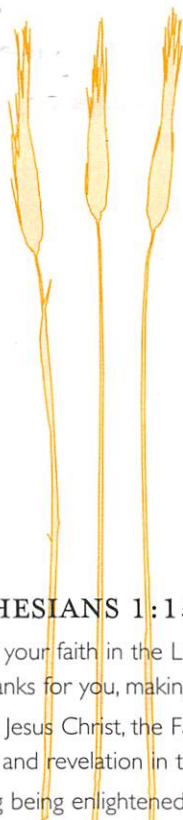


LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN



EPHESIANS 1:15-23

Therefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, do not cease to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers:

that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you
the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,

the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come.

And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all.

SCRIPTURAL PATRIOTISM

The first weekend in July this year marks the national observance of Independence Day.

On a special occasion such as this a predominant theme that is oftentimes in the national consciousness and exclaimed from podiums across this land is patriotism. The dictionary defines patriotism in the following way: “devoted love, support, and defense of one’s country; national loyalty.”

With the sad memories of scandalous living in the highest civil office in the land and the subsequent government hearings still lingering in the back of our minds, what is the condition of our spirit of patriotism?

Have such distasteful matters had a souring effect upon our patriotic spirit so that we engage in negative thinking and speaking concerning the government and the support of it? Have those matters had a negative impact upon our involvement in the many different areas of civil service—voting, paying

taxes, jury duty, military service, and volunteerism in many different areas of civic life?

The Lord Jesus helps us keep a proper perspective on things in this regard whenever we would encounter grievous conditions brought on by the human foibles and moral defects of anyone who is in a position of government leadership. Through His divine word we are reminded by Jesus to “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s . . .” (Mt. 22:21).

Jesus spoke these words initially to certain religiously and politically minded Jews who were antagonistic toward the Roman government under which they were living. They despised the civil authorities because they were pagan, worldly, and unjust. They also detested paying taxes in support of this unwanted government.

Speaking in response to the question as to whether or not it was lawful for them to pay taxes to this govern-

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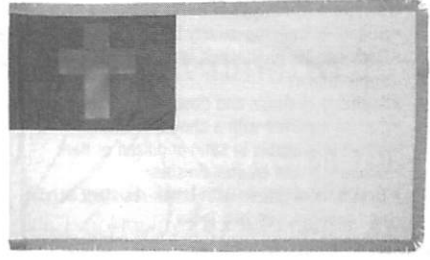
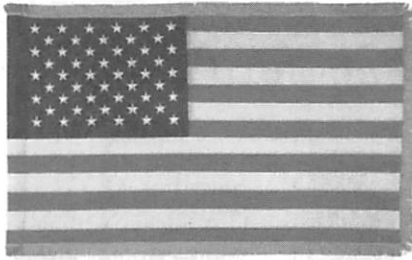
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ment, Jesus informed these Jews that according to God's will it was both fitting and right for citizens of the state to give unto Caesar—that is, the civil government—what was due unto him. In this case it involved paying taxes to the government.

Model Citizens

The Holy Spirit expanded on what is due unto the government by its citizens when He inspired the apostle Paul to write in his letter to the Christians in Rome: "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Rom. 13:7).

The Lord God calls upon all citizens of the world to show due respect, support, and obedience (provided that the civil laws do not require citizens to go against the Word of God—see Acts 5:29) to their respective governments. This is true whether the government is good or evil, just or unjust, merciful or unmerciful, and wise or unwise.

The Word of God helps us understand why the Lord calls upon us to give the government its due regardless of how good or bad it may be. In the book of Romans it is stated: "The authorities that exist are appointed by God" (Rom. 13:1), and "He is God's minister to you for good" (Rom. 13:4).

The governing authorities have been placed over us by God. They serve as His representatives to bless us with

temporal good in the form of law and order, as well as national peace and safety. So then, in recognition of this we are minded to show due regard for the government, and we are thankful to the Lord for the many earthly blessings He pours out upon us through His representatives.

In an instruction manual that has been used in our midst, the following remarks are made concerning Matthew 22:21: "The Christian is the highest type of citizen. He honestly pays his taxes, conscientiously casts his ballot, cheerfully serves on the jury, patriotically fights and dies for his country. And he does all this, not only because he loves his country, but above all because he loves his God." (*What Does the Bible Say?*, Oswald Riess)

May the Lord have mercy upon us and forgive us for Jesus' sake whenever we have not been model citizens. And may the redeeming love of our Savior God motivate us to display true and sincere patriotism, and this to His honor and glory.

—Pastor Mark Gullerud

**"Blessed is the
nation whose God
is the LORD . . ."**

—Psalm 33:12

Convictions Only God Can Produce

Ray Johnson was not what you'd call a lukewarm Christian. If anything, he was a man of deep conviction. Each Sunday Ray, his wife, and their five kids would pile into the family wagon and drive several hours just to get to church. He wore a cap which read, *"God said it; I believe it; That settles it."* So strong were his convictions, in fact, that he died because of them.

Mr. Johnson wrongly believed that he could handle venomous snakes without harm as a sign of the Spirit's presence in his heart. Hours after he was bitten by a three-foot rattlesnake in church, he was taken to his home where fellow members prayed for his recovery. Thirteen hours later he was dead.

Ray's problem was not that he lacked conviction. His problem was that his convictions were wrong.

How can we be sure that the things we believe actually come from God and are not tricks of the devil? There is a way. Jesus described three specific convictions which the Holy Spirit produces in the hearts of His people. *"When He has come, He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment"* (Jn. 16:8ff).

Only Christ

" . . . of sin, because they do not believe in Me."

In many ways the world has its own convictions about sin, doesn't it? In a society where 2.9 million cases of child abuse are reported each year, most want stricter sentencing for child abusers. When acts of violence cost American lives, Americans want new laws and appropriate punishment. Who

would deny that murder and stealing and arson are sinful? But there is one sin that the world is always willing to overlook: the sin of rejecting Christ.

In a society where all religions are equally tolerated, it is considered presumptuous, even sinful, to say that only one religion is correct and all others are worthless. Yet the Spirit teaches: "Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven, given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Sounds unAmerican, but it is a conviction that God produces.

All Christ

" . . . of righteousness, because I go to the Father."

Ask yourself: "Who is responsible for my salvation?" The question is trickier than it sounds. Each of us is born with the idea that we can save ourselves or at least contribute something by how we live or what we do. The Spirit convinces us otherwise: true righteousness is a gift of God's grace in Christ. My salvation depends 0% on me; 100% on Christ.

Why did Jesus return to the Father? Because Jesus had completed the work He came here to do. When He ascended to heaven, He left no loose ends for us to tie up; no "to do" lists for us to fulfill. The Spirit makes us certain that while salvation is only *in* Christ, salvation is also *all* Christ.

Christ Over All

" . . . of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged."

As godlessness escalates, count on

trouble ahead for all who wish to remain faithful to God. Yet, the Spirit convinces us that there is really nothing to fear. No matter what happens to us in this life, the devil is judged, eternal victory is ours. Though it often seems that we're fighting a losing battle, we have the God-given assurance that "the gates of hell shall not prevail" (Mt. 16:18)

against His Church.

These are convictions that only God can produce. To have them we need to be at the place where God produces them . . . His Word. "Sanctify them through Thy truth," Jesus prayed, "Thy Word is truth" (Jn. 17:17).

—Pastor James Albrecht



AS DAY FOLLOWS NIGHT

Sleepless nights can be long. Never does time pass so slowly as when we lie awake at night. It seems as though the darkness will never again give way to light. And it isn't just the natural darkness that makes the sleepless hours of night seem endless. There is often also a darkness that pervades our thoughts during those hours, magnifying the mistakes of the previous day and making our problems seem hopeless.

At such times we take comfort from the certainty that dawn will come, relieving the dreariness and heaviness of the night. For there is nothing more certain in this world than that day follows night. Our God, the Creator, has decreed that the cycles of day and night will continue until He Himself brings them to an end and ushers in eternity.

In Jeremiah, God uses the dependable order of day and night to assure His people that He is faithful and will surely fulfill His gracious promises.

The prophet writes: "Thus says the LORD: If you can break My covenant with the day and My covenant with the night, so that there will not be day and night in their season, then My covenant may also be broken with David, My servant, so that he shall not have a son

to reign on his throne" (Jer. 33:20-21). Just as nothing can prevent the arrival of the dawn, so also nothing could prevent the fulfillment of the covenant God had made with David.

God Is Faithful

God had promised David that his throne would be established forever (2 Sam. 7:16). In the days of Jeremiah it was hard to see how this promise could be fulfilled, for Jerusalem was being besieged by the Babylonians, and Jeremiah was prophesying that the city would be conquered and Zedekiah the king taken captive to Babylon. It looked like the royal line of David was about to come to an end. But the LORD through His prophet assured His people that He had not forgotten His promise to David. The royal line would continue, and from it God would finally cause the Savior to be born.

The Scriptures record how God fulfilled His promise when Jesus was born to Mary. Jesus, the Son of David, established the promised everlasting kingdom when He died and rose again, taking away sin and defeating Satan. He ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God to reign forever.

God's faithfulness in fulfilling His promise to David assures us that none of His promises will fail. The Savior who came from David's line has delivered us from sin and death. His cross and death, His resurrection and ascension, give us confidence in the promise that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have everlasting life.

God's faithfulness gives us confidence and hope, even in the long nights

of pain and sorrow that we have to endure in this life. And we know that the night of life in this world will not continue forever. Jesus, the eternal King, will come again to put an end to darkness for all who believe in Him. That is the dawn that we are waiting for, the onset of eternal day.

It is certain, as day follows night.

—Pastor John Klatt



Studies In Ephesians

**Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches
of Christ (See 3:8)**

Chapter 1:15-23

The "Force" Who Is Really With You

Are you one of the many who enjoy the modern morality play Star Wars? If so, you know that this captivating fiction piece won't let you face the Phantom Menace alone. "The Force be with you!"

For centuries Christian worshipers have heard the heartening blessing "The Lord be with you!" So equipped, they are ready to confront any hostile "*principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come*" (1:21).

That covers everything that devil, world, and sinful flesh can mount against us in their effort to draw us from the skies. Much more, certainly, than George Lucas' adversaries: our "dark side," intergalactic hostiles, and an army of droid machines. As it is so

often, the real foes are greater than the fictional!

A More Formidable Force

To stand up to such fierce foes we need a more formidable "Force" than fiction can find for us—more than has ever "*entered into the heart {imagination?} of man*" (1 Cor. 2:9).

We need what only God Himself can give us: "*the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*" (1:17).

Problem is, God's people tend to make their God too small, and the



power of Jesus “at His right hand in the heavenly places” (v. 20) too weak. Perhaps you have found yourself shrinking what you ask of Him to what you think is normally “possible.”

When Hope Needs Help

When Paul pondered the situation among the Christians in Ephesus, he could give uninterrupted thanks for their manifest *faith* and *love* (vv. 15-16). It was their *hope* that needed help. His prayer for them and for all of us:

A) “*The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of His calling*” (v. 18). Out with those cataracts! We need a clear vision of the fabulous dimensions of the hope of *His* calling!

B) To know that hope fully is to be keenly aware “*of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*” (v. 18). Am I impressed with what passes for glory in this age? Not even a flicker compared with the glory, the brightness, the magnificence of the inheritance we shall have from God, and the inheritance He shall have in his faithful saints {we can read the text both ways}. When that becomes real in our

mind’s eye, we will be better able to bear with the humility of Jesus’ Church in this pres-ent age. Listen to the protest chant of the hostiles: “Great is Diana of the Ephesians!” Hah! What little they know! How they will smite their mouths when our inheritance glory is revealed!

How Great *His* Power!

C) One of the hardest things for the eyes of faith to see is “*the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe*” (v. 19). A power demonstrated in Jesus’ resurrection. A power entrusted to Him in His elevation to the right hand of the Father of Glory. A power greater than any other power in this age or the age to come (vv. 20-21). A power that is being exercised always in the interests of His Church, His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all. That’s you and I and all His saints along with us!

Why is it so hard to grasp this power greatness and have it in our living consciousness?

Napoleon Knew

It is said that Napoleon in exile in Alba was thinking about the collapse of his imperial power. Considering that the kingdom of Christ had survived over the centuries when every world-power—including his own—ultimately came crashing down, he discovered something about power. Earthly powers, he noted, gain their position by *force*—the force of arms, or money, or intellect. In contrast, the Kingdom of Jesus has its powerful way with *truth* and *love* (we would say with the power of the Spirit working through the gospel).

The Church can sheath its sword. It

has the dynamite power of the gospel to win its wars!

Our Lord's Muscle Power

Jesus rules over His Church, His body, with the gentle breeze of the Spirit (1:13). We understand that and rejoice.

But there is a tornado power too. All things are placed "*under His feet*" (v. 23). In early times, a conqueror placed his feet on the neck of a defeated ruler—a sign of complete dominion. According to the Bible, all nations and forces of the world as well as His Church are under His rule. It's true! But it is hard to live in conscious awareness of that power, since Jesus usually lets

things run their course of self-destruction. Or He raises up some earthly power to serve His purposes. So Cyrus of Persia became the Lord's *servant* to conquer Babylon and return God's refugees to their homeland.

See Ezekiel 17:22-24 for a vivid portrait of God's absolute sovereignty also over worldly kingdoms. The Lord of hosts is with us!

Therefore we will not fear, no matter what. With eyes enlightened to know the *mighty power* of El Shaddai, the Lord God Almighty, that is with us, we need be dismayed by nothing.

Who needs a vague, nameless "Force" as a security blanket?

—Pastor Rollin A. Reim



Seventh In A Series (from an essay by Pastor Thomas Schuetze)—

Psalm 126

"LORD, thank You for liberating me."

A Psalm of Thanks

Psalm 126

When the LORD brought back the captivity of Zion, we were like those who dream. Then our mouth was filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, whereof we are glad.

Bring back our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the South.

Those who sow in tears shall reap in joy. He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

This psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving for the return from captivity in Babylon. It pictures the joy that God's

people felt when this happened. The happiness they experienced was so exuberant that it almost seemed too good to be true. Later, when the Jewish pilgrims traveled up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts, they sang this song to express their thankfulness to the Lord for the mercy He showed in making their deliverance possible.

As the Jewish exiles were released from captivity in Babylon, we have been released from a captivity that was far worse: captivity to sin and Satan. Jesus secured our freedom through His holy life and sinless death. It seems almost too good to be true, but it is true. The Christian Gospel teaches (and we

believe!) that the Son of God paid for our sins, conquered Satan, defeated death, and “led captivity captive.” Even when we were still His enemies.

Cause for great joy indeed! Now we are free to serve the Lord in love. Then we shall serve Him perfectly in the New Jerusalem above.



LESSONS FROM THE OLD TESTAMENT

“That We Might Have Hope” (Rom. 15:4)

First Samuel, Chapters Eight Through Fifteen

Saul vs. Paul: Arrogance vs. Humility

We recall in our Old Testament Bible history that the children of Israel were tired of being different from their surrounding nations. As a result they demanded that Samuel make them a king such as other countries had. After God instructed the prophet to warn the people just what this king would be like, they were soon introduced to the tragic figure of Saul.

Later on in the New Testament, we read of another Saul. This man, later known as Paul, also had his life interwoven into the fabric of the lives of the children of God. Two men living centuries apart—one beginning with great promise but coming to utter destruction; the other starting out on a pathway to hell, ending up a shining example to all Christendom. May the Holy Spirit teach us by their examples to see the strange mixture of arrogance and humility that often lurks within us all.

‘Before’

Old Testament Saul had a right to be arrogant by the world’s standards! The Scriptures state that Saul was a “choice and handsome young man” (1 Sam. 9:2). In fact, we’re told there wasn’t anyone more handsome in all of Israel! On top of that, he stood head and shoulders taller than any of the people, and his father is described as a mighty

man of power.

Good looks, good connections, and power are often the breeding ground for arrogant behavior. We often see the people of the world lording their power or position over others.

But what of Saul? When Samuel informed the youth that he had been chosen by God to lead Israel, Saul replied in all humility: “Am I not a Benjaminite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak like this to me?” (1 Sam. 9:21) And lest we think this was a false humility, remember that when the time arrived for the proclamation of the new king, Saul was found hiding among the baggage.

We also read that the Spirit of the LORD was given to Saul, which enabled him to prophesy. He was also “turned into another man” by this same Spirit. What a promising beginning for

Israel and her new, humble king!

Centuries later, during the time of the New Testament church, we read of another Saul—and what a contrast! This Saul (whom we shall call by his Christian name, Paul) describes himself this way: “I was . . . a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man” (1 Tim. 1:13); and “you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it. And I advanced in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries in my own nation, being exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers” (Gal. 1:13-14).

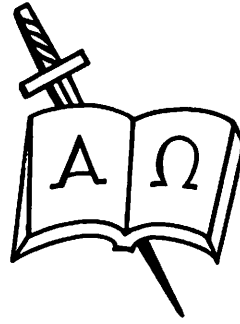
What arrogance! This man, after his study of the Scriptures, in effect created his own religion directly opposed to God. Based on his own interpretation and the traditions of the fathers, Paul was led to wreak havoc on the new Christians, desiring to see as many as possible taken away in chains. In his blind arrogance, this was a man bent on a course for destruction.

‘After’

But what became of our humble King Saul and his promising beginning? We learn that his rule, life, and faith soon began a destructive, downward spiral.

It started with seemingly innocent enough deeds, but soon progressed into gross outbreaks of sin which would cost Saul his soul. He began by regarding the holy order set up by God as no big deal. When Samuel was late for the presentation of the burnt offering, Saul took on the prophet’s responsibility. When confronted with his sin, Saul was disturbingly silent.

Later, when Saul had been commanded to “utterly destroy” King Amalek and



all that he had, Saul slipped again. This time he not only disobeyed and justified his disobedience, but he even put a righteous spin on his sin. Saul feebly offered: “We only saved the best of the animals to sacrifice to the LORD your God. Samuel, surely that’s O.K.?”

Samuel thundered in return: “To obey is better than sacrifice.” (Cf. 1 Sam. 15)

Soon Saul had given up all pretenses of faithfulness to God by slaughtering eighty-five priests of the Lord and by his attempts to destroy David, the next anointed king.

Finally, in a last act of disobedience to God, Saul took his own life.

And what of the New Testament Saul who was “breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord”? (Acts 9:1)

The Lord had a new route in mind for him. For on the road to Damascus, this arrogant man came face to face with our humble, yet almighty Savior. In a moment of time this, our beloved apostle Paul, was shown that everything he had been living for was a travesty. He had been practicing a self-centered, self-righteous religion which could only lead to hell.

The results of Paul’s conversion are nothing short of miraculous. Now Paul had a new pride and glory in his life:

the Lord Jesus. Paul wrote to his Galatian congregation: “God forbid that I should glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14).

And where is the man “advanced in Judaism beyond his contemporaries” in this declaration: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief”? (1 Tim. 1:15)

Christ, through the power of the Gospel, had crushed the arrogant, self-made spirit of Paul and replaced it with a Spirit-born humility that emulated Christ Himself. That is how this new Paul could earnestly profess:

“Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong” (2 Cor. 12:10).

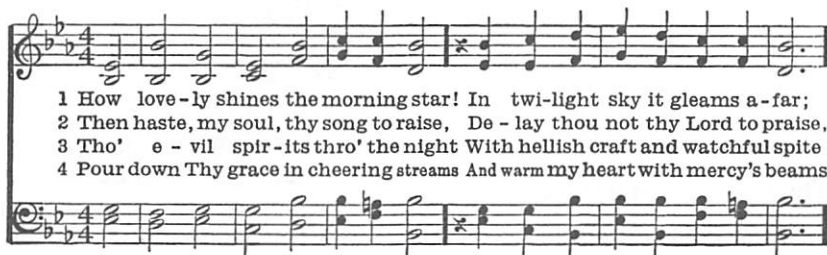
As long as we are in the flesh, we must do daily battle with our own self-made arrogance which tries to rationalize our sin before God. We must also rely on the Holy Spirit to increase our confidence in these words of our Lord Jesus: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Even so, grant us such a humble spirit, O Lord!

—Teacher David Bernthal



Appreciating Our Lutheran Hymns



1 How love-ly shines the morning star! In twi-light sky it gleams a-far;
2 Then haste, my soul, thy song to raise, De-lay thou not thy Lord to praise,
3 Tho' e-vil spir-its thro' the night With hellish craft and watchful spite
4 Pour down Thy grace in cheering streams And warm my heart with mercy's beams

How Lovely Shines the Morning Star

A Hymn for the Morning
#546 in The Lutheran Hymnal

There is nothing more ordinary than the rising of the sun and the beginning of another day. It is so ordinary that we may not appreciate a new day as we ought. In fact, the dawning of a new day may not be welcome at all, since it takes us back into the world of toil, and

perhaps strife, sorrow, and pain.

But each new day is something we as believers ought to appreciate, recognizing it as a gift of God’s grace. Each day we arise with all the sins of the past forgiven. We can go into each day confident of guidance and protection from

our Savior God. Each day we have new opportunities for serving Him.

Our hymn helps us to look at each new day as we ought and to begin it rightly with words of praise and with prayers for divine help. It is a hymn to Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

The words remind us that we enter

each day with God the Father who looks on us favorably as His children through the merits of His Son Jesus, our Redeemer; and we look to the Holy Spirit to keep us in this blessed fellowship with God.

—Pastor John Klatt



Fifth in a Series—

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE IN AND WITH CHRIST

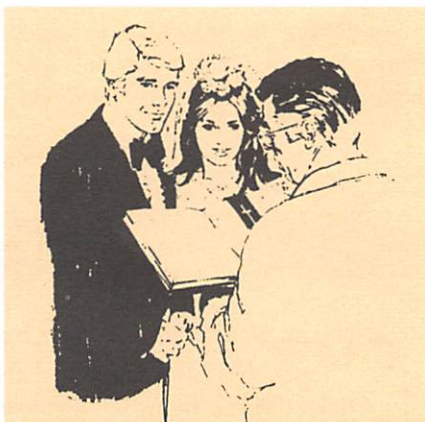
Much can be learned about Christian marriage by observing one in action—especially from within the perspective of the Christian family.

How blessed are those children who are reared in the wonderful atmosphere of a truly Christian marriage and family! There, in spite of the sin-weaknesses and struggles of all involved, the love of Christ lives and rules. Such a *wonderful Christian model* can leave an indelible and life-long impression on the hearts (and future relationships) of impressionable young souls.

The Ultimate Marriage Model

As wonderful as is the example and influence of a godly marriage, the ultimate pattern and example is found on an even higher level: “Husbands, love your wives *as Christ loved the church* and gave Himself for it. . . . Just as *the Church is subject to Christ*, so let wives be to their own husbands” (Eph. 5:25,24).

The holy pattern set forth by the Holy Spirit through Paul is the spiritual union between Christ (the Bridegroom) and the Church (His bride). Its founda-



tion is the holy, sacrificial, saving love of Christ and the responsive love-submission and service of His Church. What is to be *emulated by Christian husbands and wives* in their relationship toward one another are those *same “love-attitudes.”*

No Christian spouse would ever question such a noble “pattern” (also, goal) for our Christian marriages. Yet with the adoption of such lofty, holy objectives comes the humbling realization that their achievement is an absolute impossibility. Two sinners—even redeemed sinners—cannot even come close to imitating this love-

pattern in marriage. The Law of God—this time speaking through the Sixth Commandment—has again done its work.

So once again we are driven outside ourselves and away from any illusions of our spiritual (even marital) qualities. Only through the marvelous forgiving power of the Gospel of Jesus are we restored and reassured of our status as the redeemed and beloved bride of Christ.

He whose life and love present an unachievable pattern for us to imitate now stands before the Father as our Representative who successfully achieved every holy objective at which we have fallen short. With His blood and life-sacrifice on Calvary, He has atoned for all our failings (including marital ones) and now presents us “as a glorious church, without stain or blemish.”

Assured of God’s forgiveness and empowered by His Gospel, we now seek to please the Lord. The “*model*” of Christ’s love now becomes the *blueprint* for a major and ongoing “*remodeling*” project in our lives and marriages. Daily we strive to tear down the old, rotted walls of pride, selfishness, and lovelessness; daily we seek to build up our marriages and one another with

the new, strong, God-designed walls of Christ’s love.

Remodeling Whom?

One of the greatest temptations of any marriage “remodeling” effort is to misdirect it.

It can be very appealing to devote our time and energies to removing the “speck” from our marriage partner’s eye while ignoring the “plank” in our own eye (Mt. 7:3).

It is significant that God’s marriage blueprints focus our “remodeling” efforts on our own hearts, attitudes, and behaviors. Scriptural counsel emphasizes more *being the right marriage partner* rather than seeking to remodel our spouse.

May God help us glorify Him and reflect the love of Christ in our marriage. Our spouse is a precious soul for whom Christ died, and our marriage is a wonderful opportunity to encourage and influence one another for Christ.

In our next segment we will examine some of the practical, day-to-day areas in which Christian spouses can further reflect the “love model” of Christ and His beloved bride, the Church.

—Pastor David Schierenbeck

CHRISTIAN COUPLES RETREAT

My wife loves the times when she has the opportunity to sit down for coffee with friends. I don’t know exactly what they talk about—I suppose it’s about kids, or school, or maybe about how great their husbands are.

But one day the idea was conceived to have a Christian Couples Retreat in our vicinity, and to invite members of

our neighboring CLC congregations. The goal was to foster fellowship and to promote marriage enrichment in a Christian setting.

The wheels started turning in late summer of 1998, as a suitable site was found near the small hamlet of Byron, Wisconsin, just eight miles south of Fond du Lac. The Byron Center was

nothing fancy, but its setting was picturesque, and it had an available weekend for us in late February.

Long after invitations were sent out, it didn't look like the idea would fly. By mid December there still weren't enough couples enlisted to make it financially feasible. We were ready to cancel the whole thing. But after much prayer that the Lord would show us the direction we should go, several couples suddenly expressed their intentions of attending. In the span of a single week our emotions ran from doubt to excited anticipation, as it became clear the retreat was on!

Couples started arriving the evening of Friday, February 26. At 7:00 each couple shared with the group the story of how they met, telling about their first date. This activity was fun and light-hearted, and it set the mood for the entire weekend.

'Love Language'

After breakfast on Saturday, Pastor Bruce Naumann of Markesan, Wis., led the morning session with a review of the book *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman. He then directed us to take a personal test to help us determine our own love language. This was very revealing! As a man I realize that we of the male gender tend to shy away

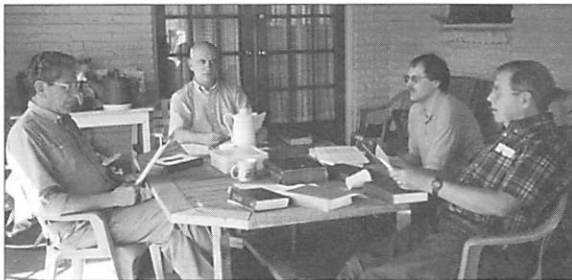
from discussions of this type, but I found this to be a catalyst of communicating freely about something that is important to every married couple.

The afternoon session was led by Dean and Laurie (Roehl) Marzofka, licensed family counselors and members of Luther Memorial Church of Fond du Lac. They spoke on the distinctive roles of husband and wife in marriage. Later that evening it was time to let our hair down, so to speak. All fourteen couples participated in a Christian version of "The Newlywed Game." We played other games, too, on this fun-filled night.

We had no pastor available for the Sunday morning church service at the retreat, so each man was asked to come prepared with a portion of Scripture that has either helped him in his marriage with his spouse, or has meant a lot to him personally. Nine men spoke from the heart, and hymns were sung with accompaniment on an organ at the facility. The entire weekend came together at this, the most edifying lay-service I have ever had the pleasure of attending.

As we parted for our various homes after church that Sunday, we all realized the retreat was a success. The price was right, the food was good, and the closeness we all felt as Christians would not be soon forgotten.

—Mark Kranz



Last winter our Texas pastors met together in Corpus Christi for spiritual rejuvenation: Dale Redlin, John Klatt, Tom Schuetze, Dan Fleischer

My Courage

Hymn #206, v. 2

Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Believers have always gotten a bum rap. We are perceived as weak because Jesus said, "Blessed are the meek." We are also perceived as weak because we do not fight as others do. We do not raise our voices in parades or go on public crusades against this or that evil in the world. We quietly go about our work and let others play the political game, and often we are passed by for promotions because of it. I can't recall how many times I sought to move up in the world only to be passed over for some one else. I'd like to think it was because I did my job where others didn't, and the boss did not want to lose a decent worker. So we are perceived as weak and as people to be stepped on and stepped over.

The real question is how do you perceive yourself in this matter? Do we perceive ourselves to be weak and therefore we timidly go quietly through life? We are not to be weak, nor are we weak. Take the "w" and the "a" and turn them over in the word weak, and we end up with the word meek. Being meek is not being weak.

Consider our Lord Jesus. He was and is the perfect example of what it means to be meek. He was not weak. He was rather courageous. No one can tell me that for Jesus to do what He did was done in weakness. He knew the path He had to walk, and that path led through the hatred of the scribes and Pharisees. The path then led to a false arrest, false accusations, false condemnation and wrongful crucifixion. He

knew that this was the will of His Father, and while Jesus asked if there was another way to win our salvation, He did not walk away from it. He went forward. He went forward to the cross. He went forward to suffer not only physically, but also was forsaken by His Father because of our sins. If our Lord's road ended there on the cross with His death, it would have been a courageous, tragic death. Jesus knew that the road He walked went beyond this, to a glorious resurrection.

In Jesus we see courage like no other. In Jesus we find our courage. A courage to walk the paths our Father has laid out for us. A courage that helps to pass through the hatred of the world. A courage that helps us to endure the many trials and sufferings we must face. A courage that helps us face our moment of death when it comes. In Jesus we have this courage because we also know that through faith in Him our end is not death or the grave, but a glorious resurrection.

How great a courage ought we not have when we set our lives next to our Lord's? What our Lord Jesus endured was far greater than what we will ever experience in life. Our Lord did not turn from it, but went forward for our salvation and to gain for us the prize of eternal life.

The end glory, eternal life—focusing upon this is what turns us from weak to courageously meek individuals. Jesus is my sure defense, and He is the source of my courage. •

SMORGASBORD

• DAILY DEVOTIONS

"I'd rather read these devotions than the Bible!"—"I like his comparisons!"—"It's as good as reading Zorn's Manna or Meditations"—"You don't know what you're missing!"

Such are comments we have heard about the daily devotions written by Pastor Roland H. Gurgel. We refer to devotions the writer has been preparing, correlating them with the daily Bible readings and hymn stanzas which appeared in your December 1998 issue as devotional suggestions for calendar year 1999.

At the time it was indicated that Pastor Gurgel would be preparing booklets of daily devotions based on the suggested readings and hymns. While he would be doing this for members of his dual parish (Faith, Nicollet and Faith, New Ulm, Minn.), he

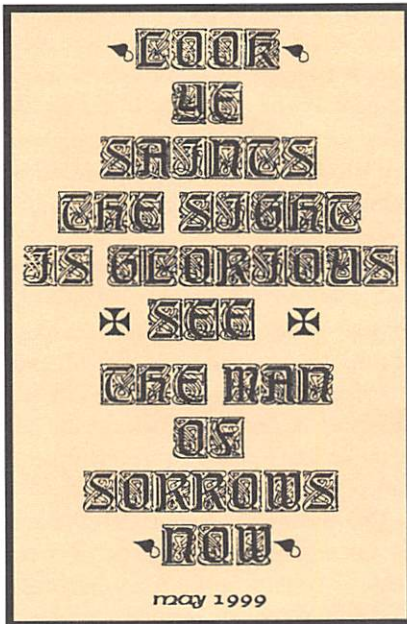
offered to make the writings available as well to *Spokesman* readers.

At least a dozen members of your congregation took up the offer. And their evaluation of "Gurgel's Devotions" is reflected in the above comments. By the word "comparisons" we know our member meant the timely applications and illustrations the writer uses. Gurgel smiled wryly when we passed along the remark that his writings were to be preferred to the Bible. He and we know, of course, what the speaker meant. Often one's understanding of Holy Scripture is enhanced by another Christian's explaining and expounding the Spirit-intended meaning. Pastor Gurgel does this well.

Think about it—a pastor producing a booklet of daily devotional readings ("on the run" as it were) is truly amazing. "I try to write one a day," says the author. "If I miss a day or two, that means three or four have to be written the next time. You can begin to run out of ideas." It's understandable, therefore, that Pastor Gurgel has appreciated the help of his father. The current booklet, containing readings for the dates of May 29 through June 28, are from the pen of retired pastor/professor Roland A. Gurgel.

Whether written by father or son, each of "Gurgel's Devotions" is thoroughly and refreshingly Gospel-based. In this issue we are including one of them—just a morsel of the rich feast awaiting those who take the time and make the extra effort in these evil days to spend a few quiet moments with God and His Word.

The booklet needs heavier staples,



A cover from Gurgel's Devotions

or different binding. The writings sometimes lack editorial polish. Here and there sentence structure, punctuation, and grammar leave something to be desired. That is our own observation (to be expected from an editor?). That being said, only positive comments have come from our members who read these devotions. They “can’t wait” for their next booklet to arrive.

According to Pastor Gurgel, at least seventy people currently use his devotions. If you are not one of them, there is still almost half the year to go, Lord willing. To receive them (for a voluntary donation of \$1.00 per month) contact Pastor Roland H. Gurgel, 22 North State Street, New Ulm, MN 56073; phone 507-354-4534; E-mail to

rhgbay@newulmtel.net.

• ‘THE EXPERIENCE OF A DECADE’

The following words explain our title: *Greetings all!*

We had the experience of the decade when the Tour Choir gave their concert here on their tour of the Northwest. We wish to thank Prof. John Reim for the beautiful and uplifting selections he put together, and the choir itself for its God-praising presentation, and thanks also to God for bringing the choir, director, and us together for the concert! It was much enjoyed by all who attended. We hope to be put on the list of stops in another 5-10 years!

The above was a June 2nd e-mail post to CLC internet subscribers from



• April 18, 1999, father and son, Pastors Paul F. Nolting (speaker) and Paul D. Nolting (liturgist), conducted the fortieth anniversary service at Grace of Sleepy Eye, Minn. Father was pastor at Grace when the congregation was born—for confessional reasons—in 1959. He based his anniversary message “Stand! Armed for Battle!” on Ephesians 6:10-18. 231 members & visitors were in attendance for the celebratory worship service. (Your editor currently serves the congregation as pastor.)



Charter members who helped celebrate forty years of grace at Grace



1998-99 ILC Tour Choir



Choir members
enjoying the scenery
at Lake Louise in
Alberta, Canada
Tuesday, June 1, 1999

staff member Pastor Paul Krause of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church, Clarkston, Washington. The choir's tour this year took them there and to other CLC churches in the Northwest and Canada.

We were in attendance as the choir

gave its concert at Immanuel, Mankato, Minn. and came away feeling as uplifted as did the brother from Clarkston. We hope you have had the privilege of hearing them too.



*Graduation—May 22, 1999
Immanuel Lutheran College
Eau Claire, Wisconsin*

In my view from a seat near the rear of the Fieldhouse at ILC, the ebullient crowd needed to be shushed into the listening mode for an experience that was harmonious in multiple ways.

There was the closing concert on Friday evening, of course, well-orchestrated around the Word in praise to our

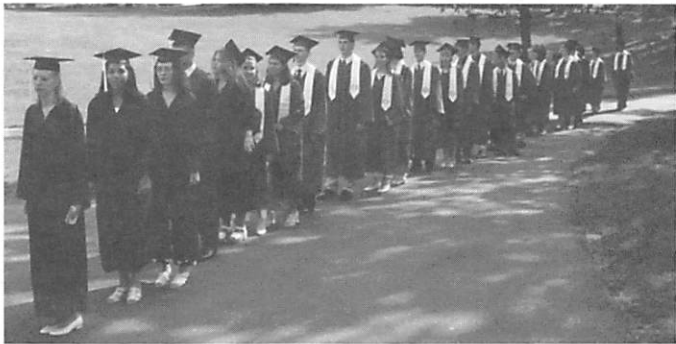
Savior; and then there was the graduation service on Saturday morning, illuminated by President John Pfeiffer's admonition to "Stand Guard."

Pres. Pfeiffer adapted the apostle's "final words to Timothy" (1 Tim. 6:20-21) to the graduates. Guard the words, he said, guard the concepts, guard the



Professors Pfeiffer, Roehl, Kuehne, and Buck leading the graduation processional . . .

. . . followed by graduates with the customary mixed emotions



Gift that is above all other gifts as you find yourselves under assault by the world's empty chatter. We understand; we hope our youngsters will understand, too.

Two Seminarians were presented to the CLC as candidates for the public ministry as pastors. They were commissioned as follows: David Schaller to Redeemer congregation of Sister Lakes, Mich.; and Stephen Sydow to Grace of Valentine, Nebr.

Four education students were graduated. Their home towns and places of assignment are: Vanessa Bernthal (Saginaw, Mich.) to Trinity Lutheran School, Watertown, S.Dak.; Kirsten Gullerud (Eau Claire, Wis.) to Grace School, Valentine, Nebr.; Teresa Nelson (Roseville, Minn.) to Luther Memorial School, Fond du Lac, Wis.; a fourth graduate, Jeffrey Rutz, currently resides in Eau Claire.

Our two-year (Associate of Arts) grads were Lindsey Paul (Waterloo, Iowa), Amy Rodas (Rochester, N.Y.), Rebecca Stratton (Eau Claire, Wis.), Jonathan Sydow (Eau Claire, Wis.) and Noel Voss (St. Paul, Minn.).

High school graduates numbered twenty-nine; I hope you get to know them, too; when they were ninth graders, they helped the undersigned close out his teaching career at ILC.

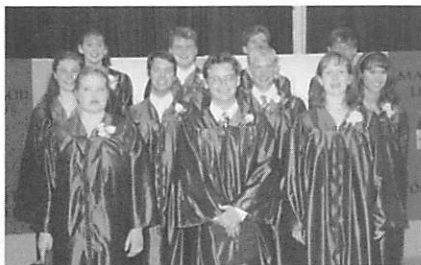
We wish them all God-speed!

The 1999 ILC graduation ceremonies encapsulated much that we hold near and dear: our children, our friends, and our school, all joined together in praise and in service to our Savior God. That's what made it harmonious.

Here are some candid snapshots as mementos of the day with its symphony of sunshine and celebrations. Indeed, 'twas brillig!

—Prof. Em. Paul Koch

*Graduation, June 6, 1999
Immanuel Lutheran School
Mankato, Minnesota*



At the graduation service at Immanuel, Mankato (2:30 p.m., Sunday, June 6th) seventeen 8th graders and eleven 12th graders were recognized for successfully completing the required courses. Five "sibling sets" (surnames Hagen, Stelter, Hanel, Johnson, Nolting) were among them. High School graduates were Andrew Hagen, Rachel Hanel, April Johnson, Todd Kruse, Justin Mueller, Kristen Nolting, Beth Olmanson, Andrew Pfeiffer, Brandon Rabenhorst, Nathan Stelter, and Heather Underdahl. High School Principal Kevin Hulke and 7th & 8th grade Administrator Leif Olmanson distributed the diplomas.

Other years (132 of them!) these closing exercises were in the church proper. This year the congregation's comfortable air-conditioned multi-purpose facility, with makeshift stage, served well as the site.

Pastor Wayne Eichstadt led the liturgical portion of the service and delivered a message on the basis of King Solomon's words in Proverbs 4:10-13. "Hold On!" the speaker encouraged the young people, comparing life to a roller coaster, but not the up's and down's in this case. Rather, graduation time, he said, is like the eight anxious and excit-

M/M Albert Gebhardt
811 S. Union Road
Spokane, WA 99206

ing seconds of "hang time" at the very top of the coaster—before you plummet over the edge and you're on your way! It's crucial, then, to "hold on"—to your firm instruction in the Gospel, to your balanced education, to your family, to your school as active alumni.

Grade school and high school choirs lent their voices wonderfully in song. The backdrop for their stage were other fitting words of encouragement by King Solomon (first spoken at the dedication of the temple): "May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us" (1 Kgs. 8:57).

Indeed, He won't—only "hold on!" for the ride, dear young people.

—Pastor Paul Fleischer

Announcements

Installation

In accord with our usage and order, Kevin McKenney, who was called by Peace Thru Christ congregation of Middleton, Wis. and Faith congregation of Cambridge, Wis. to be pastor was installed on May 16, 1999.

—Pastor Michael Eichstadt