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## Dr. Martin Luther's Sermon on Our Blessed Hope

(St. Louis Ed. IX: 930-957)

*Translation by Arthur Schulz*

We Christians are obligated all of our days to render to our dear Lord God the honor due to Him and bring our offering (i.e., that we make use of His holy word) publicly in the church and privately in our homes. In the Old Testament such divine worship was meant by the morning and evening sacrifices. In order that we today may offer our sacrifice, we will take a saying from the Apostle Paul and hear what our dear Lord God teaches us through His apostle.

Titus 2:13. We should look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.

Shortly before this text, St. Paul had taught what the preaching of the gospel should produce and work in us, namely, that it should instruct us and "teach us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live **soberly, righteously, and godly** in this present world" (v. 12). In those three words he summarizes the Christian life, and comprehends everything that a person should do, and how he should behave toward himself, toward his neighbor, and toward God. Toward **himself** a Christian should so behave as to restrain his own body, be "sober," moderate and sensible and not lead a free, impudent, wild, filthy and disorderly life in gluttony, drinking, words, desires and works. Toward one's **neighbor** he should show that he lives "righteously," cause no one harm or suffering in body, possessions or honor, or anything that is his, but give and do to each one what is proper. Toward **God** he should behave in such a way that he lives "godly," that is, fear, love, trust, praise, glorify, and obey Him. These are all truly precious good works, commanded by God Himself in the first and second tables of the Ten Commandments. Our entire life should be like this, as long as we are here.

Having summarized the Christian life and shown how a Christian's entire conduct is to be constituted, he adds a special thought and exhorts us that in this sober, righteous, and godly life (since we have renounced the ungodliness and evil lusts of the world) we should "look for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God," etc. Thus he would say: The Christian life should thither be directed, that we do not think only about living on earth and remaining in this world (as do the swine and dumb animals, which think and concern themselves no farther than how they live here on earth and can fill their bellies),

but should hope and wait for another, better life. Pigs and other dumb animals have nothing better to hope for. If the belly and this life ceases, their comfort and hope is done with. But a Christian hopes for something better when this temporal, transitory life comes to an end, that he will enter an eternal, imperishable life and a heavenly existence wherein is pure joy and bliss.

For Christ did not come down from heaven and become a man, did not die on the cross for us, did not rise again from the dead and ascend into heaven, in order that He would let us remain forever here on earth in misery and woe, much less that we should remain under the earth in death and the grave, amid stench and worms. But He came to redeem us from all these things and take us to Himself in His eternal kingdom in heaven. So also we were not baptized and did not become Christians, we do not hear the gospel, merely in order that we might fill our poor, stinking belly, and live forever in this evil, distressed world, but that we might come into another life where we shall no longer need to eat and drink, work and grow weary, suffer and be sad, die and decay, etc. Because we have now been purchased by the precious blood of Christ, through His joyful resurrection have been born again in holy baptism, and through the gospel have been called to “a living hope, to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you,” as Peter says in 1 Peter 1:3-4, therefore we should joyfully and faithfully hope and wait for this blessed hope.

St. Paul here teaches us this fine art and true masterpiece of Christianity, and admonishes us Christians that we should learn to distinguish this present transitory life from that future imperishable life. We should turn our backs on this transient life and keep our eyes fixed on that future life, firmly and confidently hoping that it will endure forever and be our real home. We should wait for the blessed hope, he says, in good works, soberly, righteously, and godly. We Christians are to prepare ourselves for a better life than the life here on earth. Although we do not as yet see and feel this life, we should rely on it more firmly and hope for it far more confidently than we rely on and hope for the present life, which we see and feel.

This truth is correctly **taught**, but not quickly **learned**; correctly **preached**, but not quickly **believed**; well **stated** by way of exhortation, but not easily **followed**; well **spoken**, but poorly **done**. For there are very few people on earth who await the blessed hope, the future heritage and kingdom that pass not away, and who await it so confidently (as they should) that their hold on this present life is not as firm as the hold they have on the life to come. Few there are who look at this temporal life only through a colored glass and see it indistinctly but see yonder eternal life with clear, open eyes. That blessed hope and that heavenly inheritance is, unfortunately, forgotten too often, but this temporal life and the transient kingdom on earth receive entirely too much thought. People constantly see and think and worry and rejoice about things in this transient life but turn their backs to the imperishable life. This life they pursue day and night, but that life they toss to the wind. Surely, among Christians it should not be that way but the very opposite. A Christian should look at this present life with his eyes closed and blinking but should look at the future eternal life with wide-open eyes and with clear, full light. He should be in this life on earth only with his left hand, but he should be in yonder life in heaven with his right hand, with his whole heart and soul, and joyfully await it in certain hope at all times.

St. Paul teaches what the words “look for the blessed hope” mean when he says: “Those who have wives should be as though they had none; those who weep as though they did not weep; those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice; those who buy as though they did not possess; and those who use this world as not abusing it. For the form of this world is passing away” (1 Cor. 7:29-31). With these words the dear apostle seeks to darken and diminish this life on earth which we see with our physical eyes, that we may learn to see it indistinctly as something that is not our real life. Rather, we should learn to bring our eyes, our hearts and souls to bear upon yonder life in heaven, for which Christ has redeemed us, and on which we are baptized and have received the gospel, and in a living hope await it with joy. For if we would be Christians, the ultimate objects of our quest should not be marrying, giving in marriage, buying, selling, planting, building—activities that Christ says the ungodly will be engaged in, especially before the Last Day (Matt. 24:37ff.; Luke 17:26ff.). To be sure, we, too, must use these things in order to satisfy the needs of the body. But our ultimate quest should be something better and higher: the blessed inheritance in heaven that does not pass away. Paul also says: “We know that if our earthly house, this tent, is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven” (2 Cor. 5:1-2). He soon continues: “We are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord. For we walk by faith, not by sight. We are confident and well-pleased rather to absent from the body and to be present with the Lord” (vv. 6-8). Thus he makes a distinction between this transient life and

that imperishable life, and says that this life on earth is not our home and our real life on which we are to place our hope, but we should yearn for our real fatherland and have a longing for the eternal home in heaven. In Philippians 3:20-21, he says: "Our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself." As though he would say: The citizenship, the sojourn, and the home of Christians is not in this world but in heaven. We are indeed citizens and peasants on earth for a while, according to its outward, worldly character, but that is not our true and abiding citizenship. Our real citizenship is with Christ in heaven, where we shall remain citizens eternally when He comes from heaven and takes us back with Him. Therefore we should so conduct ourselves, not as those who are of this world and belong here, but as those who belong elsewhere in another citizenship and kingdom where we have an abiding existence.

St. Peter says the same thing: "Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts" (1 Pet. 2:11). He calls us strangers and pilgrims in order to show what our life is to be on earth and how we are to look at it. A "stranger" is a newcomer or foreigner, who is not a citizen by descent and birth at the place where he lives, but has his origin elsewhere. In short, a stranger is not native-born, as the children of Israel were strangers and not native-born in Egypt, to which they had come from the land of Canaan because of famine. Moses often reminded them of this: "You were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Exod. 22:21; Lev. 19:34). A "pilgrim" is a wanderer who travels through a country. He has not yet arrived at his city or home but is only lodging at a strange place while passing through. He is not only a newcomer, like a stranger, but is also a guest and has nothing of his own, nor does he plan on this during his pilgrimage, but is merely passing through. As the children of Israel were pilgrims in the wilderness, so Christians are strangers and pilgrims in this world (1 Pet. 2:11; Heb. 11:13). They are "strangers" for this reason, that according to their **fleshly** birth they come from God into this world, are made out of nothing, and do not remain in this world but must leave this world like all other people on earth, as Job says: "Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither" (Job 1:21). They are "pilgrims" for this reason, that according to their **spiritual** birth they are born again through the washing of water in the word through the Holy Spirit. They are guests on earth, and their life is only a pilgrimage, as the patriarch Jacob calls it (Gen. 47:9). Peter would show us that we should not look upon this life otherwise than as a stranger and pilgrim looks at a land in which he is a foreigner and a guest. A stranger would not say: "Here is my fatherland," for he is not at home there. A pilgrim does not plan to remain in the land in which he travels, nor in the inn where he spends a night, but his heart and thoughts are elsewhere. In the inn he merely takes his food and lodging and then continues on his way to that place where he is at home. So he says: You Christians are also only strangers and guests in this world. You belong to another land and kingdom, where you have a continual refuge and an eternally abiding city. Therefore conduct yourselves as strangers and guests in this foreign land and guest-house, from which you take no more than food, drink, clothing, shoes, and what you need for this night's lodging, and all the while thinking constantly of your fatherland where you are citizens.

We should note this point well so that we may rightly know our Lord Jesus Christ and that we may rightly learn to benefit from Him and His gospel and from holy baptism. Not that we build for ourselves an eternal life here in this world, to which we go and stay, as though it were our highest treasure and kingdom of heaven and as though we benefit from the Lord Christ, the gospel, and baptism in **this** life. But since we must live here on earth as long as God wills, we are to eat, drink, go courting, plant, build, have house and home, whatever God gives, and use them as strangers and guests in a foreign land and in a guest-house. We remember that we must leave all these things and set our staff further down the road, away from the foreign land and away from the bad and uncertain guest-houses, and go on to our real fatherland, where true security, peace, rest and joy endure eternally. In that life we shall benefit from the Lord Christ, the gospel, and baptism in heaven and the kingdom of God.

Our Lord Jesus Christ is not the kind of Messiah that the Jews desired and still desire and hope for to this day. They want a **worldly** king who will prepare an earthly kingdom on earth, in which He will make His children into great lords in this world, hand out gold and silver and property, give worldly joy and pleasure. But they only end in death like other earthly kings. But Christ is an eternal King, and His kingdom is an eternal kingdom, in which He is a Lord over sin and righteousness, over death and life. He gives to His children only heavenly possessions and eternal righteousness, life and salvation. We were not baptized to this end that we should remain here on earth and obtain a paradise and heavenly kingdom **here**. The gospel is not preached to us for the sake of this worldly life, but that heaven may be opened to us and may help us to eternal life.

So far as this temporal life is concerned, how one obtains and preserves it, that is the business of civil government, which God in His word has made subject to human reason, as God said: "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Gen. 1:28). The emperor in a kingdom, with his advisers and lawyers, tells how land and people are to be ruled, maintain worldly peace, etc. Father and mother, as lord and mistress in the house, teach the children and servants how they should farm the land, plow, plant, harvest, spin, sew, milk cows, wash clothes, cook, work, keep house, etc. One needs no Christ, no baptism, no gospel for human life and relations, for matters which pertain to this temporal life; for by implanted powers, human reason knows and understands how such matters are to be handled and arranged. But in His kingdom, Christ, through the gospel, teaches us concerning higher matters, matters that belong in yonder life and that human reason is unable to understand and grasp. For He tells us where we may abide when this bodily, transient order and life ceases and we must leave this world and what is in it, together with this life of ours, and must enter upon a different sphere and life.

Whoever does not direct and prepare his heart for yonder imperishable life, but continues to cling only to this temporal, perishable life, does not understand what baptism, gospel, Christ, and faith mean. For Christ calls us through the gospel to **eternal** life, and through baptism makes us members of His **eternal** kingdom, and then assures us through the word and sacrament that, when we **believe** the word and signs, we will be made even more certain of **that** life and kingdom than of **this** life and kingdom on earth. Whoever imagines that everything pertains only to how he lives **here**, eats and drinks, scrapes and scratches, is greedy and gathers much money, seeks pleasure and is full of hope—what can such a person know and understand concerning baptism, the gospel, Christ and faith?

As I said before, this is easily **preached**, but not easily **believed**. We Christians who are baptized, who hear the gospel and have begun to believe, still feel that the Spirit in us is **weak**, while flesh and blood and reason are so strong and always want to pull us back, so that we think of yonder life as being less important and make it seem doubtful to us. Were we to confess the truth, we would have to admit that we seldom think of the fact that we must at last depart and leave this life, and for that reason our mind is not constantly set on our eternal home. Add to that our faint-heartedness, that we always stand in fear of death, we mourn and tremble under our misfortunes. All of this shows that we do not look for the blessed hope as we should. This is the case among us Christians. But the vast majority of people in the world go about self-confidently, seeking peace and good days, seeking pleasure and joy here on earth, given to greed, immerse themselves in the world as though they will remain here forever, and forget about God in heaven.

We have not been baptized into **this** life. We are not called Christians in order that we might be citizens, peasants, masters, servants, mistresses, maids, rulers, subjects, laborers, and householders. But for **this** we are baptized, for **this** we hear the gospel and believe in Christ, that we may set aside all these vocations (though we abide in these vocations here on earth as long as it pleases God and therein serve God, each one in his appointed calling) and turn from this world to another existence and life, where there is neither servant nor master, neither maid nor mistress, neither wife nor husband, but where we are altogether equal and one in Christ Jesus (Gal. 3:28), which equality begins here in faith, but yonder is made perfect in sight (1 Cor. 15:53f.), where there is no death, but only eternal and imperishable life; no sin, but only righteousness and innocence; no fear nor sorrow, but only security and joy; no dominion nor authority nor power, but God alone will be All in all; in short, where God and Christ Himself is with all His elect and saints. Unto this eternal life we are baptized, unto this life Christ has redeemed us by His blood and death, and to reach this life we have received the gospel. As soon as a child is baptized and is clothed in the baptismal gown, it is from that hour dedicated to **eternal** life, so that henceforth he is only a pilgrim and guest in this world, prepared and ready to leave this temporal life, always hoping and looking for yonder enduring life.

Here St. Paul teaches us that we should not immerse ourselves too deeply in this temporal life, as do the swine and irrational animals, which are not at all interested in a future life. A pig lies in the sty or on the manure pile. There it rests, snores, and thinks only of the whereabouts of husks and bran. It knows nothing of death, it fears no hell, it is happy about no heaven, it hopes for no future life. Husks and bran are its kingdom of heaven. People who think no farther than how they may live here on earth are just like that. In no way do they believe that there is a resurrection of the dead and an eternal life. Although with their **mouth** they may say the words of the Creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting," they do not really believe it in their hearts. Such people are baptized in vain, have heard the gospel in vain, still hear it without profit and in vain, because they do not believe that it is true that after this life we hope for another life. Therefore the apostle says: "We should look for the blessed hope," as

though he would say: Through the gospel we have come to the **treasure**, which does not consist in money and goods, power and honor, pleasure and joy of this world, yes, involves nothing of this life on earth. But it is a **hope**, a living “blessed hope,” which makes us living and blessed in body and soul, perfectly and eternally. To this treasure we are called through the gospel, and upon this treasure we are baptized. Therefore let us so conduct ourselves during this earthly life that we intend to leave this life behind us, and striving after “those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13-14).

But **how long** should we look for the blessed hope? Will it forever be a hope and nothing more come of it? No, he says, our blessed hope will not remain such forever but will finally come to fulfillment. The time will come when we need no longer hope and wait, but what we now believe and hope for will become manifest to us, and we will come into complete possession of that for which we now hope. Meanwhile, we must wait for the blessed hope until it appears. But when it does come, then all hope and waiting will cease. For he places these two words together: “hope” and “appearing.” Yet they are in a certain order, for “hope” precedes, and “appearing” follows after hope. Thereby a distinction is made between **this** life of hope, and **yonder** life of appearing. Earlier we mentioned how Paul distinguishes between **this** life of faith and **yonder** life of sight (2 Cor. 5:6-8). It is as though he would say: **Here** it must be believed, hoped for, and awaited, but **there** it will appear. Whoever does **not** look for the blessed hope, to him the appearing will not come. But whoever confidently and steadfastly waits for it will not be disappointed. Paul also makes this distinction in Colossians 3:3-4: “Your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall **appear**, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” St. John also makes this distinction: “Now we are children of God, and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be; but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2). As long as we live here in **this** world, that future life is concealed and hidden and can only be known and grasped with the eyes of faith. This present life is manifest to the five senses and to human reason, for it is visible; but yonder life is invisible. Therefore it cannot be seen with fleshly eyes or measured with one’s reason.

He says that it will be a “glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ.” He speaks not only of the glory in which Jesus Christ will appear for Himself and for His own Person, which will be an outstanding glory, as He Himself says: “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory, and all the nations will be gathered before Him,” etc. (Matt.25:31f.). At the same time, he would also have us understand the glory which Jesus Christ will work in all creatures and especially in His elect and believing ones. He himself speaks of this glory: The Lord Jesus will come “to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired among all those who believe” (2 Thess. 1:10).

This glory is so deeply hidden that no human reason can comprehend it. It is much too high for reason to understand and grasp that this mortal body shall decay and stink worse than any filth and carcass on earth, return to dust and ashes, be devoured by worms, and then from out of this stench and dust and worms again come forth and arise, so that it is the very same body but brighter and clearer than the sun, so that no creature on earth will be more beautiful. Reason asks: “What glory can be looked for when all that I can see is shameful and frightful? I **see** that a person who is baptized and has the gospel and believes in Christ still dies, and when he is dead he decays and stinks the very same as one who is not baptized and does not believe. Yes, the carcass will be so frightful that no one can stay with it. So (reason says), what are you going to tell me about **glory**? Yes, wait for it, and don’t doubt!” – That is the way of reason, and it can do nothing else.

Here one must not listen to reason, nor follow what it says, but hear what baptism, the gospel, and faith teach us. **Baptism** teaches us that we are not baptized for **this** life, but that we should look for another life. The **gospel** says “that Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures . . . If the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen, and your faith is vain” and false (1 Cor. 15:3-4, 16-17). **Faith** is based on this and says: “Very well, although a person dies and when he is dead looks hideous, decays, stinks, and is devoured by worms, still I pay no attention to what reason says about this. I have a light which is far higher than all reason, namely, baptism and the gospel. That light tells me that God will, in His own time, make out of this filthy flesh and this vile, dead body, which now decays and stinks, a beautiful, glorious flesh and a living, pure body, which is brighter than the sun and has a better scent than all balsam. I have no doubts about this, even though I have something entirely different before my eyes. Since that is what God tells me in His word, that is what He will also do.” – Thus faith must firmly bind itself to the word and fight against all reason.

How can we come to the point of saying that, even in those matters which concern our salvation, we should give more credence to reason than to God's word? How can reason judge in God's works what it cannot grasp with its five senses and keen thought? God has done more, and daily does more, that reason cannot grasp. He has created heaven and earth, sun, moon, and all creatures out of nothing. What was the sun, that beautiful bright light which fills the whole world with its brightness and light, made out of 6000 years ago? Nothing! Now all reason must confess that the "nothing" from which the sun was created is much **less** than some filth and a dead, stinking carcass. Since God created the sun out of nothing, which is much less than a dead body, should He not have enough power and strength to awaken a dead body and make it living again?

We see grain sowed in the ground. Reason now asks: What happens to the grain in winter that has been sowed in the ground? Is it not a dead, moldy, decayed thing, covered with frost and snow? But in its own time it grows from that dead, moldy, decayed grain into a beautiful green stalk, which flourishes like a forest and produces a full, fat ear on which there are 20, 30, 40 kernels, and thereby finds life where only death existed earlier. Thus God has done with heaven, earth, sun and moon, and does every year with the grain in the field. He calls to that which is nothing that it should become something and does this contrary to all reason. Can He not also do something which serves to glorify the children of God, even though it is contrary to all reason?

Therefore we should not here permit reason to cause us to err, for Christ has earned this treasure for us through His blood; and we are called to this glory through the gospel, are baptized thereon as a sure token and seal, and are lacking in nothing other than the appearing and revealing, that God will do away with the veil which still hangs before it in order that we may see face to face what we now see only in a mirror in an obscure word, as St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:12. Therefore we must here strike down all reason and yearn rather in firm faith and in sure, confident hope and pray God that His kingdom may soon come, so that in the end we may receive the treasure into which we were baptized and for which we heard the gospel.

St. Paul rightly says: "The body is sown in corruption, and is raised in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, and it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, and it is raised in power" (1 Cor. 15:42-43). He compares the glory, which Christ will work in us through the resurrection, with the picture of sowing seed. When a farmer sows grain in the field or a gardener plants beans or peas in the ground, he doesn't see that the beans or peas decay but sees the stems and pods that come forth. He knows that, before there can be beans and peas, there must be stems and pods. Therefore he puts them in the ground in order that stems may come forth and bear pods. So we should also do, not considering that our body, when it dies and is buried, decays in the earth, but rather considering that it will again come forth alive from the ground. When the dead body is buried, it is sown in corruption; not that it will remain forever in the ground amid the corruption, but that He may again raise it from the ground in incorruption. It is sown in dishonor, disgrace, and shame; for it stinks horribly, the worms devour it, the toads and snakes bore through its eyes, ears, and nose, so that nothing is left but the skeleton. There is nothing honorable, loving and glorious about it, but only an abominable, stinking, filthy substance. But it shall be raised in honor, that it may be exceedingly glorious, be more fragrant than any balsam, and more beautiful than any creature.

Therefore, when we sit in the garden or go out in the field, we should put this into practice and be strengthened in our faith in the resurrection of the dead. A gardener plants cherry stones, a farmer puts grain in the ground, and they do not see what they have sown; otherwise they might well hold back the grain and seeds; but they see the tree and the grain which will grow from it. In his heart he is minded to say: "Now I place the kernel which, in its own time, will bring forth a fine young tree that will produce beautiful cherries. Now I sow the grain; in a few months a fine green stalk will stand here, full of fat ears." So we Christians should not look merely at the body which we place in the grave but at the body which will again come forth out of the grave and arise. Just as we consider the creature and confidently hope and wait for the seed which we put in the ground to grow into beautiful grain and that the kernel will grow into a tree, so also we should consider our body and firmly believe without doubting that it will again rise from the dead. A farmer sowing seed in the field does not so much see the grain he has in his hand as he sees the grain which will later be standing in the field. He turns his eyes and heart away from the grain in his hand and looks more diligently to the grain which will result from it.

So we Christians should look very diligently to the future life and wait for it more confidently than for this present life in which we live. Through baptism we are sown and through death must decay. When that hour comes that we must die, we should think: "Now then, it must and shall ever be the case that the human body dies and decays, just like the grain which falls in the ground and decays. But just as the farmer awaits

another grain which he doesn't yet see and in its own time will be found in the field, so even more confidently I will await another future life, even though I do not as yet see it." Thus we Christians should think.

But where are they who look for eternal life in such certain hope? The vast majority of people in the world do not yearn for that eternal life. A farmer may well have the knack and ability that he waits for his beans and stems in the garden and for the fruits in the field, even though he doesn't see them as yet, but we Christians are lacking in this ability. Reason always comes in with its objections whenever faith and our Christianity are concerned. A farmer may say: "Now I'm putting out young beans and stems and sowing only young grain," but a Christian cannot say: "Now I live and do not know how long. But when I die I look for another life, which to me is much more certain than this life which I now have. Even though my body now suffers, dies, and decays, yet this same body shall again come forth and can no more suffer, die, and decay. Of this I am certain, for I am baptized and have God's word. Therefore I am God's beans and grain, who through baptism and the gospel has planted and sown me."

In this way a farmer can make a fine Bible out of his field, and from his seeds which he sows he can study and learn the article: "I believe in the resurrection of the body," and can say: "This grain which I now sow will lose its substance. Hereafter a beautiful green stalk will grow out of it, which like me will bring forth 30, 60, 100 kernels. And out of this bean which I put in the ground will grow a stem that will produce fresh young beans. This field is my dear book in which I study and learn that my body, when it is buried in the ground, will become a beautiful living body. For in this fieldwork which is before me where I sow and plant seeds God wants to teach me His work which He will someday work in me. Just as **I** sow, so also **God** sows and plants me through baptism and the word. Therefore I am His little beans and grain. When I now die and decay, out of this stinking, corruptible body will come a fragrant, incorruptible body.

But the miserable devil and our flesh try to prevent us from doing this and get us to covet and scrape and scratch and carry on as though there were no other life than this present life. Our Christian life under their influence is put to shame. We have the **name** of being Christians, but in fact we are plain swine; like them we have no thoughts of looking for another life. No farmer does that with his grain, which we do with our body. No farmer thinks that the grain which he sows in the field is always going to remain that way. But we have baptism, the word, and are thereby sown and planted by God to another life. Nevertheless, we still imagine that baptism and the gospel are given us for no other purpose than that we should remain forever here in this world.

Therefore St. Paul here exhorts us and says: "No, dear friends, that is not the meaning. The grace of God that brings salvation has **not** appeared, that we should abide forever here in **this** world. It means something other than this life on earth; direct yourself toward that. You may work, nourish, eat and drink in a godly and upright manner while you are here. But you should know that this is not the most important thing, nor is it your eternal treasure; but it is the pig's portion, which belongs to this life to preserve the belly and which also ceases with the belly. The grace of God which brings salvation has appeared for this reason, that you look and hope for another life to which you are baptized and concerning which the gospel teaches you. For that reason our Lord Jesus Christ appeared as a great God and true Savior, that He might redeem us from out of this misery and take us into His kingdom.

**Then** things will be wonderful with Christians. **Now** things go shamefully and abominably with them. When a Christian dies, he stinks just as much as a Turk and an ungodly man. In that respect there is no difference between a Christian and a non-Christian. Moreover, Christians here on earth are subject to the cross, are everywhere persecuted and plagued by the devil and men, must be the doormat for the whole world, be driven away from all that they have, and be slandered, dishonored, and condemned. Therefore Christians are not glorious in this world. Rather, the world is glorious, is worshiped and extoled. Christians are trampled under foot, while the world is held up on the hands.

That is the splendor and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ on **earth**, that He was despised and rejected. But He will come again and appear in glory. He will bring a splendor with Him that will be glorious, so that all creatures will be more beautiful than they are now. "The light of the sun shall be sevenfold brighter than now; the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun" (Isa. 30:26). The trees, foliage, grass, fruits, and everything else will be seven times more beautiful than they are now (Isa. 65:17; 2 Pet. 3:13; Rev. 21:1). The Christians will then come forth from the graves and shine like the most beautiful gleaming stars. A holy martyr, who is now persecuted and burned to dust for the sake of Christ and His gospel, resembling an obscure, dark star, will then soar in the air and be quickly drawn to the Lord in the clouds and go up to heaven as a bright, light, a glorious star (Dan. 12:3). In short, all of the elect and saints of God will be in the greatest glory. The Lord Jesus Himself will sit in the clouds "upon the throne of His glory,

and before Him shall be gathered all nations on earth” (Matt. 25:31f.). The whole world will be glorified and will be a hundred thousand times more glorious than it is now. In short, He will appear, that it may truly be called “appearing.”

But why does he call it an “appearing of the **great** God”? Are not all three Persons of the eternal, divine Majesty equally eternal, equally great, as Athanasius says in his Creed? Answer: Paul does not speak here about the essence of God, nor of any individual persons of the Godhead, but of the appearing. He doesn’t say that our Lord Jesus Christ, according to His nature and divine essence, is sometimes **small** but sometimes **great**; rather, that on that future day He will appear and show Himself as a great God. According to His divine essence He is always equally great, but according to His appearing and revelation He is **not** always equally great. **Before** the Last Day He has not yet revealed nor shown His greatness, but on the day of His coming He will let it be revealed and shown what a great and glorious God He is. Now He is small, according to the appearing and showing. **Now** He lets the pope, emperor, kings, lords, princes, peasants, and farmers play with His gospel and with His Christians and pretends that He is only a puppet-God, which is what they want, as though He does not see and hear and know and understand. But **then** He will be great and will appear in His majesty, so that they will see Him whom they pierced.

In the days of His flesh He was small. Yes, as He Himself said, He was “least in the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 11:11). “Who, being in the form of God” (as Paul says), “He emptied Himself, and took on the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:6-8). He let them capture and bind and spit on Him, scourge and crucify and kill Him, and made Himself appear as though He had no greatness, no power, no majesty. So it also happened, as the gospel testifies, that His enemies and crucifiers rejoiced and thought they had won: “Aha! You who destroy the temple, and build it in three days! Now save yourself and come down from the cross. He saved others, Himself He cannot save. If He is Christ and King in Israel, let Him now descend from the cross, that we may see and believe” (Mark 15:29-32).

In the kingdom of faith He appears the same way to this day. Christ is risen from the dead, has ascended to heaven, and sits at the right hand of God in divine power and honor. Nevertheless, He is hiding His greatness, glory, majesty, and power. He allows His prophets and apostles to be expelled and murdered: Paul to be beheaded, Peter to be crucified, His holy martyrs to be flung into bonds and prison, to be scourged, stoned, hacked, and stabbed to pieces and miserably done away with. He allows His Christians to suffer want, trouble, and misfortune in the world. He acts as He did in the days of His flesh, when John the Baptist had to lose his head for the sake of a desperate harlot, while He, the Savior and Helper, said nothing about it, departed thence in a ship, and withdrew to the solitude of a wilderness (Matt. 14:10ff.; Mark 6:27,32). Is He not a small, childish God, who does not save Himself and allows His children to suffer as if He did not see how badly they were faring?

Then, as the writings of the prophets and the Psalms state, the godless boast, mocking the Christians and their God, and say: “Where is now their God?” (Ps. 115:2; John 16:20). If He is God, let Him contend for His rights and the rights of His people, so that His name may not be rooted out and His people may not suffer. If He does not see what is going on, then He has no eyes to see and no reason to understand. On the other hand, if He does see and know but allows these things to happen, then He is not a good, faithful God and has no heart for His people. Likewise, if He sees and knows but cannot help, then He has no hands that are able to do anything, nor does He have power to enable Him to save. Hence the prophet Isaiah correctly says of God: “Verily, Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior” (Isa. 45:15). For He hides His omnipotence, wisdom, power, and might and acts so childishly as though He could do nothing, knew nothing, understood nothing, or did not want to do anything. Now He lets our adversaries treat His word, sacraments, and Christians as they please. He lets us call and cry and says nothing, as though He were deep in thought or were busy or were out in the field or asleep and heard nothing, as Elijah said of Baal (1 Kings 18:27). But the time will come when He will permit His greatness and omnipotence and power to be seen, as it is written: “Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, and like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine. And He smote His enemies in the hinder parts: He put them to a perpetual reproach” (Ps. 78:65-66).

Meanwhile Christians, baptized in His name, must hold still, must permit people to walk over them, and must have patience. For in the kingdom of faith God wants to be small, but in the future kingdom of sight He will not be small, but great. Then He will show that He saw the misery of His people and heard their crying and had a will inclined to help them and that He had enough power to help them. Now He hides His good will, His power and strength, but when He shall appear He will reveal His will, His power and strength. Now also He can help and save; He has power enough to do so. He is not lacking in the will

to help, but all of this is hidden in words that we cannot see, but must grasp with faith. On the day that He returns, He will take away the veil and appear as a **great** God and will live up to His name, so that people will say: "That is the Lord and Savior!"

For this appearance of the glory of the **great** God we must wait. For before that appearing He does not so evidently show His omnipotence, power, strength, will, and help but rules and guides His Christendom in weakness under the cross, lets His gospel and name be slandered and dishonored, lets His Christians be persecuted, insulted, murdered and slain and remains silent to all this. He lets Himself be called a Savior and Helper, but in actions He does not so perfectly and obviously show Himself as a Savior and Helper. But when He comes and appears, then He will show perfectly and obviously His omnipotence, wisdom, power, and help, so that the devil and all his serpent-scales must confess and say: "That is a **great** God!" Until now we have not known why Christians believe, confess, pray, honor, and praise their Christ as a God and Savior. But now we experience it with deeds, for He truly proves that He bears such a name with honor.

That is the reason why St. Paul here calls Christ a **great** God, for he would have us understand that Christ will manifest His great majesty and power before all creatures on the day of His appearing. He will then not be bedded in the manger, nor ride on an ass, as He did in His advent, but burst forth from the clouds in great power and glory. Then He will not permit His Christians to be trodden under foot but will make them to be beautiful stars and suns, that they may shine and give light before all creatures. Paul also says: "When the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These will be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power, when He comes, in that Day, to be **glorified** in His saints, and to be admired among all those who believe" (2 Thess. 1:7-10). In short, Christ will appear and reveal Himself in such a way that all creatures will know and see that He had power over His enemies and could have helped, and desired to help, His people. Although He did not clearly show and reveal His omnipotence, power, and will before the blessed day of His advent, He never lacked omnipotence, wisdom, might, and will. But He intended to hide Himself in this way in order to reveal Himself at the time of His choosing.

And that is also the blessed hope which, as He has said, we should wait for, namely, that we hope and await the appearing and revealing of His omnipotence, wisdom, glory, power and might. **Now** none of that appears; yes, the very opposite seems to be evident. Therefore we must needs cling to the word and strengthen ourselves in faith, patience, and hope until the hour of His glory and power and of our redemption comes, as a farmer must stand in hope throughout the winter and wait for his grain to burst from the earth, to grow and flourish in spring.

Meanwhile, before that hour comes and we must still wait for it, we should spend our life doing good works, that we may live **godly** before God, **righteously** toward our neighbors, and **soberly** toward ourselves. For Christ has given Himself for us for this purpose, Paul says, "that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Tit. 2:14).

We have often heard what good works are, since we have come to the light and to knowledge through baptism and through the gospel. We did not learn in the papacy what constitutes a good work. Before the gospel came, we were told that the works which we ourselves devised and chose were good works, such as making a pilgrimage to St. James or some other place, giving money to the monks in the cloisters for the reading of many masses, burning candles, fasting with but bread and water, praying a certain number of rosaries, etc. But now that the gospel has come, we preach thus: Good works are not those which we choose of ourselves but those which God has commanded and those which our vocation calls for.

A servant does good works when he fears God, believes in Christ, and leads his life in obedience to his master. First he is justified before God through faith in Christ; then he goes on to lead a godly life in faith, maintains moderation and decency, serves his neighbor, cleans the stable, gives the horses fodder, etc. If he goes on performing works such as these, he is doing better works than any Carthusian monk. For since he is baptized, believes in Christ, and in assured hope is waiting for eternal life, he knows that whatever he does in his calling pleases God. Therefore everything that he does in his occupation is a good and precious work. To be sure, they do not seem to be great, outstanding works: riding out to the field, driving to the mill, etc. But because God's law and command covers them, such works cannot but be and be called good works and services rendered to God, no matter how insignificant they appear to be.

In like manner also a maidservant does good works when she performs her calling in faith, obeys her mistress, sweeps the house, washes and cooks in the kitchen, etc. Though these works are not as glamorous as the works of the Carthusian who hides behind a mask and has people gaping at him, still such works are

much better and more precious before God than those of the Carthusian who wears a hair shirt, keeps his vigils, gets up at night and chants for five hours, eats no meat, etc. Although these appear to be glittering and shining works before the world, yet they have no command and order of God. How, then, can such so-called “good works” possibly please God? Likewise when a peasant or a farmer helps his neighbor, serves him where he can, warns him of the danger threatening his body, wife, servant, cattle, and goods, helping him when he needs help, etc., such works do not make a great show, but they are nevertheless good and precious works.

When the civil government punishes the wicked and protects the virtuous, and when the citizens yield obedience to the government and do so from faith in Christ and in the hope of eternal life, they are performing good works, even though they do not shine and glitter in the sight of reason. For what God does on earth through His Christians and saints will not glitter and shine in the eyes of the world but will be black and will be despised and condemned by the devil and the world. On the other hand, whatever the devil does through his hypocrites and false saints will glitter and shine, causing the whole world to open its mouth and nose and marvel at what it considers to be an outstanding, precious thing, even though it is nothing else than the devil’s deceit and lie. If you ask reason for advice, the works of a servant, a maid, a master, a mistress, a mayor, and a judge are common, lowly works compared with the Carthusian’s keeping his vigil, fasting, praying, abstaining from meat. But if you ask God’s word for advice, the works of all Carthusians and all monks, melted together in **one** mass, are not as good as the work of a single poor maidservant who by baptism has been brought into the kingdom of God, believes in Christ, and in faith is looking for the blessed hope.

These two articles St. Paul would keep alive among Christians: the knowledge of our Savior Jesus Christ and the knowledge of the office entrusted to us, so that we may rightly learn to know our occupation as Christians. Through baptism and through the gospel we are called as heirs of eternal life. Therefore we should wait for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Secondly, since we are now Christians and heirs of the kingdom of heaven, everything we do in our calling and occupation is altogether a good and precious work. Also for that reason we should be zealous for good works. We should learn these two articles well. The first article, concerning the **blessed hope** we must have for yonder life, so that we may know where we shall be when this life comes to an end. The second article, of **good works**, we must have for this life, that we may know how we should conduct ourselves in our occupation and calling.

Now, therefore, since we have heard what blessed hope we should look for, we should also learn what good works are, namely, those which result from faith, in the calling commended to us, according to God’s command and word. Although such works do not glitter in the sight of reason, they are nevertheless precious before God, while the Carthusian and the monk cannot see and understand these things. For example, I am a preacher; that is my office. If now I believe in Christ and look for the blessed hope and then go and tend to my preaching and perform my calling, even though people hold my office in low esteem, I would not trade my office for all the works that all the monks and nuns do in the cloister. And through baptism and through faith in Christ, I have my answer in yonder life, and through God’s word I have an account as to how I should conduct myself for this present life.

Likewise also that wife is a living saint who believes in Christ, looks for the blessed hope and appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, and in such a faith goes and does what belongs to the calling of a wife. Even though our works which we do in our calling may seem to be common and unimportant works to the world, yet they are precious before God, when they are done out of faith in Christ and in the hope of eternal life.

But, as said, the world is not worthy of seeing and knowing one single good work. Just as reason knows nothing of the blessed hope of eternal life, so, too, it does not understand what constitutes truly good works. It reasons thus: This maid milks the cow, the farmer plows the field. They are performing common, lowly works which also the heathen perform. How, then, can they be good works? But this man becomes a monk, this woman becomes a nun; they look sour, put on a cowl, wear a rough garment: these are exceptional works which other people don’t do, therefore they must be good works. Thus reason argues. Thereby reason leads us away from the true knowledge, both of the blessed hope and of good works.

Therefore no one knows either this present life or yonder life, nor how we can rightly conduct ourselves, unless a person is a Christian. A Christian says: “God has given me eternal life through His Son. Therefore I am baptized and through the gospel have been called, and so I will wait for it, being comforted. Moreover, He has created me and placed me in the office that I should be a master, mistress, servant, maid,

schoolmaster, preacher, etc., and serve Him in my calling. Therefore I will be diligent in good works, will be a fine, pious servant, an obedient, modest maid, a diligent schoolmaster, a faithful preacher, and do what is pleasing to God.”

Whoever knows this and lives according to it will not have a sour attitude toward his difficult life, will not murmur against God when things go badly with him. For when he is certain of eternal life and looks for the blessed hope and appearance of the Savior Jesus Christ, he gladly does and suffers all that is necessary. Because he understands his calling and knows that he is serving God therein, he is tireless in carrying out the work entrusted to him. Even though the world is very wicked and life in this world is dangerous and wearisome and the works he does appear to be unimportant, still he knows that he has a godly occupation and office, and the works he performs in his occupation are good and pleasing in the sight of God. So he goes through this life with a good conscience and joyful heart and says: “Here I serve God as long as I live and look for the blessed hope and appearance of my Savior Jesus Christ. When He is revealed from heaven, then I will possess eternal life.” Whoever does not know this and is not guided by such thoughts will have a sour attitude toward life and its burdens. Because he is not certain of eternal life and is not waiting for the blessed hope, he cannot be contented nor have patience. As soon as the wind changes and things do not go as he would like, he grows impatient and murmurs against God. Moreover, since he is not certain if his actions please God, he can find no joy in his heart nor have a good conscience in his work. He spends his life in anxiety, moaning, and weighty matters, and in the process loses the eternal life. As long as he lives on earth, he lives like a pig. When he dies he has no hope, weeps, laments, and says: “My life has been sour for me, and now I must leave and die, and I do not know where I am going.”

That is what such people can expect. Why did they not learn these two articles: first, what his hope is and what he can expect in heaven; second, how he should carry out the duties of his office and how he should live here on earth? For those who have not learned these things, this life will always be sour and difficult, and they will have hell in the hereafter. However, a Christian who knows these two articles has a sweet life here on earth and yonder eternal life through Christ our Savior. Although he has much weariness and dullness in his occupation, yet in the midst of his weariness and labor he has joy in his heart and a good conscience, for he knows that his work and labor are altogether good works and a service to God. If the Christian is a servant, he is joyful and cheerful. When he drives into the forest or rides into the fields, he is singing. If his master is eccentric, scolds him, and treats him unjustly, he is patient, and waits for another life.

Therefore we should learn these two articles well so that we may know wherein our hope consists, namely, not in this life but in another future life; and how we should live godly lives in this world and be diligent in good works. Enough has now been said regarding this verse. May our dear God grant us His grace, that we may live according to it. Amen.

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## The Meaning of οὐδέ in 1 Timothy 2:12\*

\* This exegetical study is the combined effort of pastors, professors, and seminary students. — Editor.

May the Spirit of God, according to the promise of our Savior, bless our study of His word and guide us into all truth.

The verse under study is:

v. 12 διδάσκειν δὲ γυναῖκι οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω,  
to teach But a woman not I allow,  
οὐδὲ ἀθροῦντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ' εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.  
nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in silence.

### I.

#### The use of οὐδέ in the New Testament

This word occurs about 139 times in 125 verses. (The lack of a precise number is due to how a few variant readings are taken.) The usage of this word falls into three main categories. The underlined words in the following passages reflect the translation of οὐδέ.

**Category 1.** About 100 passages (or 72% of the total) join one negative clause to a second (or third) clause with οὐδέ. This use in a simple connective sense is known grammatically as a correlative conjunction “neither ... nor (οὐδέ) ...”

Acts 9:9 “And he was three days without sight, and did neither eat nor drink.”

Matt. 6:26 “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet our heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?”

**Category 2.** About 27 passages (or 20% of the total) have οὐδέ occurring as the only negative in the sentence. Here it functions as an adverb.

Luke 23:40 “But the other answering rebuked him, saying, dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?”

1 Cor. 11:14 “Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a shame unto him?”

**Category 3.** About 11 passages (or 8% of the total) use οὐδέ in an intensifying manner.

Rom. 3:10 “As it is written, there is none righteous, no, not one.”

Acts 7:5 “And he gave him none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on: yet he promised that he would give it to him for a possession, and to his seed after him, when as yet he had no child.”

Luke 18:13 “And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast saying, ‘God be merciful to me, a sinner’.”

## II.

### Is there an epexegetical use of οὐδέ in the New Testament?

The word “epexegetis” is defined by Webster as “additional explanation; further definition, as by the addition of a word or words.”<sup>1</sup> The Spirit of God uses some words to further explain a given word or phrase. In such cases the expressions “namely” or “that is” could be used in translating the conjunction that leads to the explanatory thoughts.

Rom. 3:21-22 “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:”

Here δέ (even) is used epexegetically. Sometimes this use is also called explicative or explanatory.

Yet there are some points to be made about this category of the epexegetical use.

a. It is a rare rather than the usual understanding of the word to be translated.

b. The context alone can determine that this is actually the usage.

c. The purpose of using a word epexegetically is to define more precisely the previous word or phrase.<sup>2</sup> Thus the movement of thought is from the more general to the more specific.

It is clear that some (and we emphasize some, not many) occurrences of καί and δέ have an epexegetical use. But not one of the following reference books lists any such usage for either οὐδέ or for μηδέ.

Lexicons: Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich  
Thayer  
Louw-Nida

Grammars: Robertson  
Blass-Debrunner-Funk  
Moulton-Turner  
Dana-Mantey  
Winer, 7th ed.  
Chamberlain  
Moulton, *Prolegomena*

Misc.: Moule, *Idiom Book*

But can we find any examples in Scripture of an epexegetical use of οὐδέ? The following passages have been suggested as examples of this usage.<sup>3</sup> (The underlined words = οὐδέ)

Matt. 6:28 “And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:”

Mark 4:22 “For there is nothing hid, which shall not be manifested; neither was anything kept in secret; but that it should come abroad.”

Acts 2:27 “Because thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

Rom. 2:28-29 “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly, neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh; But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

1 Thess. 5:5 “Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”

1 Tim. 2:12 “But I suffer not a woman to teach nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.”

1 Pet. 2:22 “Who did not sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.”

The reader can judge for himself if any of the passages illustrate an exegetical usage of οὐδέ. Bear in mind that in such a case the phrase introduced by οὐδέ needs to be more specific than the preceding phrase. In several of these passages a parallelism is obvious and thus οὐδέ is simply a coordinate.

Finally, the question is not, “Can any of the passages be an example of an exegetical οὐδέ?” Rather the question is, “Do any of these passages compel us to understand οὐδέ in an exegetical manner? It is not what we can force on the text, but what the text forces on us.

Re-read 1 Peter 2:22. Does not a supposed exegetical use of οὐδέ drastically alter the meaning of the passage? Is the reference from Isaiah 53:9 (with Christ’s fulfillment in His passion) asserting that Christ did no sin of any kind, including sins of the mouth; or is it saying that Christ did no sin, that is, in the area of His mouth? An exegetical understanding of this οὐδέ actually limits the sinlessness of Jesus. “Something precious would be lost if we would limit the first clause, ‘who committed no sin,’ to the single offense of deceitful speaking. Christ did not commit any sin at all—not even οὐδέ, the sin of verbal retaliation when he was so grievously blasphemed by his enemies below the cross.”<sup>4</sup>

### III.

#### Is οὐδέ of 1 Timothy 2:12 used exegetically?

Once again here is the Greek of 1 Tim. 2:12:

ν. 12 διδάσκειν δὲ γυναικὶ οὐκ ἐπιτρέπω,  
to teach But a woman not I allow,  
οὐδὲ ἀυθεντεῖν ἀνδρός, ἀλλ’ εἶναι ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.  
nor to exercise authority over a man, but to be in silence.

Note first of all that the pattern of this verse (οὐδέ with a previous negative) fits under the major category of the most frequent usage (72%). The second category (20%) of only one negative is ruled out.

Secondly, the pattern of the verse takes us from the more specific (teach) to the more general (exercise authority).<sup>5</sup> This is the opposite direction that is needed even to have the opportunity for an exegetical usage.

Finally, nothing in the verse or the context compels us to understand the exercise of authority as a further explanation of the “teaching.”

### IV.

#### The argument to use οὐδέ in 1 Timothy 2:12 exegetically is a modern day aberration.

Over 30 commentaries ranging from the 1500s to the present were checked. Almost all of them take the οὐδέ as coordinate, not exegetical. Lenski appears to be the first to mention an “explicative” use.<sup>6</sup> The longest defense of an exegetical use is found in D. Kuske’s exegesis of 1 Timothy 2:11-15 in the October 1981 *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, p. 250:

The grammatical use of οὐδέ, which fits in this verse because it gives a meaning which coincides exactly with the rest of the Scripture is the explanatory use of οὐδέ. The technical term which the grammars use (i.e. Robertson, Blass-Debrunner-Funk, Moulton) is exegetical or explicative. The explanatory use of Καί as a conjunction is commonplace (e.g. Jn. 1:16, I Cor. 8:12, 12:27). But the Greek language does not tie one negative clause to another with καί; instead it uses οὐδέ. Thus οὐδέ is the conjunction in negative sentences which parallels all the uses of καί in positive sentences (Robertson p. 1185). Some examples in which οὐδέ is used after οὐ in an explanatory function (as it is used here in I Tim. 2:12) are: Matt. 6:28, Mark 4:22, Rom. 2:28-29, I Cor. 5:11, I Thess. 5:5, I Pet. 2:22, Acts 2:27.

There are several problems in the presentation and its claims.

1. The grammars which are cited do indeed mention an exegetical or explicative use – of καί and δέ, but not οὐδέ or μηδέ!
2. Kuske’s use of the reference in Robertson p. 1185 is very questionable.

Here from A.T. Robertson’s *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* p. 1185, is the full paragraph under study:

In accord with the copulative use of δέ we frequently have οὐδέ and μηδέ in the continuative sense, carrying on the negative with no idea of contrast. Cf. Mt. 6:26, οὐ σπείρουσιν οὐδὲ θερίζουσιν οὐδέ συνάγουσιν. So also 6:28, Mk. 4:22, etc. In Jo. 7:5, οὐδὲ γάρ, we have

οὐδέ in the sense of “not even” as often (Mt. 6:29, etc.). In Mt. 6:15 οὐδέ means “not also” (cf. also 21:27, etc.). All three uses of καί are thus paralleled in οὐδέ (merely οὐ δέ). For μηδέ in the continuative sense see Mt. 7:6. It means “not even” in I Cor. 5:11. For the repetition of the continuative μηδέ see I Cor. 10:7-10. In Mk. 14:68, οὔτε οἶδα οὔτε ἐπίσταμαι (some MSS. οὐκ--οὐδέ), we come pretty close to having οὔτε--οὔτε in the merely continuative sense as we have in οὔτε--καί (Jo. 4:11; 3 Jo. 10).

But let us put this paragraph in its longer context.

a. It comes at the end of section (iii), the section on δέ.

The major thread running throughout this section of 68 lines is that δέ is to be understood primarily as a continuative rather than an adversative particle. This is the background for the lead or thematic sentence of the twelve line paragraph under study and hence the four occurrences of the word “continuative.”

b. Because of the continuative rather than the adversative thrust, it would be natural to refer to another continuative particle καί. What are the three uses of καί? On p. 1180-81, they are plainly highlighted in *Italic print*:

The Adjunctive Use (“also”)

The Ascensive Use (“even”)

The Mere Connective (“and”)

See in the paragraph under study how Robertson himself emphasizes the parallel of two of the usages with the very words “not even” and “not also.”

c. Under Καί, Robertson has this sentence in regular print under the connective use: “The expegetic or explicative use of καί occupies a middle ground between ‘also’ and ‘and’” (p. 1181). Is it fair of Kuske to take Robertson’s comments centering on the “continuative” use and squeeze them into his own search for an “epexegetical” use? Is it fair to change Robertson’s words “three uses of Καί” into “all the uses of Καί” (underlining added)? Is it fair to elevate a comment in one sentence beyond the major heading of the paragraph and then bump that comment into a different section altogether?

d. Kuske fails to point out what Robertson has to say in the sentences before and after the one to which Kuske refers. In the paragraph cited above, did you see how Robertson listed two passages (Matt. 6:28 and Mark 4:22) that are used by Kuske to defend an epexegetical use? Yet Robertson makes no reference to such a usage, but rather lists them with a passage that is an example of a connective use. And he also makes known his understanding of the μηδέ in 1 Corinthians 5:11: “It means ‘not even.’” Robertson not only makes no reference to an epexegetical usage of μηδέ, but he contradicts Kuske’s suggested usage!

When studied in its context, the reference to Robertson not only does not prove what Kuske is trying to say, but it actually supports the very opposite.

3. The passages listed as examples of epexegetical οὐδέ are hardly compelling. We printed out all these passages (except for 1 Cor. 5:11) earlier. Careful examination revealed several passages should not be taken in epexegetical manner and none were compelling. To give the impression that these are only some of the examples (as if there were many more) is misleading. What about the 100 or so uses as a simple connective?

4. 1 Corinthians 5:11 is listed as an example of οὐδέ when really μηδέ, not οὐδέ, is used in this passage. In the following paragraph Kuske expands on the μηδέ used in 1 Corinthians 5:11. But is the μηδέ epexegetical? Here is the passage:

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat.

If taken as epexegetical (don’t keep company, namely, don’t eat with), the meaning of the passage would limit the “keeping of company” to “not eating together.” It seems obvious that taking the μηδέ as an intensive adverb yields the meaning of the Spirit. Don’t keep company with such (in any number of ways), even to the point of “don’t eat with them.” It appears that Kuske has confused the use of an epexegetical with an intensive.

Historical exegesis and the grammars do not support Kuske’s explanation. Above all, God’s word does not support it, and some of the very passages which Kuske uses (1 Pet. 2:22; 1 Cor. 5:11) prove the opposite of what he is contending.

Kuske understands well the tried-and-true principles of Bible study. On p. 245 he refutes an

argument that “strains both syntax and thought.” On p. 247 he rejects a conclusion as invalid because the word is “not used regularly in context where this meaning is inherent.” It is indeed distressing when he ignores the syntax of v. 12 and tries to make the general principle to be an exegetical or explanatory clause to the specific application. Likewise, it is distressing to overlook some 100 instances of the connective in searching for a supposed exegetical use. Kuske contends that there are two possible grammatical options for οὐδέ in v. 12, yet his contention has no validity. Evidently, he feels that what Scripture teaches elsewhere precludes the connective use and he gives as three supporting reasons the following:

1. There is only one moral principle for women—be subordinate to men. If she is not to teach, that would be two principles.
2. If the command “not to teach” is an independent command, there is no reason to add the second command about having authority over a man.
3. To forbid a woman to teach a man conflicts with Scripture.
  - Acts 18:26 Priscilla teaching Apollos.
  - Matthew 28:19-20 Teaching all that Jesus commands.
  - Colossians 3:16 Teaching and admonishing one another.

A complete examination of these points would require another paper. Let us briefly say that none of these points is so convincing that we must interpret 1 Timothy 2:12 as the one and only exegetical use of οὐδέ. Rather, let the Spirit speak and guide us in our comparison of passages. For example, if the principle is that a woman is to be subordinate to a man, could v. 12 not present two examples of violations of the principle (namely, teaching a man and exercising authority over a man)? Furthermore, much of Kuske’s problem comes as a result of his insistence that context is not restricted to relationships in the area of church work. Yet historically this passage has been understood as being in the context of the worship service.

## V.

### **The use of οὐδέ in 1 Timothy 2:12**

According to Scriptural principles including the use of grammar and syntax, the οὐδέ in v. 12 must be understood as a connective and not as an exegetical. The Spirit by the use of οὐδέ and the word order in v. 12 rules out any possibility, not to mention probability, of an exegetical meaning.

Are we splitting theological hairs? Not at all! For there is a vast difference between the two translations (and hence also our understanding and practice).

What is God saying to us?

A. I do not want a woman to teach a man in an authoritative way.

or

B. I do not want a woman to teach a man nor to exercise authority over a man.

It remains for another time to consider the many implications of these two conflicting translations. For example, is there a teaching of man by a woman that is not authoritative? Or can a woman exercise authority over a man in other ways besides teaching? We have purposely avoided drawing conclusions about the implications of understanding οὐδέ in one way or another, because we do not want to give the impression that our practice or understanding predetermines how οὐδέ is to be used. It profits no one to force our suppositions on the inviolate word of God.

Let us in closing take a look at the phrase before the negative (v. 11): “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection.”

Here is the principle stated in a positive way, which deserves as much attention as its correlate in v. 12. Verse 12 actually contains the negative, and yet is so often selected as the focus of comments. Actually, God states the point in a positive way first, and then secondly records what is not to be done. Note the terms which form balancing pairs.

<u>Do</u>	<u>Don't</u>
learn	teach a man
in submissiveness	exercise authority over a man

Cannot the instruction of God be violated in two ways? Take, for example, the instruction, “I want you to go to bed cheerfully.” That means, stated negatively, “I don’t want you to stay up” and “I don’t want you to go to bed grumpy,” not simply, “don’t go to bed in a grumpy manner.” Learn in submissiveness. That means “don’t be a teacher” and “don’t exercise authority over a man.” To limit the

negative clause to “teaching in an authoritative way” allows for some kind of teaching, which, however unauthoritative or submissive, is certainly not the same as learning.

In these last days of sore distress  
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness  
That pure we keep till life is spent,  
Thy holy Word and Sacrament.  
A trusty weapon is Thy Word,  
Thy Church’s buckler, shield, and sword.  
Oh, let us in it’s power confide  
That we may seek no other guide!  
(T.L.H. 292; vv. 2,8)

#### ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> New Universal Unabridged Deluxe Second Edition, p. 610.

<sup>2</sup> Blass-Debrunner-Funk, paragraph 442 (9) on the exegetical use of καί “always used to particularize.”

<sup>3</sup> *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. Oct. 1981, Exegesis of I Tim. 2:11-15, by D. Kuske, 250.

<sup>4</sup> Professor Clifford Kuehne of Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire, WI, “Further Comments on the Exegetical Usage in the New Testament,” p. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Armin W. Schuetze, in *The People’s Bible, I Timothy, II Timothy, Titus*, p. 42: “The application is that a woman is not to teach; she must be silent. The principle is that a woman is not ‘to have authority over a man’.”

Additional references to teaching as application and exercising authority as principle may be found in David Kuske’s article in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Winter 1991, p. 65 and Oct. 1981, p. 251.

<sup>6</sup> Lenski published his commentary in 1937. In the July 1916 *Quartalschrift* (“Gibt es in N.T. gesetzliche Ordnumgen?”) August Pieper says that teaching by women is forbidden when it involves exercise of authority. This seems to involve the same exegesis as Lenski’s.

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## Exegetical Notes and Comments on Isaiah 3-4\*

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Isaiah 3 is a continuation of the section that begins at 2:5. In this section the prophet declares that the Lord has forsaken His people, the house of Jacob, because “their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of His glory” (2:6; 3:8). Divine judgment would fall on Jerusalem and Judah, bringing suffering and death. However, even as Jerusalem/Judah was in the midst of these sufferings, the faithful were to take comfort in the grace of God which would come to them in connection with the divine-human “Branch of the Lord,” the Messiah. In 4:2-6 the prophet foretells the Lord’s grace in electing, sanctifying, and preserving a remnant for Himself by His Spirit.

These two chapters set before us the contrast between (to use the apostle’s words) “the Jerusalem that now is” and “the Jerusalem that is above.” The Jerusalem of ch. 3 is inhabited by those who despise the Lord and His will; the Jerusalem described in ch. 4 is inhabited only by those who are called holy. The Jerusalem of ch. 3 is a Jerusalem falling under judgment; the Jerusalem of ch. 4 is the place of the Lord’s continual presence and protection.

We have chosen to give these chapters our special attention for two reasons. First is the fact that we are living in what some have called a post-Christian society. We today are surrounded by the same sinful

attitudes and practices as were found, rebuked, and punished among God's Old Testament people. God's spokesmen to our age need to reacquaint themselves continually with the portions of Scripture which speak of God's wrath against sin and the impenitent sinner. At the same time, we want to let the glory of God's grace shine into our hearts through study of the gospel in prophecy and fulfillment. We believe that the section we have chosen will serve both purposes well.

### CHAPTER 3

In the first half of ch. 3 (3:1-15), the prophet declares to insolent Jerusalem/Judah that the Lord will take away every support of their peaceful and prosperous society: bread and water, military might, the prophet, political leaders, skilled workers, even their precious skilled enchanter. In the second half of the chapter (3:16-4:1), Isaiah tells the proud, vain, worldly daughters of Jerusalem of the abject humiliation and reproach that was laid in store for them.

- 1 FOR BEHOLD, THE LORD, THE LORD OF HOSTS,  
TAKES AWAY FROM JERUSALEM AND FROM JUDAH  
THE STOCK AND THE STORE,  
THE WHOLE SUPPLY OF BREAD AND THE WHOLE SUPPLY OF WATER;
- 2 THE MIGHTY MAN AND THE MAN OF WAR,  
THE JUDGE AND THE PROPHET,  
AND THE DIVINE AND THE ELDER;
- 3 THE CAPTAIN OF FIFTY AND THE HONORABLE MAN,  
THE COUNSELOR AND THE SKILLFUL ARTISAN,  
AND THE EXPERT ENCHANTER.

כי הנה הארון יהוה צבאות מסיר מירושלם ומיהודה משען  
ומשענה כל משען - לחם וכל משען - מים:

1 – At the close of chapter two the prophet had admonished the people to stop relying on mere men. No man could preserve their blessings. No man could avert the judgment that the Lord was sending. Isaiah emphasizes the certainty of the coming judgment, first through the emphatic demonstrative **הנה**, and then by referring to the Lord as **צבאות הארון יהוה**. **הנה** often does more than call attention to something (“behold”). Often it is affirmative: “Surely, the Lord ... will take away...” (Cf. Gen. 27:42 and see Pieper, 431). **הארון** (the Lord, Master) gives prominence to the idea of His rule over and possession of all things (Pieper, 379). **צבאות יהוה** emphasizes the power of Him who established His covenant with Israel. All the host of heaven and earth are at His command. His judgment will surely come.

That judgment is described, first of all, as a taking away of “the stock and the store,” **ומשענה** and **משען**. **משען** and **משענה** are from the verbal root **שען**, meaning to lean or rest upon, to repose confidence in any person or thing. In this context **משען** and **משענה** refer to those persons, institutions, and objects on which the people depended. Not just one or a few of these supports will be taken away, but all. Isaiah expresses the idea of entirety by placing the masculine and feminine from the same stem in juxtaposition to one another (G-K, p. 394, para. 123, p.v).

The most basic necessities of life are bread and water. Our daily bread is a blessing from God, a blessing which He can take away as well as give. Already at Mt. Sinai the Lord had warned that if His people refused to obey Him, He would cut off their supply of bread (Lev. 26:26). Now Isaiah announces that that threat will be carried out. The fulfillment came in the eleventh year of Zedekiah's reign (month 4, day 9), when the food in the beleaguered city was exhausted.

גבור ואיש מלחמה שופט ונביא וקסם וזקן:

שר - חמשים ונשוא פנים ויועץ וחכם חרשים ונבון לחש:

2-3 – In addition to cutting off the nation's food and water supply, the Lord would also take away the various skilled and honored men on whom they leaned. Those to be taken away were the mighty man, the man of war, the judge, the prophet, the diviner, the elder, the captain of fifty, the honorable man, the counselor, the skillful artisan, and the expert enchanter.

The military men, the prophet, the elder, and the judge are quite familiar to us. We will omit them from our comments. We are surprised to find the diviner and the expert enchanter in this list. **The diviner**

is one who practices divination. The verbal stem, קסם, is used to denote a variety of occult practices. It was the will of God that none of the occult practices of the Canaanites should be found among His people (Deut. 18). **The expert enchanter**, נבוך לחש, is one who mutters incantations to charm snakes and protect against demons. That the divine and the enchanter are listed here among those on whom Judah and Jerusalem leaned is indicative of the depths of ungodliness to which the people had fallen. **The honorable man**, נשוא פני, is “one who is received,” one who is respected, who has much authority. **The skillful artisan**, חכם חרשי, is skillful in one of various types of technical work. The basic idea of חרש is cutting into some material. A חרש is an engraver, a carpenter, or a mason.

Jerusalem should have been placing its whole trust in the Lord for protection and preservation. Instead, they trusted in these men. Therefore, the Lord would take away these men and whatever blessings they might have received through them.

The Lord’s dealings with Jerusalem should be taken as a warning by humanistic America today. Our high standard of living and our nation’s high standing in the world community are blessings from the Lord, not the product of some superior skill, intellect, or system on our part. The many skilled and gifted people of our country are a gift from the Lord. He can and does take away such gifts from nations that no longer give glory to Him. We continue to pray that the Lord will “protect and prosper everyone in his appropriate calling, and cause all useful arts to flourish among us,” and that He will “bless our land . . . and all who are in authority” (General Prayer).

- 4 “I WILL GIVE CHILDREN TO BE THEIR PRINCES,  
AND BABES SHALL RULE OVER THEM.  
5 THE PEOPLE WILL BE OPPRESSED, EVERY ONE BY ANOTHER  
AND EVERY ONE BY HIS NEIGHBOR;  
THE CHILD WILL BE INSOLENT TOWARD THE ELDER,  
AND THE BASE TOWARD THE HONORABLE.”

#### ונתתי נערים שריהם ותעלולים ימשלו-בם

4 – A well-structured and ordered society is one in which the younger is ruled by the elder. A society in which this order is reversed is a society filled with chaos and misery for all. Jerusalem/Judah would now have the latter, for the Lord would take away their old, experienced rulers and would make mere children their rulers.

Two terms are used for these young ones: נערים and תעלולים. The term נער encompasses almost the entire span of childhood, being used for any age from two months (Moses – Exod. 2:6) to marriageable young manhood (Absalom – 2 Sam. 14:21). תעלולים is a noun from the verbal root עלל, which means to plague maliciously, to torment (Pieper, 686). תעלולים are the ones who are full of malicious ill humor. The rulers that the Lord would give to Jerusalem would be unqualified, capricious, and malicious. Whether they would be children in age or just in childish immaturity matters little. The effect of their rule would be the same.

#### ונגש העם איש באיש ואיש ברעהו ירחבו הנער בזקן והנקלה בנכבד:

5 – When the stays on which their society leaned were removed, then they would turn against one another. This is often the course of God’s judgment on an ungodly nation. First He removes the support; then He allows internal strife and division to tear it apart from within. As the children of Israel had once endured oppression at the hands of the Egyptian taskmasters (נגשים), so now they would oppress (נגש) one another. (Compare the oppression of neighbors that goes on in our country, e.g., through lawsuits.)

The Lord would allow unrestrained sin to take its course, with dreadful results. The young, instead of being held in check by godly discipline and the fear of the Lord, would be insolent toward their elders. The verb ירחבו denotes an arrogant attitude. (The norm in our day!) The base, ignoble person would behave himself in a similar manner over against the honorable man. (Compare the defiant, even self-righteous attitude of the homosexuals and abortionists of our day.) This, too, would come as a judgment from the Lord.

- 6 WHEN A MAN TAKES HOLD OF HIS BROTHER

- IN THE HOUSE OF HIS FATHER, SAYING, "YOU HAVE CLOTHING;  
YOU BE OUR RULER, AND LET THESE RUINS BE UNDER YOUR HAND,"  
7 IN THAT DAY HE WILL PROTEST, SAYING, "I CANNOT CURE YOUR ILLS,  
FOR IN MY HOUSE IS NEITHER FOOD NOR CLOTHING;  
DO NOT MAKE ME A RULER OF THE PEOPLE."

כי־יתפש איש באחיו בית אביו שמלה לכה  
קצין תהיה־ לנו והמכשלה הזאת תחת ירך:  
ישא ביום ההוא לאמר לא־אהיה חבש ובביתי אין  
לחם ואין שמלה לא תשימני קצין עם:

6-7 – Syntax notes: In v. 6 **כי** is used to introduce a temporal clause (G-K, p. 502, para. 164, d,p). In v. 7 the *waw* in **ובביתי** is translated "for." G-K explains that *waw* conjunctive sometimes is used to assign the reason for a statement. As a rule, however, special conjunctions in various combinations are used to introduce causal clauses (p. 492, para. 158,a).

In times of prosperity it is easy to find men who want to rule. When peace and prosperity are taken away, however, no one wants the job. In dark days, when men should be turning to the Lord in repentance to seek His help, they often search desperately for one of their fellows as their savior.

The people of Judah would one day find themselves in this situation. Their poverty would be so great that one who had "clothing" (a **שמלה**, the large outer garment) would be regarded as a cut above the rest. His brother would try to persuade him to assume leadership of "these ruins," but he would decline, saying that he and his family really have it no better than others. He had been given this garment to wear while in the home of his father. At home he had no such clothing.

This, then, is another sign that God's judgment is upon a people. They search desperately for competent leadership but find none.

- 8 FOR JERUSALEM STUMBLED, AND JUDAH IS FALLEN,  
BECAUSE THEIR TONGUE AND THEIR DOINGS  
ARE AGAINST THE LORD, TO PROVOKE THE EYES OF HIS GLORY  
9 THE LOOK ON THEIR COUNTENANCE WITNESSES AGAINST THEM,  
AND THEY DECLARE THEIR SIN AS SODOM; THEY DO NOT HIDE IT.  
WOE TO THEIR SOUL! FOR THEY HAVE BROUGHT EVIL UPON THEMSELVES.

כי כשלה ירושלם ויהודה נפל כי־לשונם  
ומעלליהם אל־יהוה למרות עני כבודו:

8 – Who was to blame for the ruin and chaos that would come to Judah and Jerusalem? It was certainly not the Lord! He on His part had remained faithful to His covenant of grace. Jerusalem and Judah, however, had turned against Him. They had used their tongues to oppose His word and His will. In all their doings they ignored what the Lord had to say to them. They were, in effect, thumbing their noses at the Lord. They were "provoking the eyes of His glory."

This expression, "the eyes of His glory," calls to mind the revelation of the Lord Jesus in Revelation 1:14: "His head and His hair were white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire." The eyes that behold all the works of men are the eyes of Him who is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). Men ought to tremble at the thought of "provoking the eyes of His glory."

הכרת פניהם ענתה במ וחטאתם כסדם הגידו  
לא כחדו אוי לנפשם כי־גמלו להם רעה:

9 – How can we tell when a nation is ripe for judgment? When it has crucified its conscience. When it no longer feels shame or the need to hide its sin. When it has "come out of the closet." Having suppressed even the natural knowledge of God's will, such people see no reason to conceal their lusts. Taking off the mask of hypocrisy, they make their facial expression into a mirror image of their inner self. Their face becomes a clear window revealing the darkness of their soul. Nor do they hesitate to tell the whole world of their sin. They speak of it with pride, as though it were righteousness.

They do not realize, however, that the look on their countenance and the words of their mouths are bearing witness against them in God's court. Woe to their soul! They are bringing evil upon themselves!

- 10 "SAY TO THE RIGHTEOUS THAT IT SHALL BE WELL WITH THEM,  
FOR THEY SHALL EAT THE FRUIT OF THEIR DOINGS.  
11 WOE TO THE WICKED! IT SHALL BE ILL WITH HIM,  
FOR THE REWARD OF HIS HANDS SHALL BE GIVEN HIM.  
12 AS FOR MY PEOPLE, CHILDREN ARE THEIR OPPRESSORS,  
AND WOMEN RULE OVER THEM.  
O MY PEOPLE! THOSE WHO LEAD YOU CAUSE YOU TO ERR,  
AND DESTROY THE WAY OF YOUR PATHS."

אמרו צדיק כי טוב כי פרי מעלליהם יאכלו:  
אוי לרשע רע כי גמול ידיו יעשה לו:

10-11 – We think it unnecessary to comment at length on what is meant by “the righteous” in v. 10. It is accepted among us that the righteousness of “the righteous” is not man-made but God-given (cf. Isa. 53:11; 64:6). The “doings” of the righteous are the fruits of his faith. The Lord shows mercy “to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.” The righteous will be blessed according to what God had made of him and done in him. The wicked, however, will receive the due reward of their deeds.

עמי נגשיו מעולל ונשים משלו בו עמי  
מאשריך מתעים ודרך ארחתיך בלעו:

12 – We hear in this verse a father’s lament over the sad end of a wayward son. As David cried for Absalom, so the Lord grieves over His wayward people (עמי . . . עמי).

We have commented above (v. 4) on children becoming the rulers and oppressors of the people. Here Isaiah adds that “women rule over them,” ונשים משלו בו. This phrase is of special interest to us because of the modern feminist movement. The clear implication of this verse is that the rule of women comes as part of the judgment of God.

The latter part of this verse pictures the old way—the way of righteous walking according to the will of God and hearing His word—as being destroyed by those who should have been leading the people along a straight path. We cannot but be reminded of the misleading that has taken place in our own country (e.g., legalization of abortion and gambling). In the religious sphere also the old paths are being destroyed by false teachers who destroy respect for God’s word.

- 13 THE LORD STANDS UP TO PLEAD, AND STANDS TO JUDGE THE PEOPLE.  
14 THE LORD WILL ENTER INTO JUDGMENT  
WITH THE ELDERS OF HIS PEOPLE AND HIS PRINCES:  
“FOR YOU HAVE EATEN UP THE VINEYARD;  
THE PLUNDER OF THE POOR IS IN YOUR HOUSES.  
15 WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY CRUSHING MY PEOPLE  
AND GRINDING THE FACES OF THE POOR?”  
SAYS THE LORD GOD OF HOSTS.

נצב לריב יהוה ועמד לדין עמים:

13 – Here, as in several other places, Isaiah pictures the Lord as issuing a summons for His people to appear in court (44:11; 47:12f.; 50:8). In court He accuses them of wrong and challenges them to defend themselves.

Our versions translate the plural עמים as “the people,” referring to the one nation of Israel as many individuals. Others see this as a reference to the Lord’s judging of all the nations of the world. Luther translates: “*die Völker*.” The context, however, seems to demand the former view. The focus of the entire chapter is on the Lord’s judgment of the Jewish people.

יהוה במשפט יבוא עם זקני עמו ושריו  
ואתם בערתם הכרם גזלת העני בבתיכם:  
מלכם תדכאו עמי ופנו עניים תטחנו  
נאם אדני יהוה עבאות:

14-15 – Syntax note: NKJV translates the *waw* in **וְאֵתֶם** with “for” (“For you have eaten up . . .”). G-K cites this as a case in which the first part of the speaker’s statement is suppressed due to passionate excitement (p. 484, para. 154,b).

The leaders of the people are especially to be blamed for having abused the power of their office. Here Isaiah introduces the figure of the vineyard as a picture for God’s people. He elaborates on this figure in ch. 5. The prophets, elders, and princes should have diligently cared for and cultivated this vineyard for the Lord. Instead, they consumed it. The verb **בִּעַר** is often used in the sense of burning up. In Exodus 22:4 it is used of beasts devouring a crop. The leaders used their position to plunder the poor, trampling them under foot, even putting their faces to a millstone and grinding them up.

Who is it that brings these accusations against the people? It is the Lord God of hosts.

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In the latter half of ch. 3 Isaiah directs our attention to the women, the daughters of Zion. Here the prophet rebukes them for their pride, vanity, and immorality. Their future: misery.

- 16 MOREOVER THE LORD SAYS:  
“BECAUSE THE DAUGHTERS OF ZION ARE HAUGHTY,  
AND WALK WITH OUTSTRETCHED NECKS AND WANTON EYES,  
WALKING AND MINCING AS THEY GO,  
MAKING A JINGLING WITH THEIR FEET,  
17 THEREFORE THE LORD WILL STRIKE WITH A SCAB  
THE CROWN OF THE HEAD OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZION,  
AND THE LORD WILL UNCOVER THEIR SECRET PARTS.”

**וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה יֶעֶן כִּי גִבְהוּ בְנוֹת צִיּוֹן וְתִלְכְּנָה נְטוּוֹת גְּרוֹן  
וּמִשְׁקֵרוֹת עֵינֵיהֶן הַלֹּךְ וְשִׁפּוֹף תִּלְכְּנָה וּבְרִגְיָהֶם תִּעֲכַסְנָה:**

16 – The women of Jerusalem, it appears, had long since forgotten the godly woman’s virtues of humility and modesty. With their bodies they spoke a language that was not at all pleasing to the Lord. Their outstretched necks said, “I’m as good as anyone else—if not, better.” With their winking eyes they advertised their willingness to sin. The Septuagint translates **מִשְׁקֵרוֹת עֵינֵיהֶם** with *ἐν νεύμασιν ὀφθαλμῶν*, “with beckoning eyes.” Their way of walking—with short, tripping steps of a child—was an attempt to affect youthfulness (Delitzsch, 143). This manner of walking also served to draw attention to themselves, for with each step their ankle-rings and the bells on chains between their ankles would chime with a jingling sound.

This verse might be used with profit by Christian mothers as they teach their daughters the difference between what is godly and what is worldly when it comes to “body language.” Especially in our age, when the most highly acclaimed heroines of pop culture dress and conduct themselves in a manner befitting prostitutes, Christian mothers need to show their daughters what it means to be in this world, but not of this world.

**וְשִׁפַּח אֲדָנִי קִדְקֵד בְּנוֹת צִיּוֹן וַיְהוּה פִּתְחֵן יַעֲרָה:**

17 – The Apostle Paul speaks of the woman’s hair as her glory (1 Cor. 11:15). The Lord would humble these women by giving them a scab that could cause hair loss. Even worse, the Lord would “uncover their secret parts.” Delitzsch explains: “Jehovah would uncover their nakedness by giving them up to violation and abuse at the hands of coarse and barbarous foes,—the greatest possible disgrace in the eyes of a woman, who covers herself as carefully as she can in the presence of any stranger” (144).

- 18 IN THAT DAY THE LORD WILL TAKE AWAY THE FINERY:  
THE JINGLING ANKLETS, THE SCARVES, AND THE CRESCENTS;  
19 THE PENDANTS, THE BRACELETS, AND THE VEILS;  
20 THE HEADDRESSES, THE LEG ORNAMENTS, AND THE HEADBANDS;  
THE PERFUME BOXES, THE CHARMS,  
21 AND THE RINGS; THE NOSE JEWELS,  
22 THE FESTAL APPAREL, AND THE MANTLES;  
THE OUTER GARMENTS, THE PURSES,  
23 AND THE MIRRORS; THE FINE LINEN, THE TURBANS, AND THE ROBES.

18-23 – With these verses the prophet catalogs the various pieces of clothing and the ornaments with which the daughters of Jerusalem adorned themselves. The items on the list go far beyond the simple clothing with which we should be content (1 Tim. 6:8). The length of the list bespeaks the affluence of these women, as well as their materialistic mindset.

These verses raise a difficult question that faces a Christian woman living in an affluent society. Are all outward adornments forbidden by the Lord? If not, how much is too much? The church is not called upon to set up rules regarding such matters. We are simply to set forth Scripture's teaching on the proper adornment of the Christian woman (1 Pet. 3:3-4) and allow each woman to judge herself in the fear of the Lord.

- 24 AND SO IT SHALL BE:  
INSTEAD OF A SWEET SMELL THERE WILL BE A STENCH;  
INSTEAD OF A SASH, A ROPE; INSTEAD OF WELL-SET HAIR, BALDNESS;  
INSTEAD OF A RICH ROBE, A GIRDING OF SACKCLOTH;  
AND BRANDING INSTEAD OF BEAUTY.

והיה תחת בשם מק יהיה ותחת חגורה נקפה ותחת מעשה  
מקשה קרחח ותחת פתיגיל מחגרת שק כי תחת יפי:

24 – Now the sweet smell of spices surrounded the daughters of Zion. When judgment fell, however, their aura would be one of **מק**, decay, rotteness. Around their waist they would wear a rope—a sign of slavery. They would cut off their hair and put on sackcloth as signs of mourning. Now the outstanding feature of their appearance would not be their splendor and beauty, but a scar from a branding iron—another sign of slavery. (The word translated “branding” is **כי**, a contraction of **כוי** from the root **כוד**—used only here.)

- 25 YOUR MEN SHALL FALL BY THE SWORD, AND YOUR MIGHTY IN THE WAR.  
26 HER GATES SHALL LAMENT AND MOURN,  
AND SHE BEING DESOLATE SHALL SIT ON THE GROUND.  
4:1 AND IN THAT DAY SEVEN WOMEN SHALL TAKE HOLD OF ONE MAN,  
SAYING: “WE WILL EAT OUR OWN FOOD AND WEAR OUR OWN APPAREL;  
ONLY LET US BE CALLED BY YOUR NAME,  
TO TAKE AWAY OUR REPROACH.”

מתיך בחרב יפלו וגבורתך במלחמה:  
ואנו ואבלו פתחיה ונקתה לארץ תשב:  
והחזיקו שבע נשים באיש אחד ביום ההוא  
לאמר לחמנו נאכל ושמלתנו נלבש  
רק יקרא שמך עלינו אסף חרפתנו:

3:25-4:1 – When the Lord withdraws His protecting hand from Jerusalem, the male population of the city will be decimated, leaving the women in a desperate competition for the few remaining men. The goal of each woman would be to have her reproach taken away—the reproach of being without a husband and that of being childless. In order to have their reproach taken away, the women would be willing to forego the wife's right of being provided for by her husband.

#### CHAPTER 4

In 2:5-4:1 the prophet has described the people's sin and the coming divine judgment. That judgment would consume many, but not all. The Lord in His mercy would preserve a few for Himself. Those few whom the Lord would allow to escape would constitute the citizenry of a new Jerusalem. In contrast to the daughters of Jerusalem described in 3:16ff., the inhabitants of this new Jerusalem would find their glory and beauty in “the Branch of the Lord.” They would be cleansed of all guilt. The Lord would be with them at all times, protecting and defending.

- 2 IN THAT DAY THE BRANCH OF THE LORD SHALL BE BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS;

AND THE FRUIT OF THE EARTH SHALL BE EXCELLENT AND APPEALING  
FOR THOSE OF ISRAEL WHO HAVE ESCAPED.

ביום ההוא יהיה צמח יהוה לצבי ולכבוד  
ופרי הארץ לגאון ולתפארת לפליטת ישראל:

2 – The Branch of the Lord (צמח יהוה) is the Messiah (see also 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Ps. 132:17; Zech. 3:8; 6:12; LXX: ἀνατολή in Luke 1:78 and Heb. 7:14). Here the expression “Branch of the Lord” is used to emphasize His divine nature and origin. In the parallel phrase Isaiah refers to Him as “the fruit of the earth,” a name which calls attention to His true human nature.

The Branch of the Lord is beautiful and glorious in His righteousness and in His mercy toward sinful mankind. “Those of Israel who have escaped” now acknowledge Him as their beauty and their glory. This represents a radical change from the worldly attitudes displayed in the previous section. Why are these different? Their gracious Lord has worked repentance and faith in them. He has given them a new heart and has made them His people indeed.

3 AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS THAT HE WHO IS LEFT IN ZION  
AND HE WHO REMAINS IN JERUSALEM WILL BE CALLED HOLY;  
EVERYONE WHO IS RECORDED AMONG THE LIVING IN JERUSALEM.

והיה הנשאר בציון והנותר בירושלם קדוש יאמר לו  
כל־הכתוב לחיים בירושלם:

3 – In this verse the prophet adds two significant details to the description of the remnant: each of them is called holy, and each has his name recorded among the living in Jerusalem. It had been the Lord’s desire that the entire nation of Israel be holy, set apart for the holy God. Though the majority despised His grace and drew His judgment, the Lord accomplished His gracious purposes through His sanctification of this remnant. Each of them would be called a holy one. Each one would be set apart for the Lord. (See also 9:11 and 62:12.)

Isaiah speaks of each holy one as having his name written as “the living” in Jerusalem. The concept of the book of the living was familiar to Israel of Isaiah’s day. Moses had offered to have his name blotted out of that book in order to gain mercy for the idolatrous children of Israel (Exod. 32:32). The book of the living was familiar from Psalm 69:28 as well. Having one’s name written לחיים, as the living, meant more than just being physically alive. It meant standing in the grace of God and possessing life with God.

We learn elsewhere in Scripture that the Lord Himself is the one who has written the name of each one in the book of the living, and that it is due to His writing that the spiritually dead person is brought to faith in the Savior and receives the gift of life with God. We associate the book of the living with the New Testament passages which speak of God’s eternal election of grace.

4 WHEN THE LORD HAS WASHED AWAY THE FILTH OF THE DAUGHTERS OF ZION,  
AND PURGED THE BLOOD OF JERUSALEM FROM HER MIDST,  
BY THE SPIRIT OF JUDGMENT AND BY THE SPIRIT OF BURNING,

אם רחץ אדני את צאת־בנות־ציון ואת־דמי  
ירושלם ידיח מקרבה ברוח משפט וברוח בער:

4 – This verse raises two questions on which interpreters have disagreed. First, does the Lord’s “washing” and “purging” include only the remnant, or does it also involve action over against the impenitent majority in Jerusalem? Second, what are we to understand by the expressions “spirit of judgment” and “spirit of burning”? Do they refer to the Spirit’s activity of proclaiming the gospel, or to the Spirit’s judgment of the impenitent? Or are they to be separated from one another, as though one spoke of preaching the gospel and the other spoke of judgment.

Some exegetes have limited the washing and purging to the remnant, those spoken of in vv. 2-3. They interpret “by the Spirit of judgment” (ברוח משפט) as a reference to the Spirit’s work of washing the elect and giving them the new birth through the gospel. According to this interpretation משפט is primarily a reference to the Father’s judgment of the Son.

**משפט** is indeed used in the sense of “salvation” elsewhere in Isaiah (e.g., 42:1). In this context, however, it appears that the Spirit’s activity includes not only salvation for the remnant, but also, and even especially, judgment for the impenitent majority of Jerusalem. “By the Spirit of burning” implies such a judgment. **בער** (burning) is the Piel infinitive absolute of **בער**. **בער** means to kindle, burn, take away, remove, exterminate. It is the verb used several times in Deuteronomy in the phrase **הרע מקרבך בערת**, “You shall take away this wickedness from amongst you.” The expression in Deuteronomy always refers to punishment to be inflicted for a crime that had defiled the nation.

It seems best to interpret **ברוח משפט** and **ברוח בער** as parallel thoughts. The interpretation would then run along these lines: Verses 2 and 3 picture Jerusalem as being inhabited only by those who are called holy. Before such a condition could exist there must first be a removal of the filth of the daughters of Zion and the bloodguiltiness of Jerusalem. In the Jerusalem of 4:2-3 there is to be “nothing that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life” (Rev. 21:27). Those who hold to their sins must be removed. The remnant, too, must be cleansed of their sin. The Lord would accomplish this through His Spirit, the Spirit of judgment and the Spirit of burning.

- 5 THEN THE LORD WILL CREATE ABOVE EVERY DWELLING PLACE OF MOUNT ZION,  
AND ABOVE HER ASSEMBLIES, A CLOUD AND SMOKE BY DAY  
AND THE SHINING OF A FLAMING FIRE BY NIGHT.  
FOR OVER ALL THE GLORY THERE WILL BE A COVERING.
- 6 AND THERE WILL BE A TABERNACLE FOR SHADE IN THE DAYTIME FROM  
THE HEAT, FOR A PLACE OF REFUGE, AND FOR A SHELTER FROM STORM AND RAIN.

וּבְרָא יְהוָה עַל כָּל־מִכּוֹן הַר־צִיּוֹן וְעַל־מִקְרָאָהּ עֲנַן  
יוֹמָם וְעֶשֶׂן וּנְגִיף אֵשׁ לְהַבִּיחַ לַיְלָה כִּי עַל־כָּל־כְּבוֹד חִפְּפָה:  
וּסְכָה תִּהְיֶה לְצֵל־יוֹמָם מִחֶרֶב וּלְמַחְסָה וּלְמַסְתוֹר מִזֶּרֶם וּמִמַּטֶּר:

5-6 – Verse 5 recalls the pillar of cloud and the pillar of flame in which the Lord had appeared to the children of Israel in the wilderness. By means of that cloud the Lord had protected them from Pharaoh’s host and led them along the way. The new Jerusalem of the remnant would enjoy this same blessing from the Lord. The cloud of fire of His presence would continually be above every dwelling place and above her sacred assemblies.

“For over all the glory there will be a covering.” **עַל־כָּל־כְּבוֹד** is parallel to “above every dwelling place” and “above her sacred assemblies.” The dwelling places of Zion and her sacred assemblies are glorious. The cloud and the fire over them will serve as a covering. **חִפְּפָה**, a protective canopy (the verb **חִפְּףָה** means to shelter, shield). Luther translates: “*Denn es wird ein Schirm sein über alles, was herrlich ist.*”

The thought of v. 5 is expanded in v. 6. With the Lord always present among them, the remnant need not fear the heat of the day or the destruction of storms. The Lord will protect them as a shelter and a hiding place.

The Branch of the Lord will usher in the age of a new Jerusalem, the home of the sanctified remnant, the city under the Lord’s continual care and protection. If we look to “the Jerusalem that now is”—the earthly, carnal Jerusalem, as the fulfillment of this prophecy, we look in vain. The inhabitants of that city daily defile themselves more and more through their despising of their Lord. The cloud of the Lord’s presence has departed from them.

No, this prophecy finds its fulfillment in “the Jerusalem that is above,” the heavenly, spiritual Jerusalem, the home of God’s elect. The citizens of this Jerusalem are those whom God in His grace has spared. They have been washed, they have been sanctified, they have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God (1 Cor. 6:11). Though in this life they retain their sinful nature, they are holy in God’s eyes through faith in Christ. The cloud and fire of the Lord’s presence protects them as individuals and in their assemblies.

The glory of this Jerusalem is now largely hidden from our eyes. For now, it is a matter of faith. How our eyes long to see “the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared

as a bride adorned for her husband” (Rev. 21:2). May God hasten the day!

GLORIOUS THINGS OF THEE ARE SPOKEN, ZION, CITY OF OUR GOD;  
He whose word cannot be broken formed thee for His own abode.  
On the Rock of Ages founded, what can shake thy sure repose?  
With salvation’s walls surrounded, thou may’st smile at all thy foes..

SEE THE STREAMS OF LIVING WATERS springing from eternal love  
Well supply thy sons and daughters and all fear of want remove.  
Who can faint while such a river ever flows their thirst t’assuage—  
Grace, which like the Lord, the Giver, never fails from age to age?

ROUND EACH HABITATION HOV’RING SEE THE CLOUD AND FIRE APPEAR,  
FOR A GLORY AND A COVERING, SHOWING THAT THE LORD IS NEAR.  
Thus they march, the pillar leading, light by night and shade by day,  
Daily on the manna feeding which He gives them when they pray.

SAVIOR, SINCE OF ZION’S CITY I THRO’ GRACE A MEMBER AM,  
Let the world deride or pity, I will glory in Thy name.  
Fading is the worldling’s pleasure, all his boasted pomp and show;  
Solid joys and lasting treasure none but Zion’s children know.

– John Newton, 1779

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## PSALM 51 SERMON SERIES

*Paul Fleischer*

### V. Psalm 51:7-9

“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice. Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.”

This is the fifth sermon on this psalm and we have arrived only at the ninth verse. Why all this time and effort spent on the subject of sin, its effects upon us, and the need for confession of sin? St. John gives us the answer when he writes in his first epistle, chapter 1:8ff.: “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” We have been stressing how crucial it is for us sinners to see ourselves as God sees us, not the way we might want to see ourselves. The archenemy of our souls, the tempter, Satan, would have us make God out to be a liar when He describes our lost and condemned sinful nature. But beware: “Let God be true and every man a liar” writes St. Paul (Rom. 3:4), and then he quotes from our Psalm as

follows: “As it is written: That You may be justified in Your words, and may overcome when You are judged.” Any attempt by men to justify themselves by the law makes null and void the righteousness of God: “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth to be a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Rom. 3:23ff.). Let God be true and men liars. Let God be just and all men unjust. Let God be holy and all men sinners. Let God be righteous and all men unrighteous. Let God be perfect, and all men imperfect and therefore lost and condemned except they accept the free redemption that is in Christ Jesus. Only thus is God justified in His sayings.

On the basis of the divinely-inspired words of St. John, you see, one ever present danger for us is that we be deceived into imagining either that we have no sin or have not sinned. There always have been those among the religions of the world who claim to have attained to a status of perfection. This is especially true among the holiness or Pentecostal churches. There are those who imagine that, having received the Holy Spirit and following the example set by our Lord Jesus Christ, they can eventually in this life attain to perfect sanctification. Within Roman Catholicism are those who achieve the status of “sainthood,” being honored as having achieved a kind of perfection. Away with all such deception! The experience of St. Paul (see Romans chapter seven!), and that of David the King—yes, the experience of every true believer—is that he finds nothing within him but sin and unrighteousness. From the day he is born (because of original or birth-sin) to the day he is laid in the grave, he echoes the confession of Isaiah the prophet: “We are all like an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; we all fade as a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (64:6).

When the catechism talks about the gifts of the Holy Spirit, it rightly states that “the most precious gift of the Holy Spirit is the forgiveness of sins or the righteousness of Christ, by which we are justified before God (justification).” To know and believe that blessed truth gives all glory to God. The portion of Psalm 51 before us serves to emphasize that David understood true Christian theology. He has confessed his sins. Now follows the . . .

#### PRAYER FOR FORGIVENESS

I. “Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.”

“**Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean...**” To help in understanding this verse we might look at Numbers chapter 19. There the ceremony of cleansing is described in detail. Anyone who had touched a dead body was considered unclean, because death was the punishment and curse of sin. Only after purification could the person again be declared clean. How was this accomplished? A red heifer had to be burned and its ashes put into water; a bunch of hyssop (a small plant) had to be dipped into this mixture and the unclean person sprinkled with it. In the epistle to the Hebrews this ceremony is definitely mentioned as a type of the purification by the blood of Jesus: “For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Heb. 9:13ff.)

David knew that his sin had brought him under the power of death, that he was unprepared to serve the living God until he was first cleansed by God Himself. This teaches how even our apparently good works are but dead works, for they bear in themselves the death of the corrupt nature. Oh, how important it is for us to understand this, that nothing we can do, no change or reformation of our outward life, can restore us to God. One thing is needful, and that is that we be cleansed by God Himself. And this cleansing is provided for us sinners alone through the blood of Jesus. He died for our sins. He has overcome the power of sin and death. He has entered with His blood into the Most Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption for us (Heb. 9:12). This is why St. John, who warns us not to deceive ourselves by saying we have no sin, also writes in the same connection: “... The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin ... and if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. And He Himself is the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins, and not for ours only but also

for the whole world” (1 John 1:7, 2:2f.). If we desire purging and purification, then let us go to that fountain filled with blood, drawn from Immanuel’s veins, [for] sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains” (TLH 157).

David continues: “**Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow . . .**” This explains what we heard first in the second verse of our psalm, but it adds this description of the washed sinner: “I shall be whiter than snow.” David is not saying that once washed clean one will be perfect and commit sin no more. No. One who has been washed clean may again fall into the mire and be soiled. But what David is speaking of is that his freedom from guilt and punishment of sin is perfect and complete—once he has the forgiveness of his sins in Christ. By ourselves we are sinful and unclean. Jesus is perfect; when God gives us Jesus’ righteousness, then we are perfect and entire and complete, yea, whiter than snow! Our sins are completely forgiven; the curse and condemnation of the holy law of God cannot touch us or stain us. The Prophet Isaiah uses this same picture when he writes: “Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isa. 1:18).

Here, dear fellow-believers, is the source of true peace with God. Yet how many there are who are seeking peace with God on the basis of their own works, merits, efforts. As the young monk Luther discovered, one can perform all the rites and works of a monk for a lifetime, yet true peace and blessedness would escape you! As also the 32nd Psalm says: “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Therefore we sing in the 103rd Psalm: “Bless the Lord, O my soul . . . who forgives all your iniquities . . .” and shall sing forever: “To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever” (Rev. 1:5-6).

## II. “Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which You have broken may rejoice . . .”

As we have been studying this psalm and all it has to teach us about our sin and our sinfulness, many are offended. The world’s psychologists say that this Bible teaching gives people an unhealthy inferiority complex, for it is so depressing! How about ourselves? Do we get the idea that we need to walk around constantly with a long face? That could be a false humility. True contrition or sorrow over sin is godly sorrow worked by God the Holy Spirit. Such godly sorrow leads to what St. Paul calls “repentance to salvation, not to be regretted . . .” (2 Cor. 7:10).

In other words, true contrition and repentance does NOT lead to a complex of sorts or a depression; rather it leads to a confident assurance that our sins have been forgiven which, in turn, leads to joy and rejoicing in the Lord. Yes, here is true joy and gladness. We know it is not found in following devil, world, and flesh. David thought he found joy in the momentary pleasure of his adulterous act with Bathsheba, but what did it really do to him? He felt like every bone in his body was broken, as he confessed in the 38th Psalm: “For Your arrows pierce me deeply, and Your hand presses me down. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Your anger, nor is there any health in my bones because of my sin . . .” Or in the 32nd Psalm: “When I kept silent, my bones grew old through my groaning all the day long . . .” So it is that he has been moved to pray here that “the bones which You have broken may rejoice.”

Our Lord Jesus knew what the man sick of the palsy needed more than even the healing of his physical ailment. He needed the comfort of the knowledge of forgiveness of sins. Therefore the Savior told him: “Son, be of good cheer; your sins are forgiven you” (Matt. 9:2). The contrite sinner who has been assured of forgiveness experiences the fulness of joy which no man can give to him and no man can take from him. As David writes in the 35th Psalm: “All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like You, delivering . . . the poor and the needy . . . ?” Indeed, the most precious gift of the Holy Ghost is the forgiveness of sins; therefore the redeemed and believing sinner sees himself described in the words of Isaiah: “And the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing, with everlasting joy on their heads. They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35:10).

## III. “Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.”

The first half of this ninth verse exposes us to a new expression of what David desired the grace of God to do for him. He asks God to “hide his face” from his sin. Recall how, in the third verse, David said “My sin is ever BEFORE ME!” And in the fourth verse David said his sin was ever BEFORE GOD. Here he emphasizes the latter point, that his sins are before God’s holy face. In the 90th Psalm we read: “. . . You have set our iniquities before You, our secret sins in the light of Your countenance.” God Himself says through Jeremiah: “For My eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from My face, nor is their iniquity hidden from My eyes” (Jer. 16:17).

The terrible thing about the sin of unbelievers is that God will not hide his face from their sins; but as for the believers who pray with David “hide Thy face from my sins . . .” it is altogether different. In Isaiah 38:17 Hezekiah is heard to pray: “. . . But You have lovingly delivered my soul from the pit of corruption, for You have cast all my sins behind Your back.” The Prophet Micah says of the Lord: “He will again have compassion on us, and will subdue our iniquities. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea” (7:19). Similarly the Lord said to Jeremiah: “In those days and in that time, says the LORD, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; for I will pardon those whom I preserve” (50:20).

Such words as these help us understand what the forgiveness of God is. He casts our sins behind His back; He casts them into the depths of the sea, so that they can no more be found; He turns away His face from them and sees them no more. And all this takes place, not because God ignores our sin, but because of Jesus’ perfect satisfaction made for our sins. They have all been accounted for and put away, blotted out of God’s sight and covered by the robe of Jesus’ righteousness.

This concludes our study of the fervent plea of David for God’s mercy, of David’s confession of sin and prayer for forgiveness. May we regularly join David in his prayers for washing, cleansing, purging, blotting out of our sins. If we do this we know the Lord will lift up His countenance upon us and give us His peace. Yes, God sees us by ourselves as sinners; but when we believe in His Son Jesus, then God’s countenance (face) looks upon us as holy and righteous in His sight. Therein is the peace which passes all understanding. Amen.

A Prayer of Dr. Luther “for comfort to timid consciences”:

O gracious Savior, how wisely you have provided. I know that you are my brother, for it is written in the Psalms, I will declare your name to my brothers. My Lord Jesus Christ, although you are both God and King of heaven and earth, I need not be afraid of you. You are my companion, my brother, my flesh and blood. That I am a sinner and you are holy causes me to give up. Yet if I had not been a sinner, you would not have suffered for me, and so I am comforted. Among your ancestors, of whom it was your will to be born, there were both the good and the bad. So we stand in your presence in order that you may comfort our timid and fearful consciences, and we may trust anew in you, knowing that you have also taken away our sin. You have indeed taken it away and have left us the word that assures us of it. Praise to you in eternity. Amen.

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### **BOOK REVIEWS**

*A Feud With God*, by Lydia Heerman. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1993. 175 pages, paperback, \$7.99.

We don’t review many works of fiction in the *Journal of Theology*, but this 175-page paperback is worth considering. The main character is a young woman who at the age of 14 was deeply influenced by a young man who had no time for God. When he was struck down by an accident in the coal mine at the age of 18, she inwardly accepted the opinion he had once voiced, that if there is a God, he certainly does not care about us.

Outwardly she went through the motions of being a Christian, going to church, marrying a loving husband, having a child. But inwardly she continued her feud with God through her loss of a second child and through other misfortunes that seemed to prove the truth of her childhood friend's thesis: If there is a God, he certainly does not care about us.

The book has the happiest of all endings, for the angels in heaven rejoice over every sinner who repents. But the author is realistic enough to show us that the devil never repents, and there are those among us who willingly follow his lead. This is recommended reading especially for those of us who struggle with the problem of double-mindedness or hypocrisy real or imagined. God be praised for His faithful love!

– David Lau

*WELS and Other Lutherans*, by Armin W. Schuetze, Edward C. Fredrich II, and John F. Brug.  
Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1995. 104 pages.

As stated in a brief, 2-page introduction, this short volume declares that it was “not written from the viewpoint of a detached, neutral historian, but from the doctrinal perspective of the Wisconsin Synod.” It is the authors' expressed hope that their work may serve as “a ready reference” for WELS' members who have questions about other Lutheran church bodies with which they may come into contact. For such a purpose, while detachment or neutrality may not serve, surely accuracy must. In that this volume has certain deficiencies, at least in those areas more closely examined by this reviewer.

While the book has three authors, they did not work jointly on all parts. Rather, Part One, “WELS and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod,” was written by Prof. Armin Schuetze, formerly of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in Mequon, Wisconsin. It is a historical review of the relationship which prevailed between the LCMS and the WELS from 1868 to 1961. Consisting of 16 pages, it is the second shortest section. Part Two, “WELS and Other Lutheran Church Bodies in the USA,” is the shortest section, although the subject certainly has the potential of covering the most ground. It was written by Prof. Edward C. Fredrich II, also formerly on the faculty of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This section has 15 pages. There is a 3-page appendix, consisting of charts depicting the mergers of Lutheran bodies in the United States into the present arrangements and of a 1991 statistical report for 18 Lutheran church bodies in the USA and 2 in Canada.

In Part One, after a brief resume of the joint history of the WELS and the LCMS from 1868 on, a discussion of the present differences between the two church bodies commences with 1938, when the LCMS demonstrated its willingness to enter into fellowship relations with the recently formed (1930) American Lutheran Church even though jointly accepted documents of union did not settle past differences. Protracted meetings within the Synodical Conference revealed that there was a deep division among the member church bodies over the doctrine of church and church fellowship which could be seen in opposing positions on military chaplaincy, Boy Scouts, and the doctrine of Scripture. Schuetze summed it all up: “When, after a period of more than 20 years, differences between the WELS and the LCMS in the doctrine and practice of church fellowship could not be resolved, the WELS in 1961 acknowledged and declared the break in fellowship.”

To any student of the history of the 1950s, Schuetze's statement is (to be charitable) simply inaccurate. How can it be overlooked that the WELS, in its 1955 convention, unanimously adopted the following resolution: “A church body which causes divisions and offenses by its official resolutions, policies, and practices not in accord with Scripture also becomes subject to the indictment of Romans 16:17-18. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod has by its official resolutions, policies, and practices created divisions and offenses both in her own body and in the entire Synodical Conference. Such divisions and offenses are of long standing” (WELS 1955 Proceedings). There is no mention in this section of the fruitless efforts which took place within the WELS to be obedient to Romans 16:17-18, which presents the Lord's admonition that when it has been ascertained that an individual or church body is teaching or practicing contrary to the doctrine and has thereby been causing divisions and offenses, the peremptory “avoid” is to be obeyed then and there; not, as the WELS resolved in 1959, when one has at some later time reached some sort of conviction that admonition is of no further avail. Schuetze also fails to mention that it was on the basis of its 1959 resolution that the WELS eventually did break fellowship with the LCMS, and not on the basis of a simple obedience to Romans 16:17-18.

Part Two is very helpful; it is the longest and most detailed section of the work, delineating the differences between the WELS and the ELCA, which are numerous and deeply divisive. One cannot help wondering, with the preponderance of evidence attesting to many outstanding doctrinal and practical differences, how it can be that in the recent past WELS leadership has brought the WELS into frequent interchurch conferences on church growth, for example, where the WELS and the ELCA have performed joint functions which go far beyond “cooperation in externals” and are, in fact, practices of fellowship; we might also mention the unionistic

fellowship practices engaged in by the WELS and the ELCA through their constituents' membership in the AAL and/or Lutheran Brotherhood.

Part Three should be a very useful section of the book, if it is accurate. One can only judge that on the basis of a very careful study of all the documents of each of these relatively small bodies. As far as the statement about the CLC is concerned, the description of the difference in doctrine and practice between the WELS and the CLC is incomplete and therefore inaccurate, to an extent. The WELS position is presented as: "When false doctrine was detected in a sister church, there could still be a need and opportunity for the scripturally enjoined admonition of the erring. Fellowship should be terminated as soon as it becomes clear that the sister church is persisting in its error." If this is WELS doctrine, why, then, did it not break fellowship with the LCMS in 1955, when its convention unanimously declared that the LCMS had created divisions and offenses of long standing?

One other point of accuracy (or lack of it): In commenting on meetings and joint statements of both the WELS and the CLC, the book mentions that "the CLC continued to insist that there was a doctrinal difference between the WELS and the CLC" but failed to admit that the WELS had also acknowledged, in its 1973 convention, that the difference between us was doctrinal and not merely a "difference of opinion" regarding practice, as the book alleges.

Other church bodies will have to judge the accuracy of how they are represented in this volume.

*– John Lau*

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