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# The Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Galatians\*

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## Chapter I

In this epistle we have, as Meyer puts it, "jeder Gedanke, jede Spruch der ganze lebendige Paulus." Luther said: "Epistola ad Galatas est mea epistola, cui me dispondi, est mea Catharina de Bora" (Sechendorf Hist. Luth. lib. I II 85).<sup>1</sup> The very language and the thoughts serve as hammer blows against the false teachers. Vv. 1-5 contain the signature, the address, and the greeting. But the address and the greeting have features different from those found in other Pauline epistles (e.g., the letters to the Thessalonians). The epistle contains a more extensive address and greeting, which conforms to the pragmatic content of the letter itself. In its address and greeting Paul, at the very outset, wishes to indicate the basic thoughts which will characterize the entire letter, indicating its occasion, the purpose, and plan. A simple address and greeting would contain these words: "Paul to the congregations of Galatia; grace be with you and peace from God the Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ." If we take these words and add to them the expanded form, we shall see that his office as apostle and the meaning of his office as apostle and the meaning of Christ's redemptive work are dealt with. The epistle, especially the dogmatic part, concentrates on these thoughts. The greeting brings praise to God the Father. In the address and greeting Paul would clearly let the readers understand that the way which they had commenced to follow would lead them away from salvation through Christ, violate His work, and rob God the Father of the glory which belongs to Him.

Both negatively and positively, the first verse sets forth Paul's immediate call to the apostolate in contrast to the suspicions to the contrary instigated by the false prophets. At

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\* In this issue we present the first section of a new eight-part translation of an exegetical study not heretofore available to our readers. The only other English translation of which we are aware is an unpublished work prepared for class use at Bethany Lutheran Seminary by Prof. Geo. O. Lillegard. — Editor

once he places himself as apostle alongside the twelve. He is not hesitant in maintaining his position and office when the opponents make this necessary. He who has his office from God should certainly not pride himself because of it. But there may come times when it is proper to call attention to it and even to boast of it, showing that he who speaks slightly of this office which is of God, thereby depreciates God Himself. It is Paul's concern to make it clear from the outset from whom it is that he has received his high office and from whom he has not received it. If we make a comparison among all of Paul's epistles, it will be apparent that in his earlier writings, for instance, in his epistles to the Thessalonians, he does not call himself an apostle. It was not previously necessary, for at that time his apostolate had not yet been questioned. But things changed; therefore in his later writings he places special emphasis on his office as an apostle and this he did for the sake of those who denied it. He does, however, make an exception in his letter to his dear Philippians and in his epistle to Philemon, his friend. At the same time that he emphasizes his apostolate, he calls the attention of his readers to the fact that he had a right to address them and that they had the duty to listen. If one has the call to proclaim God's Word, then it is also the people's duty to hear him. This pertains not only to the apostles but to all who are "ambassadors for Christ" (2 Cor. 5:20; Luke 10:16; John 13:20).

αποστολος - "apostle." This word is here used in its basic meaning: an apostle as one of the twelve; not in the same sense as Hebrews 3:1 where Christ is called apostle, nor as in Acts 14:14 where Barnabas is reckoned as an apostle. But Paul has not appropriated this office to himself as one who runs without being sent (Jer. 23:21). So that his readers may understand this he first of all shows them from whom he did not receive the apostolate. *ουκ απ' ανθρωπων ουδε δι' ανθρωπου*, "not from men nor through man." The two prepositional phrases must not be connected to the substantive *αποστολος*. This is itself an independent thought. After *αποστολος* either *ων* or *γενομενος* is implied. The basic difference between the prepositions *απο* and *δια* must be maintained "from" and "through." *απο* indicates origin, the chief cause, *causa remotior*; *δια* the mediating cause, *causa medians*. Thus also Luther; later Winer, Wiesler, Meyer, Philippi, etc. Paul is here saying: "I do not have my apostolate from men, for in such case I would lack the divine commission; nor do I have it through the mediation of men, for then I

would, though sent by God, be in the same line with Timothy, Barnabas, Silas and all servants of the Gospel who have their office mediately through men and not immediately from God Himself, as was the case with the twelve. The false apostles were *απο ανθρωπων* "from men." They had no divine commission and for that matter not even a human charge. They came *απ' εαυτου*, from themselves, though coming from the midst of the god-hating mankind. Their doctrine, therefore, was the doctrine of men. But we must be reminded that one may have the sound doctrine and still come from oneself without divine commission, namely when one lacks a regular call. "Therefore," says Luther, "one must not consider the call to be an inconsiderable thing. It is not enough that one has the true and pure word and right doctrine, but one must also be sure of his call and that it is proper." Timothy, Titus and Silas were truly called servants of the Lord *δια ανθρωπου* but not *απο ανθρωπων*. They were *απο θεου*, for they were placed into the office according to God's will and ordinance although through the mediation of men. Only the apostles and prophets were both *απο* and *δια* God. Luther lays special emphasis on how important it is for God's servants to be sure of their call. Without the call with its duties and boundaries, one goes his own way and often trespasses on territories which are the concerns of others and should therefore be left alone.

It is to be noted that *ανθρωπων* lacks an article. This is to indicate quality: from men, from such as are men. But now comes *δια*, not with the plural as with the *απο* but with the singular *δι' ανθρωπου*, "through man." The singular is used here both to direct the thought to the individual through whom the call has been issued as well as to serve as an antithesis to the following *Ιησου Χριστου*. His call was through Jesus Christ. He issued the call. This happened near Damascus. There it was that Jesus revealed Himself to Paul and called him not only to conversion, but also to the apostolate, specifically to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 22:21; 26:16-18). There it is that he has all the qualifications of an apostle: he has seen the Lord, he has his office directly from Him, indeed not from Jesus in his state of humiliation, but from the glorified Jesus, which certainly does not detract from its quality. Since Paul here places Christ in contrast to men, he thereby provides a strong though indirect proof for the deity of Jesus. Here one might expect that the apostle would continue and "from God the Father," *απο θεου πατρος*. Here one should be reminded that both in classical and

New Testament Greek the preposition may be omitted if the meaning is clear. And we declare that Paul makes this omission purposely. Zockler is right when he says that *καὶ θεοῦ πατρὸς* stands "*ohne nochmaliges απο: denn der erhoehte Christus und Gott der Vater sind fuer den Apostel eine und dieselbe goettliche Macht.*"<sup>2</sup> For this very reason Paul presents Christ in this way, making this omission naturally as he does. Bengel weakens the thought when he says that the *δια* here "*includit vim particulae απο.*"<sup>3</sup> Jesus Christ and God the Father are here presented as being the nearer and the more remote cause for the apostle's call. It is to be noted that Paul mentions Jesus Christ first. This he does for a purpose. He loses no time in emphasizing the fact that he has received the office of apostle from Christ. This was a specific requirement that the apostolate was an office received from Christ Himself.

*θεοῦ πατρὸς*, "God Father" (not *υμῶν* but *αυτου*, namely Jesus Christ), not Father in general nor our, the believers' Father, but according to the context the Father of Jesus Christ. Paul wishes to show that God is the direct causality in every circumstance relating to the sphere of religion: this causality, over all, finds its first pregnant expression in the following *του εγερσαντος αυτου εκ νεκρων*. As the one who raised Christ from the dead, God is the chief author of the work of redemption. Here Jesus Christ's resurrection is attributed to God the Father.

But the miracle of resurrection is also assigned to Jesus Christ Himself. He raised Himself, He restored Himself to life (John 2:19; 16:17,18; 14:19,20; 15:4). When Scripture attributes Jesus' resurrection to the Father it declares that God the Father not only proclaims that Jesus is His Son, but especially that He accepts His work as a full payment for the sins of the world. If this had not been the case, He could never have released Him from the prison of the death which He took upon Himself in our stead. The resurrection stands as the Father's "yea and amen" to the Son's word from the cross: "It is finished." When Scripture attributes the resurrection to the Son Himself, then the resurrection is considered as Jesus' testimony to the fact that He was the One He claimed to be. This was testimony he placed before the whole world. Thus the resurrection stands in both respects as a ground for our faith that Jesus is God and that His redemptive work is fully valid. (Acts 2:24ff.; 13:30ff.; 17:3,31; 26:23). It was important that Paul should set forth at the very beginning the truth that Christ lives. The opponents had maintained that Paul could not be an apostle be-

cause he had not been called by Christ when He walked in the flesh, nor very likely had not even seen Him in those days. Now Paul makes it clear that Christ lives also after the death upon the cross and that even though he had seen Him after His resurrection and though he had not been directly called by the Son of Man in His state of humiliation, he had indeed been called directly by the glorified Savior, which could not be considered of less validity. Thus the apostle begins to stop up the mouths of his opponents at the very outset (cf. Siefert, Philippi, Bugge, etc.). He owes his position to the glorified Lord and King, Jesus Christ alone, and not to any man, not even to an apostle. However, Paul does not wish to claim a preferred status above the other apostles (as taught by Augustine, Erasmus, Calvin, Beza, M. Henry and others), nor does he want to be considered an apostle of a higher degree because he was called by Christ now sitting on the right hand of the Father. There isn't a single trace of such thoughts in the heart of Paul.

Verse 2. "And all the brethren who . . ." Who are these "brethren"? Beza says that they are men of the ministry in Ephesus. This opinion is certainly not correct. The readers could not derive this opinion from the word *συν εμοι*, "with me." Nor does he here speak on behalf of all the Christian brethren from whose midst he was writing. Paul does not write in behalf of an entire congregation. The frequent expression *συν εμοι* refers to brethren from the Christian fellowship who stand in a special relationship to him such as are indicated also as *οι μετ' εμου* (cf. Acts 20:34; Phil. 4:21; Gal. 2:3; 2 Tim. 4:11; Tit. 3:15). They are those who are regularly in his company, his travel companion, and fellow workers. These he calls his "brethren." As a Christian he does not raise himself above them, but in all humility places them alongside himself even though he is convinced that he occupies an office over them. He puts aside all hierarchical thoughts. Daily experience teaches us how important this is for those who occupy an office in the church! But why does Paul call them "brethren"? This is not done in order to ward off the rumor that there might be some in the apostle's circle who were not agreed with him in his doctrinal position. There is no indication of this in the epistle. Indeed the reason must be found in another direction. In other Pauline epistles we will find that the apostle uses this expression frequently to designate those who were associated with him in the sending of the letters (1 Cor. 1:1; Phil. 1:1;

Col. 1:1; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

The meaning is always this that he wants the readers to know that he does not stand alone with regard to the matters contained in his letters, but that many prominent men fully share with him the views expressed. Thereby he would gain a more ready hearing on the part of the hearers especially if the matter should involve chastisement. The Galatians were to understand that Paul did not here stand alone. The doctrine which he has taught them and now continues to teach them is a doctrine taught by others, who also agree with him concerning the chastisement which he administers. All these brethren have without exception declared this yea and amen to the contents of the epistle. They share with him his pain for the sake of the Galatians. They nourish the same burning desire to come to their assistance. Luther says, "my brethren who are with me and join me in this epistle are of God . . . So that they may not cry out that I alone set myself up as critic of so many people, let me say that I have some who agree with me, namely my brethren who faithfully join me in the confession of the true doctrine and are faithful witnesses in confessing it in writing and in speech." Although Paul does not need the support of these "brothers" for his own sake, he cites it for the sake of the readers. We do the same thing for the sake of our hearers when we quote orthodox fathers as witnesses to the doctrine we profess.

"To the churches of Galatia." Here are the letter's addressees. It is not addressed to any specific congregation, but to a number of congregations. It is a circular letter, *epistola encyclica*. Such ancient interpreters as Chrysostom, Oekumenius, Theophylact and others have made mention of the short form of this address, quite different than all the other epistles sent to congregations by the same apostle. Missing here is any qualifying adjective such as "beloved," "holy," "sanctified," or even "church of God," but simply "churches." He could not use titles of honor since the situation among them was too poor. The most he could say was that they were "churches." Jerome expressed wonder that Paul could go that far; but to this Luther says correctly: "Paul here uses a figure of speech called synecdoche, a quite general usage in Holy Scripture . . . Although the Galatians had been led astray they still had baptism, God's word, and Christ's name, so there were some pious people among them who had not defected from St. Paul's teachings but had retained the Word and Sacraments pure and unadulterated so that

they had not become unclean and unholy because of the apostasy of others." We can well understand that the apostle grieved deeply because of the condition in the churches of Galatia. The condition found in many congregations may weigh down the spirits of faithful pastors and teachers also in our day. There may be many departures from the truth, many trespasses in life, but it should be our comfort that they are congregations as surely as the Word and Sacraments are present and in use.

Verse 3 brings the greeting. This is not an empty word nor simply a conventional formula. It brings with it the very things that the words express. "Grace," *χαρις*, is the good will of God, His gracious disposition in Christ toward sinners. It is the source of all blessings showered upon us by God. Therefore it is that Paul mentions it first: "to you," *υμιν* (viz. *ειη*). Paul wishes them grace because he knows that if they are to be freed of apostasy, then it will be necessary for grace to have more and more advancement among them. "Peace," *ειρηνη*, is the subjective peace, repose of conscience and joy over the knowledge that in Jesus there is gracious forgiveness of sins. Luther says: "By grace sin is forgiven; thereupon peace brings a good conscience." *υμιν ειη* is implied after the *ειρηνη*. "From God Father": these words refer both to "grace" and "peace" which have their origin from God the Father. He is the chief cause. "Father," not with reference to creation, but the father of the believers, father of those who through faith in Jesus Christ have been received as sons. "And our Lord Jesus Christ," *κυριου Ιησου Χριστου* is found in the genitive as is the case with *Θεου πατρος* since they are both controlled by the preposition *απο*. Grace and peace also have their origin from our Lord Jesus Christ who is the mediating cause. The way in which Paul places Jesus Christ alongside of God the Father shows that he considers Jesus as God equal with the Father. "Our Lord," namely of the Christians. He is the Lord and head of the individual believer. He is also the congregation's king. How he has become their Lord is shown by Paul in the following.

Verse 4. This verse is connected to the greeting and may be considered an expansion of it. This is the only epistle of Paul which contains this expansion. This expansion, which strongly presents the meaning of Jesus' suffering and death, stands in opposition to the self-righteous false teachers who denigrate it. The reader's attention is first called to the sin which they committed by considering the works of the law as the medium of atonement. They debased the power of Christ's



death. They dethroned Christ. They did not consider Him as the all-sufficient Savior. "Who gave Himself," i.e., He gave Himself into suffering and death. Scripture says the Father gave, delivered His Son; the Son gave Himself. It is of great importance that this should be noted. The Son's giving Himself sets forth the fact that He did not spare Himself, but was unconditionally willing to make atonement. The Father's willingness and the Son's willingness are identical. Jerome says: "The Father did not deliver up His Son without the Son's will, but it was the Son's will to fulfill the Father's will." Consequently, therefore, there could be no question about an injustice here, when God gave up the innocent one for the guilty. *διδοναι* has the same meaning as *παροδιδοναι* (cf. 2:20; Eph. 5:2,25). "Himself," *εαυτον* sets forth the greatness of the sacrifice, nothing less than Himself, His person and indeed the whole person (Heb. 9:14). Christ has not required any sacrifice from us that He might be our Lord, but He has, as Besser says, offered up Himself that He might be our Lord. "For our sins," Textus Receptus gives the reading *υπερ των αμ.* . . Tischendorf with the best manuscripts gives the reading *περ*. It is commonly maintained that *υπερ* was inserted as a correction in the text since this preposition is commonly used in such contexts. *περ* - with the meaning "for" - "on behalf of." The preposition is used in the New Testament both in connection with general terms such as Rom. 8:3; 1 Pet. 3:18; Heb. 10:6,18,26, and with persons such as Matt. 26:28; Heb. 5:3. So now, Christ took upon Himself everything concerning our sins, that is, everything that was needed for the payment of our sins and this He did willingly, moved thereto not by any worthiness in us, but done alone out of compassionate love and because of our desperate need. "That He might deliver us," *οπως εξεληται*, is the subj. aor. of *εξαιρεισθαι*. *εξαιρεομαι* corresponds to the Latin "*eximo, eruo, extraho, eripio, libero*," "deliver, extricate." The subj. aor. describes Jesus' intention to enter upon the designated works in truth and reality. "This present evil age." What does the apostle mean with *ο ενεστως αιων*? Meyer says that this refers to the approaching distress preceding Christ's return. But can it be that Christ's atonement is restricted to a deliverance from that distress? What would be the occasion that would call upon Paul to speak of this to the Galatians? *ενεστως* is the perfect participle with syncope for *ενεστηκως* from *ενιστημι*, *proxime instans*,<sup>4</sup> a construction and meaning which occurs frequently in classical literature. The Greek grammarians use *ενεστως*, namely,

χρονας, equal to *tempus praesens*.<sup>5</sup> Does the word mean "approaching"? Surely it does in classical Greek and this must also be true of the New Testament even though it is denied by some (cf. 1 Cor. 7:26; 2 Thess. 2:2). But it must at least be maintained that the word also has the meaning: "present." Thus Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 3:22; Heb. 9:9. In the first passages it appears in definite opposition to τα μελλοντα. Only in this sense does this interpretation fit here. αιων ενεστως has the same meaning as the Hebrew (הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה) and the Greek ο αιων αυτος or ο νυν αιων, also ο νυν καιρος in contrast to (הַיּוֹם הַבָּא), αιων μελλων, ο αιων εκεινος or ερχομενος. ο αιων μελλων is for the Hebrews the age of the messianic kingdom which here below breaks forth invisibly, but shall in the future be revealed visibly. It is the time period which had its beginning with the coming of Christ and shall be completed in the life everlasting. ο αιων ενεστως refers, therefore, to the time period outside of the kingdom of Christ, the time period that runs parallel to α αιων μελλων until Christ's return, when it is fulfilled in an eternity of reprobation. With other words it refers to the world which is evil, πονηρος, immoral and corrupt. It is evil in two respects: (1) It is a deceptive and corrupting power because it is sinful and according to its nature can do no better; (2) It is full of distress and sorrow because it is under the wrath and judgment of God. It was the purpose of Christ to rescue us from all this evil by giving Himself. Objectively this took place by the suffering and death on the cross, subjectively in the moment that we received the benefit by the power of His suffering and death through regeneration and justification and successively through sanctification and completed in glory. Through faith in Christ we have been freed from the guilt, the punishment and power of sin and delivered from the wrath of God, the condemnation of the law, and the power of death. We have been transferred to the beloved Son's kingdom of God. Through the entire work of sanctification we are more and more freed from all evil, from the world's corrupt influence outside of us, freed from evil desires within us until at last through a blessed death these are completely destroyed. Grammatically remarkable it is that πονηρος appears without an article after the noun. But this is the case that where the noun has an attribute this may be found without the article (cf. 1 Pet. 1:18 and Buttman, § 125:2).

How strongly the apostle, by means of this expansion, emphasizes the fact that salvation is completely finished without

any cooperation on the part of man! All that we might think we should do has been done by Christ when He gave Himself. The sum and substance of Paul's teaching regarding free grace in Christ is expressed in these few words. "According to the will of our God and Father"—this prepositional phrase belongs to the preceding part of the verse with special emphasis on *του δοντος* and not only *οπως εξελ.* . . . Christ's giving Himself together with its purpose is joined with "according to," *κατα*, under the causality of God, and, as Philippi says, under the sanction of the divine will. It was in accordance with God's will that Christ gave Himself for us for the purpose here mentioned. By means of the subj. aor. in *εξεληται* the apostle expresses the fact that God's purpose was attained for his benefit and that of the readers. Concerning himself he is certain of it and he hopes that it might be certain for his readers also. A Christian hopes for the best for his fellow-Christians as long as it is possible. *του Θεου και πατρος*. We notice that the article is not repeated before the *πατρος*. The one article covers both nouns, combining both, showing that the same person is both God and our Father. Winer makes this clear when he correctly says: "*qui idem est pater noster*." "Our," *ημων* in our translation, modifies both *Θεος* and *πατρος*; but specifically *ημων* refers only to the last word, *πατηρ* (cf. *πατηρ ημων* after the absolute *Θεος*, Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3; 2 Cor. 1:2; etc.), Our Father, of the believers (cf. John 20:17).

Verse 5. The apostle's thoughts are effected by the foregoing reference to the glory of God which has been so greatly displayed in the already mentioned redemptory works. Consciousness of God's unspeakable mercy which moved Him to save us and the deep corruption from which He has rescued us causes Paul to burst forth with a doxology, praising the Savior God. He wishes that God may receive the honor which He deserves for His great deeds. *ω η δοξα* (viz., *ειη*). *εις τους αιωνας* . . . , "to eternity's eternity," i. e., to all eternity, since eternity is thought of as an unending series of time periods. This must not be considered as a popular hyperbole as maintained by Philippi, Zoeckler and others; but the words must be taken as they stand. The praising of God for His salvation is to be sounded forth from the hosts of the saved without ceasing. What August Pieper says should be well considered: Hyperbole in the strict sense of the word is not lightly to be attributed to Scripture (Thess. Herm. Can. 147). Hyperbole involves a certain exaggeration. Paul often breaks forth with similar

doxologies when he speaks of the grace which has been shown us through the saving work of Christ (cf. Rom. 11:36; 16:27; 1 Tim. 1:17; Eph. 3:21). But this is the only instance when such praise is expressed in the greeting.

### The Letter's Introduction. Vv. 6-10

The introduction of this letter is quite different from that which one finds in the other Pauline letters to congregations. We do not here find any expression of thanks to God for the spiritual condition of the congregation as is found in Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; not even an expression of thanks for God's grace in general, as in Eph. 1:3, nor for the grace of God which he himself has experienced in the performance of his office, as in 2 Cor. 1:3 (cf. v. 6,7). His mood is not of such a nature that he can begin in this way. The sad condition in the churches of Galatia did not allow for this. Certainly the apostle found occasion to direct words of admonition to other congregations, for instance, in the case of the Corinthian church. But an expression of thanks was placed at the beginning. Here, however, we read *θαυμαξω* instead of *ευχαριστω*, which indicates his painful astonishment (cf. Mark 6:6; John 7:21; 1 John 3:13). There is a hint of censure in the word *θαυμαξω*. He had hoped for something different from these congregations. They had given such a hearty reception of him and his doctrine. They had made such a good beginning in their Christian activity. Now they were declining on a sloping plane, in the process of casting away that which had given them such joy. *ουτως ταχως* stands here since there is not given an absolute "*terminus a quo*"<sup>6</sup> in the words "so soon," nor is it to be taken in a relative sense such as "so quickly." The meaning does not indicate that this deterioration has taken place so quickly. Any time element with reference to the reader's conversion is not here indicated nor in the words *απο του καλεσαντος*, for this prepositional phrase speaks of the one from whom they turned; nor do the words refer to the false doctrine which has appeared (such interpretation does not fit into the context), but to the apostle's last visit to Galatia. *μεταπιθεσθαι* - Luther, Chr. Chemnitz, von Hofman, Bugge, et al., agree with our translation which regards it as passive: "permit yourself to turn away," "let yourself enter a new position," and according to *απο*, "away from . . ." One finds in this passive an implication that the chief blame for the apostasy

must be laid at the feet of the false teachers. Other interpreters such Wieseler, Siefert, Philippi, Zoeckler and others take it as the middle voice, "turn oneself from," "fall from," and with *απο*, "away from." Thus the new Norwegian translation. The fault of the apostasy is laid at the feet of the Galatians themselves. They must themselves bear the responsibility. Since *μετατιθεσθαι* in later Greek ordinarily appears in the middle voice, this interpretation is preferred. The present tense says the apostasy had not taken place as a completed fact. They had begun to slide down a sloping plane; but the situation was not yet hopeless. Perhaps they could be rescued and it was the apostle's earnest wish that this might occur. We can well envisage an orthodox pastor who is moved by Christian charity, when he sees that a congregation is turning aside from the truth which he has proclaimed to them and is accepting a soul destroying error. "Him who called you," *του καλεσαντος υμας*, does not refer to Paul. He was not the one who had called them. He was simply the human instrument. It was God who had called them. He it is who is represented in the New Testament as the one from whom the call proceeds. The *καλεσαντος* is connected with *εν χαριτι* and not with *Χριστου*. The preposition *εν* has been variously interpreted. Some say that here the *εν* gives a direction with its result: *εις χαριν, ωστε ειναι εν χαριτι*. But the goal of the call is presented in the New Testament to be God's kingdom or salvation and this pregnant meaning of *εν* with the dative, as Philippi says, occurs only with verbs of motion. Wieseler says that *εν* indicates the basis, that upon which the divine call rests, and Siefert is inclined to agree with him. But it is more correct to take *εν* as instrumental as do Meyer, Philippi, Zoeckler, et al. Through Christ's grace, its proclamation and invitation, they had been called of God. The grace of Christ is that which was wrought by his suffering and death. Now they were passing over to another gospel. *ετερος*, as distinguished from *αλλος*, "another kind," here means "another quality." *ετερος, non tantum alium, sed diversum significat* (Tittm. Syn. p.155). The content of Paul's gospel was the grace of Christ as Christ crucified. *χαρις* identifies this gospel. The message of the Judaizers belonged to another category; this gospel was *ετερον*, a message of the law which directed to works instead of the free grace in Christ (cf. 2:2ff.; 3:11; 4:9; 5:12). Also the false teachers called their message gospel, claiming to preach the gospel. By the use of irony Paul calls it a gospel, but at the same time modifies it with *ετερος*. We have here a

so-called oxymoron.

Verse 7. *ο ουκ εστιν αλλο*, "which is not another." *ο*, namely, *ευαγγελιον*. Here the apostle uses the word *αλλος*, not *ετερος*, but not *αλλο*. The thought is clear. Paul is saying: when I have called the false doctrine a gospel, then the understanding is not that there exist two gospels, both of which may lay claim upon the name of gospel, my gospel and that of the false teachers. No, only the message of Christ is gospel. The teaching of the false teachers is not. Their law-teaching is the very opposite of the gospel. It is a corruption of that which is rightfully gospel. Seb. Schmidt has captured the thought where he says: *Quod non est aliud eu. sed perversio tantum quaedam eu. x. a nonnullis, qui conturbent vos.*<sup>8</sup> Thus it is to be understood and one must not, with some exegetes, refer *ο* to the entire sentence from *οτι ουτως ταχως* at the beginning, than which there cannot mean anything else . . . nor can *ο* refer to the true gospel since this is not named. *ει μη* expresses an exception which refers to an absolute negation, here to the absolute *ουκ εστιν*. It is our "except," the Latin "*nisi*." Thus: which, upon the whole, nothing is excepted that some . . . The strange thing here is that *ει μη* stands at the conclusion of an independent sentence, but in general it has only a dependent case without a verb (cf. however, Mark 6:5; Rom. 14:14; 1 Cor. 7:17). More formally the sentence would have read: false doctrine is not another gospel except that it is merely a confusion of the gospel. But Paul carefully changes the construction after *ει μη* and makes false teachers the subject instead of false doctrine because he wants to lay hold of the persons from whom it proceeds or by whom it is proclaimed. Thus he covers a great deal with just a few words. *τινες*, - "some," - certain well-known people whom he does not name because of his contempt of them. This is a characteristic way of referring to opponents and enemies, a device often used by Paul (cf. Rom. 3:8; 1 Cor. 4:18; 15:12; 2 Cor. 3:1; Gal. 2:12; and a number of times in the pastoral letters). *οι ταρ. υμας*, "who trouble you." With reference to the linguistic presentation it should be noted that a participle may have an indefinite pronominal conception as *τις*, *αλλος*, *ετερος*, *πολλοι* (cf. Col. 2:8 and Buttman, p. 254). The article is here used to show that *ταρ.* characterizes the *τινες*. It is their intention to unsettle their hearers, as a business venture of theirs (Acts 15:24). The present participle *de conatu* indicates that this is their specific attempt. *θελοντες* - this participle has no article since the preceding article covers it. Paul thereby

shows that both participles do characterize them. As distinguished from *βουλομαι*, *θελω* represents a strong, energetic, and reflective sanctioning will. What they here want is a well-considered decision. They cannot be excused. But what was it that they wanted? *μεταστρεψαι το ευαγγ.*, namely, the gospel which Paul had preached which alone is the gospel. *μεταστρεφειν* means to distort, destroy, overthrow something from the ground up, so that it will present an entirely different form. This was the goal of their energetic will. But the gospel as an objective gospel or the truth as an objective divine truth cannot be destroyed or overthrown by any man or earthly power. The Word of God remains to all eternity. It will remain in spite of all attacks. The most that false teachers can do is to distort the truth for the individual, with the result that his faith is destroyed as he is led astray. Luther says: "Here we have the comfort to know that the devil with all his members, regardless of how strong, is unable to accomplish what he has in mind and plans for. He may be able to trouble and confuse the conscience of a few poor simple people, but the gospel of Christ he must let remain. For although it may often occur that the truth suffers distress, it is impossible that it should entirely and completely be suppressed: For God's word continues to all eternity (Isa. 40:8)."

*ευαγγ. του Χριστου* - the gospel which Paul preached was the gospel of Christ. The genitive *του Χριστου* is not the subjective but the objective genitive, not the gospel from Christ, but concerning Him, concerning His grace. That which they wanted to destroy and overthrow as to its validity as gospel, was the gospel which has Christ and His grace as its content. But how could Paul use such strong words concerning these "few"? They were not pure Jews, preaching pure Judaism. They had accepted Jesus of Nazareth as Messiah. They embraced Him and proclaimed Him. But this is the case: they were not willing to accept salvation as coming from Him alone; for they asserted that it was not dependent on his grace alone, but on grace and works. They did not hold to grace alone. They added a plus to it and this plus they sought in man himself. But here applies what the fathers taught, that "If grace is not grace in all respects then it will not be grace in any respect." Paul indeed says: "if by grace, then it is no longer of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace" (Rom. 11:6). Grace or works, law or gospel; a third way of salvation which is called grace and works, law and gospel is not found in God's Word. Consequently the

Judaizers rejected the meaning of Jesus' atoning death. They had nothing to do with Him and therefore they overthrew the gospel. One becomes equally guilty when one will not confess that salvation is by grace alone. Let us all take note of this. If Christ is not everything for us, He is nothing.

Verse 8. *αλλα*, "but," stands in contrast to *τινες εισιν*, thus: there are some who want to pervert the gospel wherewith you are called; but, *αλλα*, let everyone who is such a perverter be accursed, whether that would be I or an angel from heaven. *και εαν* are joined together with the meaning "if also," "even if." The expression introduces a conclusion from the greater to the lesser which is to serve in increasing the weight of the anathema pronounced over the opponents. *ημεις*, "we," - the plural stands here with the meaning of the singular. Paul does not now include the brethren mentioned in verse 2. We see this from verse 9 where the plural *προειρηκαμεν* is used interchangeably with the singular *λεγω*. We see this even more clearly in verse 11 ("by me," *υπ' εμου*). *αγγελος εξ ουρανου*, "an angel from heaven" - Paul and an angel from heaven is a strong expression indicating "anyone." Meyer correctly says: "*verwirft Paulus sogar die eigene und die angelische Auctoritaet fuer den angenommenen Fall als verflucht, so ist jeder ohne Ausnahme demselben Fluche in demselben Falle unterworfen.*"<sup>9</sup> *ευαγγελισται* - this is now the reading of Tischendorf. According to this reading the meaning would be: "If we or an angel from heaven would preach . . ." Earlier Tischendorf had this reading *ευαγγελιζεται*. Since this reading is well supported and since the present tense fits very well, here we should not reject it. Nor has the newer Norwegian rejected it. It reads "*forkynder*" (preaches). The present tense points to what the false teachers are now occupied with. *παρ' ο*, really "away from that which," "instead of that," in such a context: "against that which." The verb *ευαγγελιζεται* "to proclaim the gospel," may apply to the hearer in the dative case, as in 4:13; 1 Cor. 15:1, to proclaim the gospel to a person, or it may apply to the person in the accusative case, to evangelize a person, to make him the object of gospel preaching (cf. v. 9). Luke often uses this construction.

*αναθεμα εστω*, "Let him be accursed." *αναθημα* responds to the Hebrew (אנחם). The word is also found in other New Testament passages: Acts 23:14; Rom. 9:3; 1 Cor. 12:3; 16:22; Luke 21:5. In the latter passage some manuscripts have the following spelling, *αναθημα*, which is the Attic form, while *αναθεμα* is the Hellenistic (cf. *ευρημα* and *ευρεμας*; *προσθημα* and *προσθεμα*).



Both forms are derived from *ανα* and *τιθεμι*, "to move something back to another sphere," "deliver something" to God, either to His consuming holiness or to His unifying love. Thus the word *αναθεμα* is a word which may have two different meanings, like the Hebrew (אָנָה), either as in Luke 21:5, that which is dedicated to God as a gift which He accepts in grace, a temple donation, "*donarium templo consecratum*"<sup>10</sup> - or as in Rom. 9:3, that which is delivered to God's consuming holiness and thus destined to destruction, a destruction which in the New Testament breaks forth into eternal death, the complete *απωλεια*. To pronounce a curse over one is to deliver him to the worst fate imaginable. Anyone who pronounces such a curse over another has to be sure of having a firm basis for it and absolute certainty of having clear evidence. Paul was certain of the validity of his anathema. That he wants the Galatians to understand this is shown by the repetition found in verse 9. He was sure of this that he was doing nothing more than to repeat and declare his yea and amen in connection with that which God had already pronounced over the false teachers who proclaimed a different gospel. Philippi says most strikingly: "*Da wir von Natur unter der καταρα stehen und X. uns durch seinen Versoehnungstod erkaufte hat von der καταρα του νομου, so macht sich im Grunde jeder selbst wieder zum αναθεμα der durch Abfall vom rechtfertigenden Glauben an den Versoehnungstod Jesu und Rueckkehr zum gesetzlichen Standpunkte sich aufs neue muthwillig unter die stellt, vgl. 5,10 βαστασει το κριμα, so dass das αναθεμα εστω eigentlich nur besagt: er soll das wirklich sein, was er selber freventlich sein will.*"<sup>11</sup>

Verse 9. Here the apostle solemnly repeats the curse to show how diligently he expresses it "as we have said before." This "before," *προ* in *προειρηκαμεν*, refers to a previous expression. Interpreters are not agreed what time the *προ* refers to. Luther and others say that the reference is to verse 8. What I said there I now repeat. Other interpreters say that the reference is to the apostle's previous visit in Galatia. Thus Philippi, Zoeckler, et al.: If this is correct, then Paul must already at that time have noticed the Judaistic trend which called forth his curse. It must be concluded that linguistic considerations point to the correctness of the latter, for if the apostle was thinking of his expression in verse 8, then *ως ειρηκαμεν, παλιν λεγω* would be enough. Nor is it likely that the false teachers bobbed up suddenly. The plural in *προειρηκαμεν* is the same as in verse 8. *αρτι* is our "now," the Latin *nunc, hoc tempore*.

Later the particle is often referred to as the present moment. *παλιν*, "again," refers back to the time which is pointed to by the word "before." *ει τις*, "if anyone," if the reading of Tischendorf is correct, we have another *modus* than in verse 8 where we have the subjunctive while here the indicative. The difference in thought is this that by the subjunctive in verse 8 a supposed or possible occurrence is envisioned while here in verse 9 with the indicative an actual occurrence is spoken of. Paul thus goes a step further when he says there are those who are doing this (i.e., preaching another gospel). *ο παρελαβετε*, "what you have received," - in verse 8 Paul says that the false teachers' so-called gospel is a gospel opposed to that which he had preached to them, while here he says that it is opposed to that which they had received.

It should be noted that when Paul in verse 8 and then again in verse 9 pronounces a curse over the false teachers, this in no way excludes his desire that they may acknowledge the truth, be converted and thus be saved from destruction.

Verse 10. After the *γαρ*, "for," Paul proceeds to give the reason why he passes judgment (vv. 8,9) without regard to the result in the eyes of men. If I sought to please men, I would take care not to speak so forthrightly, but now I don't bother to think of the fact that some may not like what I am saying, for I do not seek to please men. *αρι*, "now," designates that something is pushed to the front, because it is a weighty matter. Some interpreters say that *αρι* makes reference to the time before his conversion when he did indeed consider the pleasure of men. His conduct at that time would thus stand as a contrast to his present behavior. But if that is the interpretation, then *αρι* would have different meaning than it has in verse 9 and this would be a forced interpretation. The simplest procedure would be to refer *αρι* to the present moment in which I am speaking, consequently without any reference to the past. *πειθειν*, which in our translation is rendered "to persuade," means really to seek to get one over to your side. This can take place by word or by other means, for example by money. Therefore one finds the expression *πειθειν αργυρω*. *πειθειν* is often used in the same sense as the Latin *persuadere*, "to prevail upon," to convince one by means of argument, to get him to believe what you want him to believe. In context it then has the meaning, "to seek to get him on your side," "to seek to win over." Thus in Acts 12:20; 2 Cor. 5:11; 1 John 3:19. In these passages the word occurs with an accusative of person. The present tense has an

important meaning. It expresses a present characterization of the apostle. His present confrontation with the false teachers is a specific proof that he is not seeking to please men. The opposite *ἡ τοῦ Θεοῦ*, "or God," speaks of the very opposite in response to the question whom does he seek to please. He does not seek to please men, but simply to please God. *ἡ ζητῶ αὐθ. ἀρεσκείν*, "or do I seek to please men?" – this is not just another way of expressing the same thought as is stated previously but introduces something new. *ἀρεσκείν* stands as a medium for *πειθεῖν*. *ἀρεσκείν* does not just have the meaning to introduce oneself, but to present oneself so that the result is pleasing with the purpose of winning them to your side. *εἰ ἐτι αὐθ. . .*, "if I still please men," – *ἐτι*, "still," *etiam nunc, porro*. This particle implies that there was a time when he conducted himself differently in this respect. But if it is the same way with him in his contact with men now, if his approach and behavior in their presence, his speech, his deeds are now, as in the former days, intended to please men, then it could be said that he is not the servant of Christ and indeed could not be. *δουλος*, "servant," – stands, as Zoeckler says, not in the historic sense as equal to "apostle," but in an ethical sense an expression designating a full unconditional dedication to Jesus and submission to His will (cf. Rom. 6:18,22). But how is this to be understood? Has not Paul said that everyone is to please his neighbor (Rom. 15:2)? Has he not said of himself that he made himself a servant to all, that he might win the more, that he became all things to all men that he might save some (1 Cor. 9:19-22)? Ought not all of the Lord's servants seek to save men? Or should they perhaps seek to stir them up to anger and enmity, the more so much the better? Surely not. Neither should they drive people away from Christendom by their behavior. Every true servant of the Lord should emulate the example of Paul and seek to win all people (i.e., their souls) though not for themselves, but for the Lord. What one can do to please others, in accord with the truth that one should do. But if it becomes a priority to please men simply as members of the human race, then one will be carrying the cape on both shoulders, speaking simply to be speaking, preaching to please itching ears, not letting truth have its proper place. To gain people this way shows that one is winning them for oneself more than for Christ. But then it becomes clear that one is not serving Christ, but oneself; for no man can serve two masters.

(To be continued)

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Meyer - "Every thought, every word is the living Paul."  
Luther - "The Epistle to the Galatians is my epistle, betrothed to me; it is my Catherine von Bora."

<sup>2</sup> "Without a repeated *απο*, because the exalted Christ and God the Father are for the apostle one and the same divine power."

<sup>3</sup> "Includes the force of the particle *απο*."

<sup>4</sup> "Being nearby."

<sup>5</sup> "The present time."

<sup>6</sup> "Point of departure."

<sup>7</sup> "Signifies not so much 'another' as 'different.'"

<sup>8</sup> "Which is not another gospel, but rather a certain perversion of the Gospel of Christ, by some who trouble you."

<sup>9</sup> "When Paul rejects even his own and the angelic authority in the assumed case as condemned, then everyone without exception is subject to the same curse in the same case."

<sup>10</sup> "That which is consecrated as a gift to the temple."

<sup>11</sup> "As we by nature stand under the *καταρα* and Christ has redeemed us by His atoning death from the *καταρα του νομου*, everyone in reality makes himself again anathema as surely as he stubbornly places himself again under the *καταρα του νομου* by apostasy from justifying faith in the atoning death of Jesus and by return to the legalistic position . . . so that the anathema says in reality just this: 'He shall actually be what he himself wantonly desires to be.'"

# THE FRUITFUL ENTRANCE:

## An Exegetical Study of 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

Vance Fossum

(Conclusion)

### 8

*So affectionately longing for you, we were ever well-pleased to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own lives, because you were beloved to us.*

**AFFECTIONATELY LONGING FOR YOU** — ομειρομενοι, apax. from ομειρομαι, have a kind feeling for someone.

**EVER WELL-PLEASED** — ευδοκουμεν, imperf. expressing continuous action in the past.

**SHARE WITH** — μεταδουναι, μετα + διδωμι, "with-giving," aor. inf. = to share.

**LIVES** — ψυχας. Note: Paul does not use ζωη—life in the absolute sense, but ψυχη—the life of the individual. Jesus came that He might give ζωη (John 10:10); but as our Good Shepherd He laid down His ψυχη (John 10:11).

**BELOVED** — αγαπητοι, loved in the highest possible sense—as God loves, with understanding and purpose, and unconditionally.

"So" (οутως) continues the thought of verse 7. But now Paul ties together in beautiful fashion the tender behavior mentioned in verse 7 with the bold behavior mentioned in verse 2. It was all a matter of "sharing with" those who were dearly loved by those who ministered the gospel. As far as Paul is concerned (as far as we should be concerned!), being "ever well-pleased" to share the gospel of God with others included being "ever well-pleased" to give out one's life for them as well! The one should follow the other just as our Good Shepherd's pleasure in sharing His gospel with men was followed by the sharing and giving out of His life for them.

But this is no easy task! The problems the Christian pastor

encounters in counseling both members and non-members come fast and heavy in this age of gross materialism and the disintegration of the family. The temptation at times is to "share the gospel" in church on Sunday morning and "hide out" in the parsonage for the rest of the week! But it is clear from the apostle's words that a "fruitful entrance" to those we serve requires "a sharing of our own lives"—a giving of ourselves, our time, and energy beyond that giving of our sermon on Sunday morning. The "sharing of our own lives" is proof that the pastor practices the love he preaches!

We should also emphasize that such devotion to the Thessalonians was not because they "had **become dear**" (NKJV) to those who served them the gospel of God, but because they "**were**" (ἐγενήθητε is used in place of εἰμι as in 2:5) **beloved**. Just as every minister of the gospel must continually resist his natural desire to make himself "dear" to the people he serves, so also he must resist the temptation to serve "especially" those who "become dear" to him. For his calling is only to set Christ forward, to make **Him** "dear," and to do so without the least favoritism, even as Christ died for all.

There was no period of time involved during which the Thessalonians endeared themselves to Paul, or Paul learned to love them because they were so "lovable." The time was extremely short! Furthermore, the "ἀγάπη" love which Paul and the others had for the Thessalonians was not conditioned by anything in them, thankfully! It was rather that unconditional love which is "of God" (1 John 4:7), produced in all who believe His gospel and expressed in the conduct of every true servant of the gospel as he shares that same gospel and his life with others.

## 9

*For you remember, brethren, our wearisome toil and hard labor—working night and day, so as not to be burdensome to any of you, we preached to you the gospel of God.*

**WEARISOME TOIL AND HARD LABOR** — κοπος and μοχθος. The first is the more common; Trench says it is found 20 times in the NT. The emphasis of the term is "not so much the actual exertion which a man makes, as the lassitude or weariness which follows on this straining of all his powers to the utmost." Often κοπος is used with its verb, κοπιω, to speak of what the work of

the Christian ministry should entail. In this connection Trench cites John 4:38; Acts 20:35; 1 Thess. 3:5; among other passages. *μοχθος* occurs only two other places in the NT: 2 Cor. 11:27 and 2 Thess. 3:8. "It is the homely everyday word for that labour which, in one shape or another, is the lot under the sun of all the sinful children of Adam" (*Synonyms of the New Testament*, pp. 377-378).

**BURDENSOME** — *επιβαρῆσαι*, aor. inf. of *επιβαρῶ*, to weigh down, be a burden. Used in 2 Thess. 3:8 (direct reference to the present verb) and in 2 Cor. 5:9. Here the inf. is found with *προς το* forming a rather rare type of purpose clause.

**PREACHED** — *εκηρυξαμεν*, aor. of *κηρυσσω*, to proclaim what one is commissioned to proclaim—no writing of one's own script!

Paul invites the Thessalonians to call to mind one way in particular by which those who preached the gospel of God to them had demonstrated their willingness to give to them not only from the gospel, but also from their own lives. Paul and his fellow-laborers had worked hard "day and night," wearing themselves out so as to provide their own physical needs and not become a burden to the Thessalonians. It was not with Paul as it sometimes is with preachers today; he did not preach the gospel in order to make a living; neither did he prefer to make tents (Acts 18:1-3) while preaching the gospel only in his spare time. Paul's priorities were exactly correct—he would share the gospel of God with the Thessalonians at no charge to them, whatever the cost to himself.

Paul continues to recount the tender and personal care exercised by his company of ministers toward the Thessalonians . . .

### 10-12

*You are witnesses, God also, how holily and righteously and blamelessly we were toward you, the believers; just as you know how—each one of you as a father does his own children—we were exhorting you and encouraging and testifying so that you walk in a manner worthy of God, the One calling you into His own kingdom and glory!*

The NKJV translation of these verses is surely smoother

than the translation offered above. Nevertheless, we have tried somehow to capture the ascending drama and excitement of Paul's language here, as indicated by the sentence structure and verb tenses in the original.

**DEVOUTLY** — *οσιως*, adv. = holily, as being in a right relationship to God, observing His will, opposed to evil. Although the adv. is used only here in the NT, the adj. is much more common and often used with "righteousness."

**RIGHTEOUSLY** — *δικαιως*, adv. = righteously, in accord with what is right. Paul uses the term also in 1 Cor. 15:34 and in Tit. 2:12.

Trench mentions a clear distinction in heathen literature between the adverbs *οσιως* and *δικαιως*, but then dismisses it as not transferable to Koine Greek. We believe, however, that a commonly recognized distinction between these two terms among the heathen may have been precisely the reason the adverbial forms were used by Paul. Were not the Thessalonians largely of Greek-heathen background? So, perhaps also here the following distinction is possible: one who conducts himself *οσιως* (holily) is "careful of his duties toward God," while he who conducts himself *δικαιως* is careful of his duties "toward men" (Cf. Trench's *Synonyms*, pp. 328-329).

**BLAMELESSLY** — *αμεμπτως*, adv. = blamelessly, from a conjugate of *μεμρομαι* = to find fault, + alpha privitive.

NOTE: If the distinction between *οσιως* and *δικαιως* is valid, then Paul is speaking of how "holily" they behaved with respect to God, how "righteously" they behaved with respect to man, and therefore also how "blamelessly" they behaved altogether among the Thessalonians. It is possible that the NKJV translators had something like this in mind with their "devoutly," "justly," and "blamelessly."

**EXHORTING** — *παρακαλουντες*, pres. part. of *παρακαλεω* = call to one's side to make an appeal, exhort.

**ENCOURAGING** — *παραμυθουμενοι*, pres. part. of *παρα-*



μυθεομαι = to speak closely (παρα, near + μυθος, speech). Vine says regarding the noun forms, παρακλησις and παραμυθια, that the latter is the "more tender term" (Vol. I, p. 207).

**TESTIFYING** — μαρτυρομενοι, pres. part. of μαρτυρομαι = to summon as witness, to bear witness.

In 2:2-6 Paul speaks of his ministry of the gospel as it related to God Who had "entrusted" him with it. In 2:7-12 he speaks of his gospel ministry as it related to the Thessalonians for whom it was intended. In order to emphasize the loving and giving nature of his very personal ministry among the Thessalonians, Paul uses the familial figures: Mother, Father, children. Let's be sure we get the point!

Mothers are not alone in giving from their own lives to their children. Good Fathers do also. However, one could make this general distinction: whereas both share their own lives with their children through much "TLC," with Mother this usually means "Tender Loving Care," but with Dad it usually means "Tough Loving care." Every preacher of the gospel of God must be both Mother and Father to the "beloved" people he serves—exercising loving care with both tenderness and toughness. His love must be sensitive to the needs and weaknesses of his spiritual children, as well as patient in its dealings with them. (This will mean much "giving of his own life" to them in many ways!) But while being sensitive and patient, his love must also be strong and persistent in the correction of sin and error and in the faithful preaching and application of the true gospel teachings to every one of his children. (This, too, will mean much "giving of his own life" to them in many ways!) Just as the gospel of God presents Christ as giving Himself for every sinner in connection with both strength and tenderness, from the beginning of His earthly ministry to its end, so also must be the ministry of those who present this Savior to others.

Paul and his co-workers had presented to the Thessalonians a strong "father image" by their example which spoke louder than words. The Thessalonians are "witnesses" (μαρτυρες) who could testify, "and God too," of how "holily" Paul had conducted himself with regard to the teaching and will of God; how "righteously" he had conducted himself toward the Thessalonians; and therefore how "blamelessly" he had behaved among them. Those who were opposed to the gospel Paul preached and

those who impugned his motives and character after he left Thessalonica surely accused him of wrong-doing. But their testimony counted for nothing! What did they know of the true God or of true godly behavior? Paul's beloved readers, who were "the believers" (τοῖς πιστευούσιν), were all that counted. They alone had received the gospel by faith "not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God" (2:13), and so were able to judge Paul's behavior correctly (Cf. 1 Cor. 2:12-16).

Paul does not claim perfection for himself or for those who ministered with him, but they did strive hard by the grace of God to be perfect. So much so that Paul can, in good conscience, call upon the Thessalonian believers and God Himself as witnesses of just "h o w" (ὡς) "holily," "righteously," and "blamelessly" they actually were toward them.

Neither was this blameless behavior a surprise or a mystery to the Thessalonians. Paul's practice was in harmony with what he preached. "Just as you know," he continues, "how—each one of you as a father (does) his own children—we were exhorting you and encouraging and testifying, so that you walk worthily (ἀξίως) of God, the One calling you into His own kingdom and glory." (We note here that the ὡς clause of this verse is joined to the ὡς clause in the previous verse by καθάπερ — "how . . . just as . . . how." This means that the two clauses share the one finite verb, ἐγενήθημεν.)

When Paul used the aorist ἐγενήθημεν ("we were") in verse 10, he presented a snapshot or still-life of his conduct toward the Thessalonians. Now in verse 11 he adds to the aorist finite verb three present participles (historic presents), bringing the picture to life from the past and drawing their attention from his life to their own living before God. Paul did not want the Thessalonian believers merely to stand in admiration of his life among them. Nor did he want them to sit around talking of how well they knew him and admired him after he had gone. Of what good would that be to God, to the Thessalonians, or even to those who ministered to them?

Paul had always wanted them to "walk" (περιπατεῖν) as he had walked—"worthily of God." He had always wanted them to live so as to bring honor to God all their days. It was toward this goal, "for this purpose" (εἰς το + inf.), Paul says, "that we were continually exhorting you [strongly urging you along the right path], and encouraging [comforting and cheering you along the way], and testifying [firmly and faithfully affirming

to you the whole Truth of God as it has been delivered to us by Him]."

Both the reason and the motivation for such walking is stated by Paul in the last and climactic clause: "the One calling you into His kingdom and glory." God is no heathen idol to which the Thessalonians had come with their works and sacrifices, hoping against hope to avert divine wrath and to earn some small kindness from a dumb and impotent statue. He is the "calling God"! The "call" of God by His gospel, which Paul preached, had produced the desired effect in his readers. "They received the Word of God" (2:13). They were "believers" (2:10). They had become members of God's own kingdom and glory! And God continues to call them (*καλοῦντος*, pres. part.) by His gospel, not into an earthly kingdom of forced submission and taxes, but into a spiritual and heavenly kingdom where they rule with Him and possess life and all things with Christ forever!

Included in God's calling into His own kingdom and glory—included as the fruit of the gospel by which He calls to faith—is the **walk** of faith that is worthy of such a gracious God. His calling by the gospel is ever a calling into His own kingdom of grace where He gives and renews a spiritual life that is according to His own image (Eph. 4:17-24). Therefore Paul says later: "God did not call us on the basis of uncleanness, but in connection with holiness" (4:7). God's calling is not done on the basis of our natural uncleanness, but in connection with His own sanctifying action, by which He intends to keep on separating His believing children from the world, making them more and more like Himself until He receives them into His own glory.

Therefore, every exhorting, encouraging, testifying word spoken for the purpose of promoting the faith-walk that is worthy of God, ought to say to the believer: "Since God is calling **you**, don't disgrace Him by your life, but show His grace in your life. For this is the will and the working of Him Who is calling you in Christ Jesus unto His own kingdom and glory!" Without doubt, such exhorting, encouraging and testifying can only be well carried out in the ministry of him who exercises strong father-love with Paul.

It was no accident that Paul's "entrance" among the Thessalonians was "fruitful." By God's grace, Paul and his companions in ministry had shared "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16) faithfully, while they conducted themselves

as those who had embraced their Savior and all those He came to save.

Lord, ever help us all by Your steadfast love in Christ, so that as we administer Your gospel we may do so in faithfulness to our pastoral calling—bold in connection with You to speak Your gospel which is entrusted to us, yet gently caring for each and every soul entrusted to us. Forgive our many failings as pastors, for the sake of Jesus, our Savior. Grant us Your enabling Spirit according to Your own promise: ". . . how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him." Amen.

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## Psalm 51 Sermon Series

*Paul Fleischer*

Psalm 51:1a

**“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness . . .”**

The Book of Psalms has been called the Christian’s prayer book. Christians love the psalms because in them God the Holy Spirit Himself teaches us how to pray. The beauty of the psalms is, on the one hand, in their simplicity; on the other hand, there is a richness and depth in the psalms which can never be exhausted. Testifying to this is the fact that the more we read and study the psalms, as with all of God’s Word for that matter, the more precious they become to us.

The psalms are particularly precious to sinners—to those who are anxious about their salvation. Other books of the Bible talk to us about sin and conversion, and about the conflict within, and the blessedness of, believers. But in the psalms we have some very personal pouring out of the heart of the child of God. Thus we can here learn so well how WE may talk with God, how to confess sin, pray for forgiveness, and praise God for His grace and mercy.

The psalms are precious to believing sinners, but let us note how they were also close to the heart of our Savior who was made sin for us that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. When He was in the most stressful part of His passion, He who was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities cried out: “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”—which was a quotation from the 22nd psalm. And when He was dying and cried out: “Father, into Your hand I commit My spirit,” was that not a word from another psalm (31:5)? If our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ used words of the psalms to comfort and strengthen Himself in prayer to His heavenly Father, how much more you and I will want to have our hearts prepared for times of great need by similar words of Scripture.

As the “Preparation” for Lenten services we suggest the prayerful reading of one of the so-called penitential psalms. It would be safe to say that the penitential psalm used most by penitent believers is the 51st. Some have committed the entire psalm to memory, and may we suggest that we all endeavor to do this.

Many of the verses from our liturgical services quote from Psalm 51; therefore we are all very familiar with at least selected portions of it. The order of Confessional Service in *The Lutheran Hymnal* quotes the 17th verse: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit,” says the pastor; and the congregation responds: “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise.” Also the Offertory (“Create in me a clean heart, O God . . .”) which is commonly used after every sermon in our Sunday services comes from this psalm. So then we are familiar with portions of this psalm, but may I suggest that this very familiarity urges us to a more concentrated study. We do not want to become guilty of merely mouthing pious phrases.

As we then, dear Christian believer, meditate upon Psalm 51, may we come to a deeper realization of our sin and sinfulness, and therewith to a greater appreciation of our salvation in Christ Jesus. The first meditation will confine itself to an overview of this psalm, its background, and its introductory petition: **“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness . . .”**

### I. Background and Lessons to Learn

As stated, our psalm is one of the penitential psalms and indeed the chief among them. To understand it aright we should especially note the situation the author, King David, was in when he wrote it. The superscription above the psalm (“A Psalm of David when Nathan the prophet went to him after he had gone in to Bathsheba”) tells us that David had fallen very deeply into sin. He had committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah. But more than that, he had tried to conceal his sin; and when he did not succeed in doing that, he had Uriah put to death.

But even this was not the worst of it. Had David confessed and repented of his sin, all might have been well; yet for nearly a year he remained unrepentant. It was only after the birth of his child, when God sent the prophet Nathan to him, that David came to a true sense of his sin. Nathan had drawn out of David a sentence of condemnation against a rich man who had robbed a poor man of his only lamb, a pet lamb. It was only after the king (David himself) had pronounced the sentence and Nathan had exclaimed: “You are the man!” that David humbled himself and acknowledged: “I have sinned against the LORD.” Nathan then told him: “The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.” Then it was that David went to the Lord in deep humility, confessing his sin, begging God for His Holy Spirit, for assurance of forgiveness of sin and praying for a new and clean heart. These are the background events, as recorded in 2 Samuel, chapters 11 and 12.

One of the lessons we want to learn as we go through this psalm is **how terrible the might and power of sin is**. As Luther remarks, “Psalm 51 teaches us what sin is and how one may get rid of it and become just in God’s sight. For reason does not know what sin is and thinks to atone for it by works. But the psalter tells us that even all the saints are sinners and can in no way be holy and blessed except by recognizing and knowing that they are sinners, that by grace alone they are made righteous before God.” Think for a moment who David was. He was a man after God’s own heart, “the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob, and the sweet psalmist of Israel” (2 Sam. 23:1). Think of the wonders God had performed through him and to him. And yet what happened when he succumbed to an inclination of his own heart? Indeed, even the “saints” of God are and remain sinners, and nothing but God’s Word can awaken them to repentance and faith.

We are living in a day when sin and its consequences are minimized. One of the dominant traits of the many cults and sects is that “a sense of sin is frequently either minimized or totally absent.” A consequence of this is a belittling of the need of reconciliation between man, the sinner, and God. Among these cults and sects, then, little need is felt for the Christian phenomena of Lent, which celebrates the innocent suffering and death of the God-Man, Jesus Christ, and His atoning sacrifice for sinners on the cross. To the cults, Jesus is but another man who had just one more idea of how to get to heaven. Yes, beware, fellow sinners, of the minimizing of sin. A certain Dr. Duncan of England used to tell his students that “the one great heresy that afflicts the church and keeps back the conquest of the world for Christ is defective views of sin.” Upon reflection, wouldn’t we have to agree? Also among us “church people” there may be those who either do not know their sins or who have imperfect ideas about the corruption of man’s nature; there may be those who do not recognize how capable of sin are our sinful hearts, or how fearful is the power of sin to blind a person. As we go through the psalm may we all be reminded what a fearful burden sin is.

A second lesson we would be reminded of is **what a glorious redemption is ours in Christ**. If one harbors inadequate thoughts about sin and the confession of sin, going hand in hand will be a failure to appreciate the mercy of God and the redemption accomplished for us by our Savior. In our psalm we come to understand, with David, that we need to be washed from our sins, that they may be blotted out and we might be purified by the Holy Spirit. A third lesson to be brought home to our hearts is **what a thankful life redeemed sinners will live, again through the power of the Holy Spirit**. We want to see how, for the penitent sinner who knows the forgiveness of sin, his one desire is to praise and serve the merciful and gracious God, so that in turn poor sinners will have no greater joy than to make known to others what God has done for them.

To sum up, in Psalm 51 we will see a man confessing his sin in the deepest misery and anxiety; then being brought to rejoice in his redemption and the grace of God; and finally, how he as a redeemed sinner is brought to glorify God for His free salvation in Christ Jesus. With that overview, let us now look at the first words of the psalm.

## II. The Plea For God’s Mercy

The key to all true prayer—in fact, the key to the content of the entire psalm—really lies in the first words from David’s lips: **“Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness.”** If one doesn’t understand the need for this opening cry, one will never understand aright the balance of the psalm.

“Have mercy upon me, O God . . .” We must know **who the God is that David is addressing**. This is no vague, undefined “supreme architect of the universe” type of being. This is not—what Luther terms—“the naked God” whom Luther was taught to know as the Holy One who is ready to cast a bolt of lightning upon the sinner. No, this God is the God who comes to sinners clothed in the gracious promises of His saving Word. This is the Covenant God who, though He is indeed holy and righteous, reveals Himself as a merciful and forgiving God. While all sinners will, like Israel of old, shake and tremble before Him, yet at the same time this is the Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob who proclaimed Himself to Moses on Mt. Sinai as “the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abounding in goodness and truth” (Exod. 34:6). Had David been addressing the “naked God”—God apart from His gracious promises to fallen mankind—he would have had to flee. But no! He knew the comfort of the 130th psalm: “If You, LORD, should mark iniquities, O LORD, who could stand? But there is forgiveness with You, that You may be feared . . . For with the LORD there is mercy, and with Him is abundant redemption. And He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.”

“**Have mercy upon me, O God . . .**” The penitent, believing sinner believes that there IS mercy with God. This quality of God is actually one of the most precious of all. We may wonder at other characteristics of God, such as His omniscience, His omnipotence, His absolute holiness; but do we realize how desperate our condition would be if God were not a merciful God? “It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31), and “For our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:29). And yet the amazing truth is that, though we sinners deserve to be rejected by Him, God pities us. Mercy is something that is entirely undeserved. It is a gift which we cannot lay claim to for anything we may do or not do. There is nothing we sinners can boast of, but we realize that grace, free grace, is our only hope. Fellow

sinners, let us never cease marveling that God has compassion on the fallen race of mankind; that He Himself paid the ransom price for our sin at the cost of the lifeblood of His Son; that His fatherly heart longs after the ungodly, forgiving them all their sin and their sinfulness; and that He receives them as His children through faith in Jesus. In our own personal and individual lives, let us never doubt but believe that there IS mercy with God.

Furthermore, the penitent sinner knows that he NEEDS God's mercy. "Have mercy **upon me**, O God . . ." Penitent, believing sinners desire mercy to be shown to them, to each one, personally. It is little comfort to know that God is merciful unless I am led by the Spirit to see that this mercy is TO ME! FOR ME, not just for David, for Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for Peter, James and John, for St. Paul and Dr. Luther, but FOR ME—put your name there, fellow sinner!

"Have mercy upon me, O God, **according to Your lovingkindness . . .**" (literally "Your steadfast love"). When we understand this truth, what room is left for any supposed meriting or earning of God's mercy by us sinners? No room at all. When we think carefully about it, it is tremendously significant that the Word of God time and again speaks of poor sinners "finding" mercy, "obtaining" mercy, "receiving" mercy, "partaking" of mercy. From the standpoint of God He is always said to "have" mercy, "give" mercy, "show" mercy, and all apart from man's supposed ability or attempts to earn it! When we sinners confess our sins, we, like David, divest ourselves of any excuses for sin, as well as of any merit for earning His mercy, and **we merely receive what He gives "according to His steadfast love"**—a love shown so genuinely to the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ, our Savior. Jesus fulfilled God's holy law for us in His holy life, and He willingly offered Himself as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. We have been justified, we have been forgiven. Through faith in Jesus the benefits are ours. Praise be to God!

And so we conclude our thoughts on the first half of the first verse of our psalm. May a combination of our realization of our Savior-God's mercy, and of the burden of our sin, be the two things which cause us to pray daily with David: "**Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness.**"

#### Prayer For Forgiveness of Sins:

Dear God, before you I confess that I am a great sinner. The Ten Commandments would drive me and commit me directly to hell. But your precious gospel teaches me to know and believe that out of love you have established a kingdom through Jesus Christ. In it you will be merciful and will help forlorn and condemned sinners. So I say my confession of faith and sin in one word: I am truly a sinner, but God is merciful to me. I am your enemy, but you are my friend. I deserve condemnation, yet I know that you do not want to condemn me. You want me to be blessed and to inherit heaven. This is indeed your will. You have permitted this truth to be preached to me and have commanded me to believe it, for the sake of your son whom you have given for me. Amen.

(From the book *Luther's Prayers*. Augsburg Publishing House, 1967. H. F. Brokering, Editor.)

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## P A N O R A M A

### AAL and ELS/WELS . . .

The *Lutheran Sentinel* (ELS) recently had a wonderful opportunity in its "Pastor, I have a question" column (March 1993). This was the question: "I have concerns about the AAL. Is it proper to be associated with them? AAL supports not only confessional Lutheran synods but also the liberal bodies. If AAL supported only true Lutheran churches, which adhere to the teachings of Scripture, then I would have no problem supporting or representing them." Imagine! The question itself provides most of the reasons for the correct answer: No, it is not proper! More than that: it is sinful unionism to be associated with them.

The ELS columnist did not, however, give this God-pleasing reply. Instead, he began by saying, "If AAL or Lutheran Brotherhood was a 'church' organization, the church fellowship passages would apply in demanding unity of doctrine before participation." He went on to liken AAL with federal or state governments which often distribute tax dollars in ways Christians can not approve, claiming that since it is not unionism when the government supports things which Christians do not approve it is also not unionism when fraternal insurance companies do the same. As support, a portion of AAL's 1983 position paper is cited, in which the AAL simply makes the claim that neither its purpose or method in assisting Lutheran congregations and church bodies is "church-like" or "based on doctrinal or confessional considerations." The ELS columnist concludes by advising readers not to elevate these insurance companies [AAL and LB] over other insurance companies by implying that they are officially recognized arms of a synod or of a local

congregation. For the ELS it is a matter of freedom, and should not be laid as a “conscience matter” on fellow brothers and sisters in their churches.

We have heard these excuses before. If an organization is not a “church organization” or “church-like” by its own definition, then God’s warning against religious unionism does not apply! One cannot help wondering if the ELS uses the same measuring stick with Boy and Girl Scouts and the lodge! I have not heard these organizations defined as church organizations or “church-like,” whatever that means! Just because the AAL and LB may not identify themselves as “church-like,” it does not necessarily follow that they are not. Page 19 of the February 1993 *Northwestern Lutheran* (WELS), under the heading “Also in the news,” reports grants from AAL to Northwestern College and Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary totaling \$49,900, for promoting the pastoral ministry for second-career students and financial assistance to students and faculty; and a grant of \$92,000 to the WELS Home Mission Board from LB, to provide financial assistance for outreach efforts. Surely, no one can deny that this involves the support of church work; surely, no one could successfully claim that this is “cooperation in externals”!

It is not helpful to compare fraternal insurance organizations with federal and state governments. There is a big difference, for one thing, in that membership in a fraternal organization is entirely voluntary. One needs to keep in mind that when you take out insurance in a fraternal group, you are not merely making a commercial purchase or investment; rather, you are becoming a member of the organization. As a member, one has responsibilities; one votes for officers and approves corporate policies and the apportioning of surplus funds. Membership involves one in everything that the organization does. Therefore, members of AAL and LB cannot claim that they are not personally responsible for supporting the work of false-teaching churches through grants, even though the 1983 AAL statement says they can!

Contrary to what the ELS columnist states, it is not “binding consciences” to warn against and resist such religious unionism (Rom. 16:17-18).

- John Lau

### WHAT IS GOING ON? #3 . . .

Under this title we have previously considered the “Lutheran Leadership Conference,” sponsored by Lutheran Brotherhood in July 1991, which brought together “leaders” of the ELCA, LCMS, and WELS with the stated aim of being motivated “to carry out God’s mission in our changing world” (ELCA news release). We also considered the ELCA news release reporting a new religious music program (“Joy”), which according to the news release (later denied by the WELS praesidium) was to be a “joint ministry” of the ELCA, LCMS, and WELS.

Now we have another joint event to consider, a gathering which took place in Orlando, Florida, February 4-7, 1993. Sponsored this time by the Aid Association for Lutherans (AAL), the meeting was a part of a major research project called “Church Membership Initiative,” designed “to help Lutheran churches to increase membership within congregations,” according to an ELCA news release dated February 23. Participants came from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Other Lutheran church bodies in the United States and Canada sent observers (as distinguished from participants, we assume).

We have two reports of the conference at hand, the one previously cited and the other in the February 1993 issue of the WELS *Northwestern Lutheran*. The difficulty lies in differing versions of the same event. For example, the *NWLutheran* declares: “WELS representatives stated their concern that there be no hint of ‘Church Growth’ [at the conference]. The CMI name was chosen to represent the planners’ intentions not to involve church growth theology.” The ELCA release, on the other hand, twice uses the heading in large, bold type: “LUTHERANS DISCUSS CHURCH GROWTH.” It also quotes the Rev. Craig J. Lewis, assistant to Bishop Herbert W. Chilstrom of the ELCA: “We look forward to future opportunities we might have to focus on these important tasks of evangelism and church growth and our further partnerships with AAL on both matters.”

Another example: The *NWLutheran* states: “Each church body will discuss and study the gathered information within its own group. Plenary sessions will be only reporting sessions.” The ELCA release: “Presentations to the whole group were made by church historian Martin Marty on the immigrant history of the churches, researcher George Gallup Jr. on current attitudes toward religion, and futurist Joel Barker in a video on discovering the future. The Rev. Charles Mueller of Bloomingdale, Ill., spoke on celebrating the congregations [?] at the closing session.” [Emphasis added. - Editor.]

The “Church Membership Initiative” did not merely involve the Orlando meeting. The ELCA release explains: “The project has been organized into four phases. The first phase from October 1991 to March 1992 identified and organized issues through a series of regional focus group interviews with Lutheran pastors and individual meetings with other church leaders. The second phase began in April and continued through December. It included investigation and analysis of factors that contribute to membership increases or decline in congregations. The Orlando gathering was the third phase of the project. The fourth and final phase will test the various approaches to membership increases that



were uncovered during the research.” [Emphasis added. - Editor.] This last may or may not be a surprise to the WELS representatives. On this issue the *NWLutheran* reports: “[AAL representatives] assured the WELS representatives there will be no evaluation of the means by which church bodies carry out their ministry.” [Emphasis added. - Editor.]

Difficult as it may be to determine the exact nature of what went on at Orlando, because of the differing accounts, it nevertheless ought to be obvious that even though there may not have been (according to the *NWLutheran*) any overt practice of fellowship, there certainly was a “form of church work,” to use the expression of an earlier WELS leader, Prof. Carl J. Lawrenz, former professor at the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Back in 1944 he said: “Joint endeavors, according to WELS conviction, do not remove doctrinal differences, but they lead those who are still sensitive about doctrinal differences to forget them, to grow indifferent to the authority of the Word of God” (Cf. “Voices from the Past,” *Journal of Theology*, March 1992, p. 45). As is the case with other endeavors sponsored through grants from fraternal insurance companies, the Orlando gathering can certainly not be defended as “cooperation in externals,” (that is, only secular and not spiritual matters).

- John Lau

## THE COMFORT FACTOR . . .

In its September 1992 issue, *Affirm*, published by LCMS conservatives, sought to defend Missouri’s new president, Dr. A. L. Barry, from what it termed “the innuendo in [former LCMS president] Dr. Bohlmann’s letter when he discusses Dr. Barry’s study at the Orthodox Lutheran Seminary and his membership in the Wisconsin Synod” (p. 5).

The *Affirm* defense went something like this: Dr. Barry attended the OLC seminary only because the WELS colloquy committee directed him to do so when he planned to serve WELS; he was never a member of the OLC, just as he was not a member of the ELCA when he attended its Luther Seminary. Comparing Barry’s later exodus from WELS to that of J. A. O. Preus from ELS to LCMS, *Affirm* makes the remarkable statement: “Dr. Barry left the Wisconsin Synod and returned to the LCMS in which he had held membership for most of his life. . . . It is our understanding that Dr. Barry felt more comfortable in the Missouri Synod than he did in the Wisconsin Synod, though he continues to speak highly of those whom he came to know there.” [Emphasis added.]

Evidently Dr. Barry’s still earlier connection with the ELS was not suspect. He attended Bethany Lutheran College in the late 1940s or early 1950s. As a member of the Bethany faculty at that time, the present writer was the director of the band in which A. L. Barry enthusiastically beat the bass drum (there is a yearbook picture to prove it)! But let’s rapidly put that episode aside, returning to the “comfort factor.”

If one were to examine text books of Pastoral Theology regarding the termination and acceptance of calls, I doubt very much if being “comfortable” is one of the recommended considerations. In all fairness, let us remember that Dr. Barry is not the one being quoted here; he is not guilty of seeking a greater measure of comfort in leaving WELS for the LCMS, after all. It is *Affirm*’s statement that is questionable, not his.

In the past, during the days in which there was full confessional agreement among the synods comprising the Synodical Conference, pastors and professors freely accepted calls from one synod to another. One thinks, for example, of Franz Pieper or Martin Franzmann accepting calls to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Even so, I question whether or not “comfort” had much to do with such transferring.

At the time when Dr. Barry left WELS for the LCMS, however, things were very different from those earlier times. The year was 1960 or 1961, and WELS was in the midst of debating whether or not it would sever its fellowship relations with the LCMS. In 1961, in fact, WELS did obtain a majority vote among its convention delegates to break from Missouri. Now, when one is “more comfortable” in the LCMS under those circumstances, it can and should be only when one fully shares the doctrine and practice of the church body to which he is going, thus also disavowing the doctrine and practice of the church body from which he is departing. If that is the case, why not say so and straightforwardly avoid the unnecessary euphemism of feeling “more comfortable”?

- John Lau

## REFORMATION OR APOSTASY?

In response to some of the rhetoric in the 1992 presidential election, the conservative newspaper columnist, Cal Thomas, wrote that we now live in what can be called a “post-Christian” society. Shortly after that column was published, TIME magazine’s cover story for its November 23, 1992 issue was entitled, “God and Women—A second Reformation sweeps Christianity.”

The content of the *Time* article bears out the judgment of Mr. Thomas. Rebellion against the Lord’s will and disobedience to the Word of God are considered the “second Reformation.” How Luther would roll over in his grave!

Richard N. Ostling, an Associate Editor of *Time*, writes in response to the recent decision by the Church of England (Anglican) to allow women to serve as priests. He also shows how hymnals and even Holy Scripture are being changed to reflect politically correct non-inclusive language. A time line is also offered to show the “landmarks” women have made in the past fifty years within visible Christianity. Of interest to us are these dates—1958: “Sweden’s Lutheran Church admits female pastors”; 1970: “First female pastors are named in U.S. Lutheranism”; 1992: “Maria Jepsen (Germany, Aug. 30) and April Larson (U.S., Oct. 11) elevated as first female Lutheran bishops.”

It doesn’t need to be said that there appears to be tacit approval in the article for the rise of feminism in the church. The sad fact is that feminism has gained control in most of the mainline churches, as well as in formerly conservative churches, and even in the Roman Catholic Church.

The following quotes provide the gist of what the entire six-page article was about:

. . . the broader cultural shift has been occurring for decades and is fast gaining momentum. In permitting the ordination of women, the Church of England joined a transformation that has altered other Protestant denominations since the early 1950s . . .

Then there are the issues that go beyond ordination, ones that touch the faith of women and men who arrive in church on Sunday morning and find controversy where they least expect it. Words to prayers and hymns they have cherished since childhood are gradually changing. Denominations that once would not tolerate divorced ministers now find themselves debating whether to accept avowed lesbian ones. Feminist theologians are searching for new ways of conceiving God himself—or herself—as Mother, Wisdom, Sophia, Goddess.

There are “women who have formed separatist ‘Women-Church’ worship, a New Age blend of feminist, ecological, neopagan and Christian elements. One book offers liturgies to celebrate the coming-out of lesbians, teenagers’ first menstrual period and cycles of the moon. In an Ash Wednesday rite, women repent not of their own sins but of the sins the church commits against women. Last month, 30 members of Chicago Catholic Women gathered to chant, ‘I am a woman giving birth to myself; bless what I bring forth,’ and then shared eucharistic bread and wine—without once uttering the name of Jesus.”

The primate of world Anglicanism, Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, said last year that “the idea that only a male can represent Christ at the altar is a most serious heresy.”

In the interest of fairness, the article does speak of those who don’t exactly go along with such a feminist trend, but they are viewed as people who are struggling against a force or a movement which will inevitably overwhelm them. Note the following:

Though some conservative Protestants feel bound by those words [1 Timothy 2:12 and 1 Corinthians 14:34], a sizeable body of their leaders holds that the commands were not universal but related to specific 1st century situations.

In some liberal Protestant churches, the women’s movement is on its way to becoming the single most important influence over how members worship and what they believe.

Given the human-rights preachments that all churches deliver, a good case can be made that accommodation of women’s demands is not only just but also essential for the church’s well-being.

We applaud those who appear to see what is really occurring, and we applaud *Time* for at least stating their case, even if it may be “down the nose”:

“I have become more and more disillusioned with the Church of England,” declared Ann Widdecombe, an M.P. and junior minister in the Conservative government who quit the church after the vote. “Its doctrine is doubtful, its creed compromise, and its purpose appears to be party politics.”

The [women’s] movement’s goal, warns traditionalist Donna Steichen, author of *UNGODLY RAGE*, is nothing less than “the overthrow of Christianity. It’s not about advancing women in positions of the church. It’s

about a complete change in theology. Are we talking about a church founded by the Son of God made man? Or are we talking about simply a social gathering that we can rebuild as we wish?"

After reading the *Time* article I went to my files and dug out an undated copy of a Missouri Synod conference paper by Paul Lindemann, entitled, "The Woman in the Church." The paper appears to have been presented in the early part of this century because of the use of German quotes and the term "suffragette" instead of our present-day "feminist." The paper was reprinted by Holy Cross Press of St. Charles, MO.

I mention the paper because it helps shed some light upon what is really going on in visible Christendom today. Let's listen to Paul Lindemann:

Matilda Joslyn Gage, in her well known book, *WOMEN, CHURCH AND STATE* published 1893, speaks regretfully of the fact that the feminine principle is absent in the Christian conception of the Deity. She looks upon it as a regrettable loss of something which heathen nations had and have, for instance, the combined male and female principle as represented in god among the Chinese under the name Fou-Fou, i.e., Father-Mother.

Mrs. Gage and her ilk see the only hope for woman to obtain absolute equality with man in the abolition of the Christian religion. She says: "The Church has ever obstructed the progress of humanity, delaying civilization and condemning the world to a moral barbarism from which there is no escape except through repudiation of its teachings."

But the greatest value of Lindemann's study is in this fact: He reminds us that feminism gains a foothold in those places where the Bible is no longer considered the Word of God:

Some upholders of "higher criticism" say: "We must first get rid of the old idea of the verbal inspiration of the Bible, or take the Pauline idea that woman must keep silent in the churches." But for us, of course, the Bible stands as the unchangeable authority in this and all other matters. We can not be justified in rejecting the divine Word on the ground that the spirit of the age demands it. Of course, the "higher critics" claim that Paul's INSPIRATION was defective, and hence his mistake concerning woman's SILENCE.

We consider St. Paul and all other Scriptural writers who touch upon the question of woman as inspired, and their statements as the unalterable decrees of God. We cannot argue the question with anyone who does not accept the Bible as the Word of God, and consider the statements of the writers of Holy Writ as mere individual expressions of opinion, without binding force upon us in our day.

Did Lindemann possess an unnatural degree of foresight? No. He is simply telling the truth. That is why he and Donna Steichen can come to the same conclusions, many decades apart from each other, that feminism is simply pursuing the outright destruction of New Testament Christianity. Such rebellion against the revealed will of God in Holy Scripture is no different than that first rebellion expressed in the Garden of Eden.

We need to understand as well that in those churches and denominations where women are being ordained and placed in positions of authority, the Word of God no longer holds the preeminence. Such groups have long ago rejected the verbal inspiration and inerrancy of Holy Scripture. If they can no longer accept the creation account of Genesis, if they relegate the historical accounts of Jericho and Jonah to the pile of mythology, if they seriously question the divinity of Christ Jesus, along with His virgin birth and physical resurrection from the dead, they certainly will not listen to the apostle Paul when it comes to the role of women in the public life of the church. As a result it becomes very difficult to argue with such people on the basis of the Word, because they don't accept that Word as authoritative anymore. There is no standard for faith or conduct anymore for such people, other than popular opinion and the wish of the majority.

And this is where we need to beware. Because of public pressure, because we now have female bosses over male workers in the workplace, because we might very well one day have a female President of the United States, because we are looked down upon by a majority of people in our society who feel we disregard the rights of women by not allowing them to vote or hold office or preach in our congregations—because of all these things there is a pressure to change our ways. "Do we have it right?" "Are we practicing what Holy Scripture really teaches?" "Are we still steeped in the chauvinistic attitudes of our forefathers?"

Because of such doubts and questions there is the temptation to have this conference paper and that study paper and this discussion and that meeting *ad nauseam*. But the Word of God is clear. And all the debate and study will do nothing to change what the Scriptures teach, and what we have believed and confessed for centuries: 1 Timothy 2:12, “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.” 1 Corinthians 14:34 “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but [they are] to be submissive...” (NKJV).

If there is to be study and discussion it should be in the APPLICATION of the Scriptural principle which God, the Holy Spirit, teaches through Paul. One wonders if some of our practices may indeed be chauvinistic and subject to change. For example, why do we allow female organists, but not female ushers or girl acolytes? Why is it that some congregations disapprove of the women even sitting in on the voters meetings? Are these really proper applications of the Spirit’s Scriptural injunctions? But the principle remains firm and constant. And to study unendingly and debate and argue the principle will eventually lead us to disobey the Word also.

To remain faithful to God’s Word is becoming increasingly difficult in these latter days. This writer can foresee the time, especially with the new administration in Washington, that we may lose our tax-exempt status, or possibly even worse, be forced by law to allow women to serve in positions of authority within the church—all in the name of equal rights.

So how do we react in response? The only way we can, and that is with the unadulterated proclamation of Law and Gospel, which is lacking in a majority of American churches. It is only when we recognize our sin and what we deserve because of it, and it is only when we behold our blessed Savior, Jesus Christ, who has saved us from our sin and all it deserves, that we will truly listen to and obey what the Spirit says throughout the rest of Scripture. We can then, without being ashamed, teach our people what God says about the role of women in the church, and we can teach our women, not only what they can’t do, but what they can do to serve their Lord and Savior in gladness—according to His Revealed Will.

“These are the last and mad times of a world grown old.” Martin Chemnitz.

“Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word!” Martin Luther.

- Stephen Kurtzahn