. THE I-POWER-fem. acc. sing. IN BUT THE I-POWER-fem. dat. sing. THE UNDER-REMAIN-fem. acc. sing. IN BUT THE UNDER-REMAIN-fem. dat. sing. THE PIETY-fem. acc. sing.]

And in knowledge, self-control; and in self-control, perseverance; and in perseverance, godliness.

As we follow the “golden chain,” we see the movement of the Spirit from the inner life of faith to the outer life of sanctification. The fruits of faith are the external testimonies of the Spirit, proceeding from the Spirit’s testimony in the external Word. The Spirit furnishes us with perseverance (*ὑπομονή* = “under” + “remain”) in this life under the cross.

1:7

ἐν δὲ τῇ εὐσεβείᾳ τὴν φιλαδελφίαν, ἐν δὲ τῇ φιλαδελφίᾳ τὴν ἀγάπην.

[IN BUT THE PIETY-fem. dat. sing. THE FRATERNAL-AFFECTION-fem. acc. sing. IN BUT THE FRATERNAL-AFFECTION-fem. dat. sing. THE LOVE-fem. acc. sing.]

And in godliness, brotherly affection; and in brotherly affection, unconditional love.

Godliness, fueled by the means of grace, produces brotherly love. This movement within the communion of saints is reflected in the Exhortation after the Sanctus:

You should also unite in giving thanks to Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, for so great a gift, and should love one another with a pure heart. (ELH, p. 53)

Faith ultimately expresses itself not only in love for Christian brothers and sisters, but in *ἀγάπη* toward friends and enemies, as Peter had previously written:

Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love (εἰς φιλαδελφίαν ἀνυπόκριτον) of the brethren, see that ye love (ἀγαπήσατε) one another with a pure heart fervently. (1 Pet 1:22 KJV)

This is the love that the world does not know (Mt 5:44-47), love that, as Bede comments, offers the right evangelical witness to unbelievers, as opposed to “arguing them into the kingdom” (ACCS XI.134).

1:8

ταῦτα γὰρ ὑμῖν ὑπάρχοντα καὶ πλεονάζοντα οὐκ ἀργούς οὐδὲ ἀκάρπους καθίστησιν εἰς τὴν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐπίγνωσιν·

[THIS-neut. nom. pl. FOR YOU-dat. pl. BE-AT-DISPOSAL-pres. act. part. neut. nom. pl. AND ABOUND-pres. act. part. neut. nom. pl. NOT IDLE-masc. acc. pl. NOR UNFRUITFUL-masc. acc. pl. SET-IN-CHARGE-pres. act. ind. 3rd pl. INTO THE-fem. acc. sing. THE LORD-masc. gen. sing. I-gen. pl. JESUS CHRIST-gen. sing. KNOWLEDGE-fem. acc. sing.]

For as these things are at your disposal and are abounding, they appoint you to be neither idle nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The key here is stewardship, expressed in the verbs ὑπάρχοντα and καθίστησιν, as Jesus said:

I tell you the truth, he will put him in charge of all his possessions (ἐπὶ πᾶσιν τοῖς ὑπάρχουσιν αὐτοῦ καταστήσει αὐτόν). (Mt 24:47 NIV84).

Christ puts the Word and Sacraments at His Church’s disposal. He appoints ministers—stewards of His mysteries—to dispense them, with this promise: when—not “if”—we put the Gospel to use, we are neither barren nor unfruitful (note the litotes).

Divorced from the means of grace, words become careless, and action inaction; ἀργός makes up half of *lethargy* (the other half will follow). Inactivity in the means of grace means fruitless inactivity in ministry:

The cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. (Mt 13:22b ESV)

ὑπάρχοντα and πλεονάζοντα are always translated conditionally, yet the divine power operating through the means of grace is also not a matter of “if” when it comes to sanctification. Those who have been justified by faith, who dwell in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, will not be idle. They cannot stand still (*Examen* I.620, Kretzmann 545).

1:9

ὧ γὰρ μὴ πάρεστιν ταῦτα, τυφλός ἐστιν μυωπάζων, λήθην λαβῶν τοῦ καθαρισμοῦ τῶν πάλαι αὐτοῦ ἁμαρτιῶν.

[WHO-masc. dat. sing. FOR NOT BE-PRESENT-pres. act. ind. 3rd sing. THIS-neut. nom. pl. BLIND-masc. nom. sing. BE-pres. act. ind. 3rd sing. SHUT-EYE-pres. act. part. masc. nom. sing. FORGETFULNESS-fem. acc. sing. TAKE-aor. act. part. masc. nom. sing. THE CLEANSING-masc. gen. sing. THE-fem. gen. pl. LONG-AGO SELF-masc. gen. sing. SIN-fem. gen. pl.]

For to whomever these things are not present, such a person is so myopic that he is blind, having forgotten the cleansing of his sins long ago.

ὧ γὰρ μὴ πάρεστιν ταῦτα may be impersonal, but the warning here is not: abandoning the Gospel is apostasy and blindness.

Spiritual myopia is a willful refusal to see the Light of the World. When we are unwilling to see Jesus, Luther writes, we are blind to our neighbor (30:157-158). We seek the bare minimum instead of the highest good.

Spiritual forgetfulness (λήθη is the other half of *lethargy*; cf. Vulgate *oblivionem accipiens*) is not benign amnesia, but a matter of unfaithfulness, as we see throughout Scripture:

And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God (אִלְהֵיךָ אֶת־יְהוָה אֲשֶׁר־אֲנִי מְשַׁבְּחִים > ἐὰν λήθη ἐπιλάθη κυρίου τοῦ θεοῦ σου), and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish. (Dt 8:19 KJV; see also Lev 5:15 and Num 5:27)

How ironic that we forget our cleansing in the baptismal river by drinking from Lethe, the mythical river of forgetfulness!

Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? and thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? (Ps 88:12 KJV)

1:10
διὸ μᾶλλον, ἀδελφοί, σπουδάσατε βεβαίαν ὑμῶν τὴν κλῆσιν καὶ ἐκλογὴν ποιεῖσθαι· ταῦτα γὰρ ποιοῦντες οὐ μὴ πταίσητέ ποτε.

[THEREFORE MORE BROTHERS-masc. voc. pl. ZEAL-aor. act. imp. 2nd pl. FIRM-fem. acc. sing. YOU-gen. pl. THE CALL-fem. acc. sing. AND CHOICE-fem. acc. sing. DO-pres. mid. inf. THIS-neut. acc. pl. FOR DO-pres. act. part. masc. nom. pl. NOT NOT STUMBLE-aor. act. subj. 2nd pl. EVER]

Therefore even more, brothers, be earnest to make firm your calling and election; for by doing these things, you will never ever stumble.

This verse was very important to our fathers. From start to finish, the Confessions hold to the proper interpretation of this controversial verse, keeping the distinction between faith and works in focus:

Now here you see, dear reader, that our opponents have not wasted any effort in learning logic, for they have learned the art of inferring whatever they like from the Scriptures. “Make your calling sure through good works.” Therefore works merit the forgiveness of sins! This is a very good way of arguing, since one could argue this way about a person who stood under the sentence of death and who was then pardoned. “The judge commands that from now on you stop stealing what belongs to another. Therefore, through this you have merited the pardon of the penalty, because you from now on will refrain from taking what belongs to another.” To argue this way is to make a cause out of an effect. (Ap XX 12)

Peter is talking about the works that follow the forgiveness of sins and teaches why they should be done, namely, in order to confirm their calling, that is, so that they do not fall from their calling by sinning again. Do good works to persevere in your calling, which were given beforehand, not on account of the works that follow, and which are now retained by faith. Faith does not remain in those who lose the Holy Spirit and reject repentance. As we said above, faith exists in repentance. (Ap XX 13, quoted in FC SD IV 33)

The Holy Spirit dwells in the elect who have believed as he dwells in his temple and is not idle in them but impels the children of God to obey God’s commands. Therefore, believers should in the same way not be idle either, much less resist the impetus of God’s Spirit, but should practice all Christian virtues...and should diligently seek to “confirm their call and election” [2 Peter 1:10], so that the more they recognize the Spirit’s power and strength in themselves, the less they doubt their election. (FC SD XI 73)

1:11

οὕτως γὰρ πλουσίως ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται ὑμῖν ἡ εἴσοδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν καὶ σωτῆρος Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

[THUS FOR RICHLY SUPPLY-fut. pass. ind. 3rd sing. YOU-dat. pl. THE ENTRANCE-fem. nom. sing. INTO THE ETERNAL KINGDOM-fem. acc. sing. THE LORD-masc. gen. sing. I-gen. pl. AND SAVIOR JESUS CHRIST-masc. gen. sing.]

For thus there will be richly provided for you entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

The divine service is God's "heaping up" of "splendor and richness" (Kretzmann 546):

Accordingly, Christ offers the promises of the gospel not only in general but also through the sacraments, which he has attached as a seal of the promise and by which he confirms the promise individually to each and every believer. (FC SD XI 37)

ἐπιχορηγηθήσεται ὑμῖν ἡ εἴσοδος is emphatic; again, according to the future passive, God alone will be the supplier. The source and destination of salvation are one and the same; ἡ εἴσοδος εἰς τὴν αἰώνιον βασιλείαν is the purpose of the divine gifts:

Through the use of these means we therefore arrive at the *terminus* appointed by Him. By our attitude toward Christ and the means of grace we can therefore tell whether we have been elected from eternity. (Pieper III.478)

1:12

Διὸ μελλήσω ἀεὶ ὑμᾶς ὑπομιμνήσκειν περὶ τούτων καίπερ εἰδότας καὶ ἐστηριγμένους ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀληθείας.

[THEREFORE INTEND-fut. act. ind. 1st sing. ALWAYS YOU-acc. pl. REMIND-pres. act. inf. ABOUT THIS-neut. gen. pl. ALTHOUGH KNOW-perf. act. part. masc. acc. pl. AND ESTABLISH-perf. pass. part. masc. acc. pl. IN THE BE-PRESENT-pres. act. part. fem. dat. sing. TRUTH-fem. dat. sing.]

Therefore, I will always be reminding you about these things, although you have known them and have been established in the present truth.

With the time he has left, St. Peter promises to keep on calling the gifts of the divine power to remembrance (present infinitive ὑπομιμνήσκειν, NRSV "keep on reminding"). The work of the Lord's ministers is to exhort and instruct, even if some—both laity and clergy—might say, "I already know all that":

I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth. (1 Jn 2:21 NKJV; see also Rom 15:14-16, Php 3:1, Jude 3-5)

The active εἰδότας is only possible because of the passive ἐστηριγμένους. Having been established by the Spirit ἐν τῇ παρουσίᾳ ἀληθείας, the truth that is present for us in the means of grace, we know the truth of salvation in Christ, and live under the cross with joy.

1:13

δίκαιον δὲ ἡγοῦμαι, ἐφ' ὅσον εἰμὶ ἐν τούτῳ τῷ σκηνώματι, διεγείρειν ὑμᾶς ἐν ὑπομνήσει,

[JUST-neut. acc. sing. BUT THINK-pres. mid. ind. 1st sing. ON AS-MUCH-AS-neut. acc. sing. BE-pres. act. ind. 1st sing. IN THIS THE TABERNACLE-neut. dat. sing. AROUSE-pres. active inf. YOU-masc. acc. pl. IN REMEMBRANCE-fem. dat. sing.]

And I consider it right, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to keep on rousing you in remembrance.

As we joyfully look forward to our entrance into the heavenly kingdom, it is meet, right, and salutary that we keep on stirring God's people up through the signs of His remembrance. The present infinitive διεγείρειν is translated "stir up" (ESV, KJV, NKJV, NASB), "refresh" (NIV, NRSV), "wake up" (HCSB; cf. Vulgate *suscitare*), and "arouse" (NRSV).

The divine ὑπόμνησις overcomes human λήθη (note Paul's expression ὑπόμνησιν λαβῶν in 2 Timothy 1:5, as opposed to λήθην λαβῶν in v. 9 above). ὑπόμνησις is God's remembering of us in the Word and Sacraments:

Concerning the use of sacraments they teach that sacraments were instituted not only to be marks of profession among human beings but much more to be signs and testimonies of God's will toward us, intended *to arouse and strengthen faith in those who use them*. Accordingly, sacraments are to be used so that faith, which believes the promises offered and displayed through the sacraments, may increase. (AC XIII 1-2)

1:14

εἰδὼς ὅτι ταχινή ἐστιν ἡ ἀπόθεσις τοῦ σκηνώματός μου καθὼς καὶ ὁ κύριος ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἐδήλωσέν μοι,

[KNOW-perf. act. part. masc. nom. sing. THAT SWIFT-fem. nom. sing. BE-pres. act. ind. 3rd sing. THE REMOVAL-fem. nom. sing. THE TABERNACLE-neut. gen. sing. I-gen. sing. AS THE LORD-masc. nom. sing. I-gen. pl. JESUS CHRIST-nom. sing. MAKE-CLEAR-aor. act. ind. 3rd sing. I-dat. sing.]

Since I know that swift is the putting off of my tabernacle, as our Lord Jesus Christ made plain to me.

Peter thinks of his own εἶσοδος, now swiftly approaching, which Jesus had prophesied in John 13:36 and 21:18-19. Here we learn that, like Luther's Smalcald Articles, this second letter is the apostle's last will and testament. Twenty-five years before, Herod Agrippa had made an appointment for Peter — an appointment with death. That appointment was canceled; the Lord sent His angel to rescue His apostle. This appointment, however, would be kept. But Peter was not afraid. Death is but an ἀπόθεσις; or, in Bede's definition, "Exchanging the tent for the comforts of home" (ACCS XI.138).

1:15

σπουδάσω δὲ καὶ ἐκάστοτε ἔχειν ὑμᾶς μετὰ τὴν ἐμὴν ἔξοδον τὴν τούτων μνήμην ποιῆσθαι.

[BE-ZEALOUS-fut. act. ind. 1st sing. BUT AND ALWAYS HAVE-pres. act. inf. YOU-acc. pl. AFTER THE MY DEPARTURE THE-fem. acc. sing. THIS-neut. gen. pl. REMEMBRANCE-fem. acc. sing. DO-pres. mid. inf.]

And I will be even more eager to have you keep the remembrance of these things at all times after my departure.

To enter a new place requires an exit from the old. Until then, Peter's efforts in the "chief endeavor" will continue. The Holy Spirit will see to it that, in his last moments, St. Peter will write the Word of God in order to rouse us in remembrance. This letter is the proof of his earnestness and his great concern for souls (LW 30:162, Lenski 284).

Irenaeus, among others, thought τὴν τούτων μνήμην was a specific reference to the Gospel of Mark (Robertson 155, CSSB 1919), while Chemnitz broadens the definition to include all the apostolic writings and discusses this deeper meaning:

[ἔχειν μνήμην ποιέσθαι] is altogether more to “make recollection” than merely to “remind,” for it means to preserve the memory of a thing...both the recollection of something and the sign of remembrance by which that recollection is renewed and preserved. (*Examen* I.142)

God causes His name to be remembered for all generations through His Holy Spirit, as His Son prophesied the night He was betrayed:

But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you. (Jn 14:26 KJV; see also Ex 3:15, Ps 111:4, Ps 115:12)

John 17:20-26: “We might well inscribe this text in letters of pure gold.”

Sergius Paulus, the proconsul of Cyprus, was a “man of intelligence” (ἄνδρὶ συνετῷ). When he saw the mist and darkness fall upon Elymas the magician (or Bar-Jesus the false prophet)—just as Paul (or Saul), full of the Holy Spirit, had prophesied—he believed, not because of the miracle, but because he was “astonished at the teaching of the Lord (ἐπὶ τῇ διδαχῇ τοῦ κυρίου)” (Ac 13:12). He marveled at the power that was in the teaching, the transformative power of the Word given by the Lord to His apostles.

A tract I stole from the Episcopal church two blocks to the east invites me to join them because they offer “A Faith for Thinking People”:

As God leads us to new discoveries through science, historical research, and the use of our reason, we find meaning in the Bible which previous generations did not see.

Another tract convinces me that Episcopalians are bugging my office for material to mock:

Is strict literalism the only approach to holy scripture [sic], or is there a way to engage the Bible with intelligence?

The first thing to understand is what kind of book the Bible is, and what kind it is not. *Many suppose the Bible is a seamless garment* of God’s literal pronouncements from Genesis through to Revelation. It is not.

These tracts are ostensibly designed to reverse the bad decline in the Episcopal Church and other mainline denominations—which they equate with apostasy—by making the Word more appealing to “men of intelligence.” Temptations to go down this path are everywhere. One church offers faith “for thinking people”; the other tries to entertain the hell out of you. Both churches have succumbed to spiritual hyperbole; they have convinced themselves that they must change or die.

Hyperbole denies the promise of Christ and the divine power of His Word. In these New Testament times, the Lord Jesus has committed the seamless garment of His Word to the one holy Christian and apostolic Church, and committed it seamlessly, just as His Father committed the Word to the prophets:

On your walls, O Jerusalem, I have set watchmen; all the day and all the night they shall never be silent. You who put the LORD in remembrance, take no rest, and give him no rest until he establishes Jerusalem and makes it a praise in the earth. (Is 62:6-7 ESV)

As you sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. (Jn 17:18b ESV)

Sergius Paulus recognized this seamless commission. This man of intelligence acknowledged the teaching of Paul and Barnabas to be the teaching of the Lord.

Jesus promises the enduring Word in His High Priestly Prayer on Maundy Thursday. Here, before the agonies of Gethsemane fall upon our Savior, is the “unspeakably sublime consecration of His Church” (Edersheim 841). His prayer for complete, seamless unity in the Church inspired the Concordists, who asked for this blessing on the Epitome:

May the almighty God and Father of our Lord Jesus grant the grace of his Holy Spirit, that we may all be one in him [John 17:20-21] and steadfastly remain in the Christian and God-pleasing unity. (XI 22)

Luther’s commentary for John 17 is based on a sermon delivered on October 17, 1528. The Reformer speaks with intelligence against the tracts of hyperbole today:

I must diligently admonish you to learn highly to esteem such passages and this entire chapter, for I know of no other that treats this chief article of all Christian doctrine so richly, all gathered together in one place, and sets it forth in such powerful words, to wit, that in Christ we have all we need and not in ourselves or in any other human being. The words are simple and plain, and that makes the clever spirits rush over them and despise them as something they had abandoned long ago with children’s shoes. And in the meanwhile they have written and preached the world full of their own dreams and ideas. (69:107)

One theologian who took these words to heart was Pieper, who cited John 17:20 forty-two times in *Christian Dogmatics*. Will we also heed Luther’s exhortation and “inscribe this text in letters of pure gold” (69:101)?

17:20

Οὐ περὶ τούτων δὲ ἐρωτῶ μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ περὶ τῶν πιστευόντων διὰ τοῦ λόγου αὐτῶν εἰς ἐμέ,

[NOT ABOUT THIS-masc. gen. pl. BUT ASK-pres. act. ind. 1st sing. ONLY BUT AND ABOUT THE BELIEVE-pres. act. part. (masc.) gen. pl. THROUGH THE WORD-masc. gen. sing. SELF-masc. gen. pl. INTO I-masc. acc. sing.]

But not only concerning these do I ask, but also concerning those who, through their word, believe in me.

ἐρωτῶ means that Jesus asks the Father as an equal; Lenski comments that we cannot use this verb when we pray (1154). Earlier that evening, Jesus promised to bring another petition before the Father:

And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper, to be with you forever. (Jn 14:16 ESV)

The Spirit will inspire the enduring, apostolic Word, the Word of Christ.

Just as God remembered Noah and his family in the Ark, so Jesus remembers us in His prayer; all those who believe through the Word. As the Formula declares, the abundance of faith’s blessings comes to us

in no other way than through his holy Word (which people hear proclaimed or read) and through the sacraments (which they use according to his Word). (SD II 50; see also AC V 2-3 and Ap XIII 5)

The Savior establishes the ministry of the Word for all time. That sinners believe in the Word presupposes its continuance, existence, and possession. There is no church, no faith, no fruits of faith, without the external Word, to which Jesus binds His ministers (Pieper I.337, 342; II.339-340; III.156; see also Lenski 1154).

For Luther, there is no need for hyperbole in these dark times, when “the devil’s spawn is swarming against [preaching]” and despising the external Word. No, Jesus does not promise that all will believe, but He does not say that *no one* will believe. His Word is divine power, and His promise “embraces all Christendom until the Last Day” (69:102).

17:21

ἵνα πάντες ἐν ὧσιν, καθὼς σύ, πάτερ, ἐν ἐμοὶ καὶ γὰρ ἐν σοί, ἵνα καὶ αὐτοὶ ἐν ἡμῖν ὧσιν, ἵνα ὁ κόσμος πιστεύῃ ὅτι σύ με ἀπέστειλας.

[THAT ALL-masc. nom. pl. ONE-neut. nom. sing. BE-pres. act. subj. 3rd pl. AS YOU-nom. sing. FATHER-masc. voc. sing. IN I-dat. sing. AND I-nom. sing. IN YOU-dat. sing. THAT AND SELF-masc. nom. pl. IN I-dat. pl. BE-pres. act. subj. 3rd pl. THAT THE WORLD-masc. nom. sing. BELIEVE-pres. act. subj. 3rd sing. THAT YOU-nom. sing. I-acc. sing. SEND-aor. act. ind. 2nd sing.]

That all may continually be one, just as You, Father, are in me, and I in you; that they also may continually be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Lenski divides the three ἵνα clauses into 1) substantive, stating the request itself; 2) appositional; and 3) purpose (1155-1158).

In the substantive clause, the present subjunctive ὧσιν shows that this unity has already been achieved; i.e. “continually be” as opposed to “become” (CSSB 1640). This is the work of God, who “hath tempered together” the Body of Christ,

That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. (1 Cor 12:24-25 KJV)

The continual unity of the Church fulfills the promise made to Jeremiah:

And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear me for ever, for the good of them, and of their children after them. (32:39 KJV)

The appositional clause shows that the unity of the Church derives from the Unity of the Godhead (Edersheim 841). This unity is kept safe from the attacks of the devil and deviations in doctrine. This comforts Christians under the cross; as Luther writes, the Church, though it appears to be the opposite, is “a powerful lady and empress in heaven and earth” (69:105).

The purpose clause shows that this unity is essential for evangelism:

The greater our oneness in the Word, the greater our victories in the world...It makes a great difference how the church acts in bringing the Word to men. (Lenski 1158-1159)

The fruit of our unity *is* the spreading of the Word to the sinful world:

That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ. (1 Jn 1:3 NKJV; see also LW 69:106)

17:22

καὶ γὰρ τὴν δόξαν ἣν δέδωκάς μοι δέδωκα αὐτοῖς, ἵνα ὧσιν ἐν καθὼς ἡμεῖς ἐν·

[AND I-nom. sing. THE GLORY WHICH-fem. acc. sing. GIVE-perf. act. ind. 2nd sing. I-dat. sing. GIVE-perf. act. ind. 1st sing. SELF-masc. dat. pl. THAT BE-pres. act. subj. 3rd pl. ONE-neut. nom. sing. AS I-nom. pl. ONE-neut. nom. sing.]

And the glory which you have given me I have given them, that they may continually be one just as We are one.

As we learned in 2 Peter 1, the glory of the Trinity becomes ours when we partake of the divine nature. Here the divine glory *and* unity are communicated to us through the ministry of Word and Sacrament (Lenski 1160; see also Gregory of Nyssa in ACCS IVb.258-259).

The perfect δέδωκάς reminds us that God had glorified His only-begotten Son before all worlds and would continue to glorify Him; now the hour had come for the Son of Man to be lifted up on the cross, that He might glorify His Father. δέδωκα, also perfect, shows us that our Redeemer has given and continues to give us His glory and unity the only way we can receive it: through His Spirit, working through the Word.

Here a second round of ἵνα clauses begins, again following Lenski's order of substantive, apposition, and purpose.

17:23

ἐγὼ ἐν αὐτοῖς καὶ σὺ ἐν ἐμοί, ἵνα ᾧσιν τετελειωμένοι εἰς ἓν, ἵνα γινώσκῃ ὁ κόσμος ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας καὶ ἠγάπησας αὐτοὺς καθὼς ἐμὲ ἠγάπησας.

[I-nom. sing. IN SELF-masc. dat. pl. AND YOU-nom. sing. IN I-dat. sing. THAT BE-pres. act. subj. 3rd sing. COMPLETE-perf. pass. part. masc. nom. pl. INTO ONE-neut. acc. sing. THAT KNOW-pres. act. subj. 3rd sing. THE WORLD-masc. nom. sing. THAT YOU-nom. sing. I-acc. sing. SEND-aor. act. ind. 2nd sing. AND LOVE-aor. act. ind. 2nd sing. SELF-masc. acc. pl. AS I-acc. sing. LOVE-aor. act. ind. 2nd sing.]

I in them, and You in Me; that they may continually be perfected into one; that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them just as You loved Me.

This mystical union is “high, outstanding knowledge” that can never fully be learned (LW 69:106); nevertheless, in the appositional ἵνα clause, our Savior prays that we might be brought to complete unity and kept in that unity forever. This completeness only comes from the perfect Lamb of God, who made the atoning sacrifice for sin; it is brought about only by Word and Sacrament: τὸ πνεῦμα καὶ τὸ ὕδωρ καὶ τὸ αἷμα, for only the Spirit, working through the water and the blood, brings the perfection of Christ's sacrifice to our hearts (1 Jn 5:8).

The unity of the Church—i.e. its faithfulness to the Word—carries a promise of blessing:

But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him (ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ θεοῦ τετελείωται). By this we know that we are in Him. (1 Jn 2:5 NKJV; see also 1 Jn 4:12)

The love of the Father for believers is the love of the Father for the incarnate Son. This love binds everything in perfect harmony and gives us confidence to preach the Gospel to all creation (Col 3:14; see also Cyril of Alexandria in *De duabus naturis*, 468-469; Lenski 1163-1164).

In the purpose clause, the present subjunctive γινώσκῃ assures us that this divine purpose will be realized in every age, wherever believers unite around the Word (Lenski 1163).

As in 2 Peter 1:13, repetition, here expressed in the two rounds of three ἵνα clauses, is our Teacher's way of rousing us up in remembrance. Luther writes that Jesus dwells on this precious truth, emphasizing it over and over to impress it on us (69:107-110); it is a “childlike overflowing of words” meant to comfort the Church and fortify Her ministers against lethargy:

We must labor daily for it with praying, preaching, exhortation, with all sorts of sufferings and temptations, so that we do not lose so glorious a treasure nor let the devil take it away. (69:111)

17:24

Πάτερ, ὃ δέδωκάς μοι, θέλω ἵνα ὅπου εἶμι ἐγὼ κἀκεῖνοι ὧσιν μετ' ἐμοῦ, ἵνα θεωρῶσιν τὴν δόξαν τὴν ἐμήν, ἣν δέδωκάς μοι ὅτι ἠγάπησάς με πρὸ καταβολῆς κόσμου.

[FATHER-masc. voc. sing. WHICH-neut. acc. sing. GIVE-perf. act. ind. 2nd sing. I-dat. sing. WILL-pres. act. ind. 1st sing. THAT WHERE BE-pres. act. ind. 1st sing. I-nom. sing. AND THAT-masc. nom. sing. BE-pres. act. subj. 3rd pl. WITH I-gen. sing. THAT SEE-pres. act. subj. 3rd pl. THE GLORY THE MY WHICH-fem. acc. sing. GIVE-perf. act. ind. 2nd sing. I-dat. sing. THAT LOVE-aor. act. ind. 2nd sing. I-acc. sing. BEFORE FOUNDATION-fem. gen. sing. WORLD-masc. gen. sing.]

Father, what You have given Me, I will that, wherever I am, those continually be with Me, that they keep on beholding My glory, which You have given Me, because You loved Me before the foundation of the world.

Luther calls this the most comforting part of the prayer, the “pillow and feather bed for our souls” before our joyful departure. Our Lord promises that we will no longer be “a mat for the devil’s feet,” but, echoing 2 Peter 1:11, “You shall be well provided for and come to the place where you long to be” (69:112-113).

The neuter ὃ in ὃ δέδωκάς μοι may have rankled some, leading to the variant οὗς—“whom” (which is how everybody translates it anyway) as opposed to “what.” Lenski calls the variant “an inferior reading” — Metzger gives it a [B]—since ὃ simply refers to “the mass” of believers; i.e. the invisible Church (1165). The perfect δέδωκάς shows us that this sum of all Christians was present in Jesus’ mind that night.

θέλω ἵνα introduces a complementary clause that replaces the Classical Greek infinitive (Wallace 476). Not only does it express Christ’s purpose, but also His last will and testament, expressed with the “confidence of the Redeemer” (Kretzmann 506). The Lord’s use of θέλω, Luther writes, is meant

to stir us up, since we are so lazy and feeble in faith, so that we may not remain in doubt or hesitation but hold it to be just as certain as if we saw it present now before our eyes. (69:114)

Our Savior’s divine will is that we keep on beholding and keep on participating in His glory, glory through and under the cross, glory whose final consummation is in heaven. This is the *summum bonum*, the “highest good” (Augustine, ACCS IVb.261; see also *De duabus naturis*, 69; Pieper III.552; Lenski 1169). His will is that we remember how He has remembered and will continue to remember us!

17:25

πάτερ δίκαιε, καὶ ὁ κόσμος σε οὐκ ἔγνω, ἐγὼ δέ σε ἔγνω, καὶ οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας·

[FATHER JUST-masc. voc. sing. AND THE WORLD-masc. nom. sing. YOU-acc. sing. NOT KNOW-aor. act. ind. 3rd sing. I-nom. sing. BUT YOU-acc. sing. KNOW-aor. act. ind. 1st sing. AND THIS-masc. nom. sing. KNOW-aor. act. ind. 3rd pl. THAT YOU-nom. sing. I-acc. sing. SEND-aor. act. ind. 2nd singular]

O righteous Father, even though the world did not know You, I knew You, and these knew that You sent Me.

The righteous Father has the right to make a distinction between the world—those who reject the free gift—and the disciples of His Son (LW 69:116).

The repetition of γινώσκω in the aorist shows that our Lord speaks of accomplished, undeniable facts. Although the world knew neither its Creator nor its Redeemer, the work of Christ, who knew the Father and His will perfectly, was not in vain: οὗτοι ἔγνωσαν ὅτι σὺ με ἀπέστειλας (Kretzmann 506).

Edersheim calls this verse the final consecration of our High Priest (841); Ylvisaker calls it His supreme intercession for the Church (690). Lenski points out an economy of words here; without spelling it out, the Son trusts that the righteous Father knows exactly what to do with and for the disciples (1169).

17:26

καὶ ἐγνώρισα αὐτοῖς τὸ ὄνομά σου καὶ γνωρίσω, ἵνα ἡ ἀγάπη ἣν ἠγάπησάς με ἐν αὐτοῖς ἢ καὶ ἐν αὐτοῖς.

[AND KNOW-aor. act. ind. 1st sing. SELF-masc. dat. pl. THE NAME-neut. acc. sing. YOU-gen. sing. AND KNOW-fut. act. ind. 1st sing. THAT THE LOVE-fem. nom. sing. WHICH-fem. acc. sing. LOVE-aor. act. ind. 2nd sing. I-acc. sing. IN SELF-masc. dat. pl. BE-pres. act. subj. 3rd sing. AND I-nom. sing. IN SELF-masc. dat. pl.]

And I made known to them Your name, and I will continue to make it known, that the love with which You loved Me may continually be in them, and I in them.

Jesus had spent much of Maundy Thursday making things known to His disciples:

No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you. (Jn 15:15 NKJV)

In just a matter of hours, the cross of Calvary would make things very plain to a sinful world, as David prophesied: “The LORD is known by the judgment He executes” (Ps 9:16a NKJV).

Though His work of redemption is complete, the risen Savior is not finished with sinners; He will continue to make His Father’s name known through the ministry of the Word and the Spirit, which give us the power to know the Father (LW 69:118).

Jesus finishes His prayer by speaking of the Father’s love abiding in us; i.e. our adoption as His sons. Our Brother assures us that His Father will treat us as His own (*De duabus naturis*, 45; Lenski 1171).

Having committed us to the Father, Jesus gets up from the table to suffer and die (Ylvisaker 690). The rejected Stone will be the Cornerstone of the Church. The foundation will be His Word. His blood and water will be the mortar that holds everything together.

Conclusion: “A blessed future for a Lutheranism worthy of the name.”

How did the crowd at Corinthian Hall react to the scorching irony of their invited guest, his searing indictment of American lethargy and apostasy, his impassioned plea to cling to the principles of the long-forgotten Fourth? They gave him a standing ovation.

In the end, Frederick Douglass was no pessimist:

Allow me to say, in conclusion, notwithstanding the dark picture I have this day presented, of the state of the nation, I do not despair of this country...The arm of the Lord is not shortened, and the doom of slavery is certain. I, therefore, leave off where I began, with hope...drawing encouragement from the Declaration of Independence, the great principles it contains, and the genius of American institutions. (17)

In 1967, the 450th anniversary of the Reformation, Professor Milton Otto offered these optimistic thoughts in the *LSQ*:

If we are to celebrate the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation in a manner that will be both pleasing to God and profitable for us, we can follow only one course and that is to re-affirm the Reformation principles which were so clearly enunciated by Luther and his co-workers, on the basis of Scripture, and which throughout its history have been the hallmark of confessional Lutheranism. But more important than the present anniversary observance—

only by such re-affirmation and re-dedication can there be any hope that sound orthodox Lutheranism will survive. A conscientious re-studying of the whole Reformation movement can bring about such a resolve and thus, under God, insure a blessed future for a Lutheranism worthy of the name. (6-7)

The means of grace, which alone work faith in the redemption of Jesus Christ, will “re-affirm the Reformation principles,” from justification by faith alone to a life of sanctified vocation. They will insure our blessed future. They are the Spirit’s reminders, binding us in unity and love with the Father and the Son, making our calling and election sure, for all the days of the earth:

For this is as the waters of Noah unto me: for as I have sworn that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth; so have I sworn that I would not be wroth with thee, nor rebuke thee. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee. O thou afflicted, tossed with tempest, and not comforted, behold, I will lay thy stones with fair colours, and lay thy foundations with sapphires. And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles, and all thy borders of pleasant stones. And all thy children shall be taught of the LORD; and great shall be the peace of thy children. In righteousness shalt thou be established: thou shalt be far from oppression; for thou shalt not fear: and from terror; for it shall not come near thee. (Is 54:9-14 KJV)

Suggested Hymns

24 Lord, Open Thou My Heart to Hear	494 I Know My Faith Is Founded
167 How Lovely Shines the Morning Star	496 Lord Jesus, Think on Me
212 Lord Jesus, Thou the Church’s Head	499 Now I Have Found the Ground Wherein
219 Lord, as Thou Wilt, Deal Thou with Me	511 Lord Jesus Christ, with Us Abide
254 In Vain Would Boasting Reason Find	527 In the Midst of Earthly Life
396 If God Had Not Been on Our Side	549 O God, Our Lord, Your Holy Word
439 Lord of Our Life and God of Our Salvation	583 God’s Word Is Our Great Heritage
440 O Lord, Look Down from Heaven, Behold	589 Lord, Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word

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