

The
Concordia  *Lutheran*

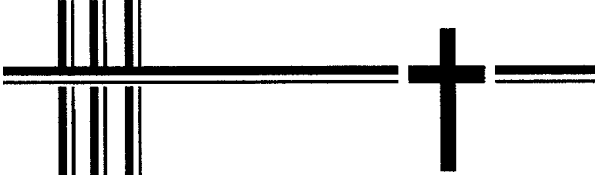
“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35.

“Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105.

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“Behold,
we go up to
Jerusalem...”

Luke 18:31





"The Scripture cannot be broken." John 10:35
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STATEMENT OF PURPOSE:

To set forth in simple and plain language the pure doctrine of God's Word as taught by the true Lutheran Church in full accordance with the **Book of Concord of 1580** and the **Brief Statement of 1932.**

To show, **on the basis of Scripture,** what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

To seek out all who truly share our Scriptural position in doctrine and practice, and to urge the mutual public acknowledgment of such God-given unity. Thus we shall be able thereafter to practice a God-pleasing fellowship with them.

To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are *"perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment."*

To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

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Our Savior's Epiphany in His Miracles

*"The works which the Father hath given Me to finish,
the same works that I do, bear witness of Me,
that the Father hath sent Me." —John 5:36*

With the exception of what happened on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1–2), the outward appearance of Christ during His *state of humiliation* was not particularly stunning or impressive. St. Paul writes that He *"took upon Him the form of a servant"* (Philippians 2:7). While He was being severely tortured, scourged, and crucified on our behalf, His face and body were badly marred and disfigured. *"His visage was so marred more than any man....He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him"* (Isaiah 52:14; 53:2). But even though Christ, for approximately thirty-three years, appeared for the most part to be an ordinary, meek, and mortal man, He also at times manifested His divine glory through the *miracles* that He performed. These divine works, as Jesus says in John 5:36, bore witness to the fact that He is the *Son of God*, the *Messiah* foretold in the Old Testament, and the *Savior of the world*. We focus on how Christ thus revealed Himself during the church season of *Epiphany*—a word that means "manifestation" or "revelation." The *divine authority* of Christ could be detected in the very way that He *taught* the people. *"On the sabbath day He entered into the synagogue, and taught. And they were astonished at His doctrine; for He taught them as One that had authority, and not as the scribes"* (Mark 1:21–22). Even His enemies marveled at the answers that He gave to their tempting questions (Matthew 22:22,33,46). And though Jesus' very *words* carried divine power, wisdom, and authority, and thus showed Him to be our God and Savior, the specific focus of this particular article is how His *miracles* testified to this fact.

Since the miracles of Christ were works that only *God* could do, they showed that He was, at the very *least*, a *teacher that was sent by God*—a true Prophet whose words carried the Lord's stamp of approval and were, therefore, to be believed by all. Nicodemus, the Pharisee, told Jesus: *"We know that Thou art a teacher come from God; for no man*

can do these miracles that Thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). Even though Nicodemus had not at this point concluded that Jesus was his God and Savior (v. 11–12), yet in acknowledging Him to be a true teacher, approved of by the Lord, this Pharisee allowed himself to be instructed by Christ, who then identified Himself as the omnipresent Lord (v. 13), the “*only begotten Son of God*” and the Savior of the world (v. 14–18). And this testimony Nicodemus accepted as the truth, and, after he had been brought to faith, demonstrated his discipleship after the Savior’s crucifixion by assisting in His burial (John 19:39-40).

However, being much more than just a *Prophet*, Christ, by His miracles, revealed Himself as the very *Son of God*; as the Apostle John wrote: “*We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the Father*” (John 1:14). The prophets and apostles never claimed to have the power *in and of themselves* to perform miracles but gave all credit and glory to God. Accordingly, Peter healed the lame man at the temple “*in the name of Jesus Christ*” (Acts 3:6, 12). However, *Jesus* made it clear that *He Himself* was able to do the same works as God the Father. Christ told the Jews who sought to kill Him for healing on the Sabbath: “*My Father worketh hitherto, and I work. ...what things soever He [the Father] doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. ...For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will*” (John 5:17, 19, 21).

Through His miracles, Christ also manifested various *attributes* of God. *Divine mercy* was shown in the miraculous help that Jesus bestowed upon the sick and the needy (Luke 17:13; Matthew 14:14; etc.); *divine benevolence* was shown to Malchus, an enemy of Jesus, in the miraculous healing of his ear (Luke 22:50–51); and, of course, *divine omnipotence* was revealed in every miracle that Jesus performed. Especially by the fact that after His crucifixion, *while His dead body still lay in the grave*, Christ had the power to bring Himself back to life (John 2:19; 10:17–18), He definitely showed Himself to be much more than a mere man—He revealed Himself as the omnipotent Son of God: “[*Christ was*] *declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*” (Romans 1:4).

Now it is important to remember that in order for a person to be saved from his sins, it is not enough for him simply to believe that Jesus is a true Prophet, nor only to believe that He is the Son of God. Additionally, and most importantly, he must trust and believe in Jesus as his only Savior from sin and hell. And, thankfully, Christ’s miracles clearly

showed Himself to be the Savior of the world—the Messiah promised by the Lord in the Old Testament. This was His greatest *epiphany*—His manifestation as the Savior of sinners. By inspiration of the Holy Ghost, the Prophet Isaiah wrote concerning the Savior who would take the sins of the world upon Himself, suffer and die in the sinner’s stead, and establish peace between God and man. Concerning the Messiah, or Christ, to come, we read in chapter 53 of the book of Isaiah’s prophecy: “*The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all*” (v. 6); “*Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed*” (v. 4–5); “*He [the Father] shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied: by His knowledge shall My righteous servant justify many; for He shall bear their iniquities*” (v. 11).

But how did Jesus’ *miracles* identify Him as this Savior? Also through the Prophet Isaiah, the Lord had told His people that the Messiah would perform miracles of mercy and be a preacher of the Gospel (glad tidings). So when the disciples of John the Baptist came to Jesus with the question: “*Art Thou He that should come, or do we look for another?*” (Matthew 11:3), He told them to take note of the works that He was doing, which clearly revealed Him as the Savior prophesied in the Old Testament Scriptures, saying: “*Go and show John again those things which ye do hear and see: The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the Gospel preached to them*” (v. 4–5). With these words, the Lord Jesus directed them to the prophecies concerning the Messiah that He Himself was fulfilling before their very eyes—such prophecies as: “*Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing*” (Isaiah 35:5–6); and again: “*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me; because the Lord hath anointed Me to preach good tidings unto the meek; He hath sent Me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound*” (Isaiah 61:1). Even though Jesus did not appear to be a mighty earthly king (as many expected the Christ to be), the fulfillment of these prophecies by His miracles clearly identified Him as the promised Messiah and Savior.

Of course, those who were being guided by their human reason would have quickly dismissed Jesus from consideration as even *possibly* being the Messiah—seeing Him only as a poor carpenter, the son of a poor car-

penter. This is how the inhabitants of Galilee, His “*own country*,” viewed Him (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3). Could this Jesus be the mighty Deliverer for whom God’s people had been waiting for so many years? Could this poor, itinerant and homeless prophet be the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God? But even though He did not have the outward appearance of greatness, Jesus’ *miracles* revealed Him as the Anointed One foretold in the Old Testament. Therefore, if the perfect light of sacred Scripture had been followed instead of their own rationalistic imagination about what the Messiah should have been, the people who observed Jesus’ miracles would necessarily have concluded that He was, indeed, the promised Christ, and the Savior of the world of whom the prophets had written.

Sadly, many who *did* recognize Jesus’ miracles as proof of His messiahship still had a completely distorted idea of what kind of King and Savior the Lord’s Christ was to be—expecting Him to be an *earthly* king who would deliver the Jews from the oppression of the Roman government. After Jesus miraculously extended five barley loaves and two small fishes to feed over five thousand people with twelve baskets of leftovers, “*then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that Prophet that should come into the world. When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take Him by force, to make Him a king, He departed again into a mountain Himself alone*” (John 6:14–15). On the basis of His miracle, they rightly identified Jesus as that Prophet of whom Moses spoke, saying: “*The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken*” (Deuteronomy 18:15; compare also Acts 3:22). But they wrongly thought that He would be an *earthly* king—giving a carnal, worldly interpretation to the Old Testament prophecies that describe the Messiah as a King (Jeremiah 23:5; Daniel 7:13–14). When Jesus was questioned by Pilate concerning His status as a king, He made it clear that, though He *is* the *King* of His believing followers (in His *kingdom of grace*), yet He is *not* an *earthly* king (John 18:33–37).

We learn from the inspired history of the New Testament that many people followed Jesus, not to hear His Word, but just because they had seen His miracles (John 4:45) or because they wanted to get their bellies filled by means of His miraculous feeding (John 6:26). The enemies of Christ only grew in their hatred of the Savior after seeing His miracles (John 11:47–53). Would it therefore have been better for His work of leading lost sinners to salvation if He had not done so many miracles? Needless to say, Jesus’ *miracles* were not to blame when a person re-

acted in a negative, fleshly way to them; nor was Jesus' *teaching style* to blame when He described saving faith as spiritually eating His body and drinking His blood, even though some of His disciples said: "*This is an hard saying; who can hear it?*," and then "*went back, and walked no more with Him*" (John 6:60–66). The good and beneficial purposes of Jesus' miracles, which have already been mentioned in this article, should not be forgotten: His miracles brought help to the needy, they manifested Jesus' deity, they caught the people's attention and testified to the truth of what He taught them, they fulfilled Old Testament prophecies, and thus they revealed Him as the Messiah.

But neither should it be thought that Jesus' miracles were a Means of Grace—as if the miracles in and of themselves were able to bring anyone to saving faith in Him. The *most* that such miracles could accomplish would be to convince a person that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and the Savior promised in the Old Testament Scriptures. But just believing that those *facts* are true is not saving faith—it is *knowledge* and *acceptance*, but the all-important *trust* is not there. The saving *trust* whereby a penitent sinner despairs of any self-righteousness and looks to Jesus alone for divine pardon and deliverance from the wages of sin can only be created in his heart by the power of the Holy Ghost through the Gospel. But if a person persists in impenitence and rejects the gracious invitation of the Gospel, then no miracle, not even the resurrection of a dead man —yea, not even the resurrection of Jesus Himself, would bring him to saving faith, as we are told in Jesus' story of the Rich Man and Lazarus: "*If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead*" (Luke 16:31).

But what about the cases of *Nathanael* (John 1:46–49) and *Thomas* (John 20:24–28)? Were they not brought to faith in Christ through an impressive demonstration of His deity? No, they were not. In the case of Nathanael, it was not Jesus' display of omniscience that made him a Christian; rather, Nathanael was already a true believer in the Messiah to come, in whom he had come to trust through the Gospel recorded in the Old Testament. He showed his knowledge of the messianic prophecies when he responded skeptically to the assertion of Philip that Jesus of *Nazareth* was the promised Christ, wondering out loud whether *any* good thing could come out of *that* town (John 1:46). But when Jesus manifested forth His deity by demonstrating His omniscience, Nathanael's saving faith in the promised Messiah came to rest in the God-Man who stood before him, and he declared: "*Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God; Thou art the King of Israel*" (John 1:49).

In the case of Thomas, though the appearance of the resurrected Christ yielded a true confession of faith from this formerly disbelieving disciple (John 20:25, 28), yet it was not the miracle of Jesus' resurrection that made him a believer. Thomas had long known and believed in the Gospel prophecies of the Old Testament; he had also been privileged to hear the Gospel from the lips of the Savior Himself over a period of about three years. But after His crucifixion, Thomas and the other disciples (Luke 24:21; Mark 16:14) lost confidence in Him as the one who they thought would fulfill the messianic prophecies. And it is true that if Christ had not risen from the dead, He could not have been the Savior of sinners (I Corinthians 15:17). But when Jesus appeared in His resurrected body and invited Thomas to touch the scars of His crucifixion, Jesus was again looked to as the Messiah and Savior set forth in the Gospel, the Gospel which Thomas both knew and trusted. With both Nathanael and Thomas, it was not the demonstration of divine omniscience or omnipotence that brought them to the true Christian faith, though these things did help to focus them on *Jesus* as the fulfillment of the messianic prophecies. In both cases it was by the working of the Holy Ghost in the *Gospel* that their saving faith in Christ was created and strengthened.

Jesus told the formerly doubting disciple: "*Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed*" (John 20:29). And in the very next two verses, the Apostle John writes: "*And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name*" (v. 30–31). We can read of His miracles for our comfort and edification in the Scriptures—being assured that He is the glorious Son of God and our precious Savior from sin and hell; but we do not need to see Him or His miracles with our *physical* eyes before we can believe on Him. After recounting the majestic manifestation of Christ's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration, the Apostle Peter reminds us that, above and beyond that *visible display* of Jesus' deity, "*we have also a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the Day Star arise in your hearts*" (II Peter 1:19). May we always in true, child-like faith take heed to the sure Word of Scripture for the *spiritual sight* of faith, until our confidence in Christ is finally turned to *virtual sight* in paradise!

—P. E. B.

What is LEGALISM, and what DANGERS does it pose?

“The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”

—II Corinthians 3:6

First of all, legalism is making the Law of God (and not the Gospel of Christ alone) the foundation of justification for sinners. This is the most blatant, the most disgusting, and the most blasphemous form of legalism. Why? Because it defies and opposes God’s clear revelation in Scripture that on account “of Christ’s entire work of redemption, by both His active and passive obedience, God declared all mankind righteous in His sight, not charging their sins against them, and thus, reconciled the whole world unto Himself. This judicial act of general or objective justification is proclaimed to men in the Gospel and becomes the personal property of the individual by faith in the merits of Christ – faith which simply lays hold on God’s gracious forgiveness like the hand of an unworthy beggar. Only those who thus are personally or subjectively justified by faith are the saints of God. **Bible References:** Romans 5:18-19; Isaiah 53:11; II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:21-24; Ephesians 1:7; Romans 4:5-8; 3:28; Acts 10:43; Galatians 3:26; Romans 5:1” (*A Sketch of the Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*, pages 6-7).

Faithful and accurate witness **against** this first form of legalism is provided for our benefit in Dr. C.F.W. Walther’s *The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel*, where, in Thesis V, we find this statement: “The first manner of confounding Law and Gospel is the one most easily recognized – and the grossest. It is adopted, for instance, by the Papists, Socinians, and Rationalists and consists in this, that Christ is represented as a new Moses, or Lawgiver, and the Gospel turned into a doctrine of meritorious works, while at the same time those who teach that the Gospel is the message of the free grace of God in Christ are condemned and anathematized, as is done by the Papists” (Page 69). Then Dr. Walther gives some documentation from the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Council which met between December 13, 1545 and December 4, 1563, with interruptions of 3 and 10 years. This Council remains one of the main sources of Roman Catholic doc-

trine and practice. In its sixth session, the Council of Trent adopted Canon XXI, which set forth this horribly offensive and absolutely wicked statement, a statement which has never, up to this very day, been rejected and repudiated by the Roman Catholic Church: “If any one saith that Christ Jesus was given of God to men as a Redeemer in whom to trust, **and not also as a legislator whom to obey** [our emphasis], let him be anathema [damned]” (*The Canons and Decrees of the Council of Trent*, translated by Bishop J. Waterworth, 1848, page 47). Is Christ **both** “a Redeemer in whom to trust” **and** “a legislator whom to obey” for the salvation of sinners? In other words, does Christ do His part (by **His** grace) and we sinners do our part (by **our** obedience) in order to reach heaven? Most certainly not! God’s Word of truth is crystal clear when it says: “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law; ye are fallen from grace*” (Galatians 5:4). Romans 11 reminds us of two unchanging, wonderful facts: “*If by grace, then it is no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace, otherwise work is no more work*” (v. 6). So, the Roman Catholic Church, in its doctrine and practice concerning the justification of sinners, promotes and supports legalism, as well as portraying Christ as a legalist.

But **in sharp contrast** to this legalistic, false position of the Pope’s church (as well as of all other legalistic-grounded churches, religions, and organizations) in regard to the justification of sinners, we have the sweet, marvelous, and ever-comforting message of the Gospel of Christ, as revealed in the Holy Scriptures. This Gospel “is not a new or higher law, but that doctrine of the Bible which reveals what God in His perfect love and mercy has done and still does for the salvation of mankind. It requires nothing of the sinner, but simply announces to all men the free gift of God’s grace in Christ Jesus, the Savior, “*that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life,*” and the blessed assurance that God earnestly desires the salvation of every soul. The Gospel is also the means by which God makes people believers, changes their hearts and lives, and keeps them in the true and saving faith. While the Law of God must be preached to all men, this Gospel of comfort and peace with God through Christ should be preached only to penitent sinners, those who have already been struck down and terrified by the Law on account of their sins. **Bible References:** I John 4:9; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 3:16; I Timothy 2:4; Romans 3:23-24; Mark 1:15; Luke 24:47; Romans 1:16; Matthew 7:6; II Timothy 2:15; Romans 5:1; John 14:27; Colossians 1:20” (*A Sketch of The Doctrinal Position of the Concordia Lutheran Conference*, pages 5-6).

Why do **we** ever need to be on guard so that we do not turn away our ears from the truth of the Gospel of Christ and be turned to the fable, the lie of legalism (II Timothy 2:4)? **We** ever need to be on guard for this plague and “*vomit*” (II Peter 2:22) of legalism because of our wicked, no good, corrupt flesh (Ephesians 4:22; Romans 7:18; Jeremiah 17:9), which is and will ever remain (until we are in “*paradise*” – Luke 23:43) an enemy of God, an enemy of His Word, especially an enemy of His Gospel of grace and mercy in Christ Jesus, for “*the carnal mind is enmity against God*” (Romans 8:7). Let us not forget the strong rebuke from God through the Apostle Paul to the Galatian **Christians**: “*O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you? This only would I learn of you: Received ye the Spirit by the works of the Law or by the hearing of faith? ...For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them. But that **no man is justified by the Law in the sight of God**, it is evident, for, The just shall live by faith. And the Law is not of faith, but, The man that doeth them shall live in them. Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us, for it is written: Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree*” (Galatians 3:1-2, 10-13). We ever need these warnings from our God in His Word, not only because of our atheistic flesh, but because of the many temptations from the legalistic worldlings all around us (I John 2:15-17; II Timothy 4:10). And let us not overlook our daily “*adversary, the devil, [who] as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist steadfast in the faith*” (I Peter 5:8-9a).

But we, God’s dear adopted children in Christ Jesus, already have the victory over our legalistic flesh, the legalistic world, and the legalistic “*father*” (John 8:44) of lies through our dear and only Savior, as the Apostle Paul announced so unashamedly in those priceless words written down by inspiration of the Holy Ghost in I Corinthians 15, “*Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*” (v. 57), and also in Romans 8: “*Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us*” (v. 37).

Secondly, legalism is making the Law of God (and not the Gospel of Christ alone) the motivation for sanctification in the life of a child of God. The Law has three purposes, and **none** of those three purposes is to motivate Christians to willingly, cheerfully, and gratefully live a God-pleasing life.

For this article on Legalism, the “text” is II Corinthians 3, verse 6: *“The letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.”* The “letter” is the Law of God. And since this divine Law demands perfection (Matthew 5:48), any obedience which falls short of perfection is sin. *“Sin is the transgression of the Law”* (I John 3:4). What does the Law of God “dish out” to those who break, disobey, and violate it? It “dishes out” death - *“The wages of sin is death”* (Romans 6:23); *“The letter [the Law] killeth”* (II Corinthian 3:6); *“The soul that sinneth, it shall die”* Ezekiel 18:20). This death is not just temporal death, but eternal death, which is nothing other than the everlasting curse and condemnation of the Law. Galatians 3 leaves no “wobble room” when it declares: *“Cursed [damned] is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them”* (v. 10). In II Corinthians 3, the Law of God is called *“the ministration of condemnation”* (v. 9). So, the Law of God threatens (Ezekiel 18:4) and serves as a **curb**, even for Christians to keep their corrupt flesh in check – the **first use of the Law**. The Law of God also demands perfect holiness (Leviticus 19:2) and, therefore, as a **mirror**, shows all people, including Christians, their imperfections, their sins (Romans 3:20) – the **second use of the Law**. Finally, the Law teaches Christians which works they must do – what is the **standard or rule** - to lead a God-pleasing life (Psalm 119:104-105) – the **third use of the Law**. The Law of God was never intended to motivate or encourage believers to willingly, cheerfully, and gratefully live a life pleasing to God. So, legalism is a gross **misuse and abuse** of God’s Law when it is used to motivate and urge Christians of whatever age to gladly think, say, and do what is God-pleasing.

Only *“the Gospel of Christ”* (Romans 15:29), *“the Gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:24), *“the Gospel of peace, ...[the] glad tidings of good things”* (Romans 10:15), the *“good tidings of great joy”* (Luke 2:10) can and will most certainly motivate, strengthen, and urge the children of God - for the sake of the redemption, the payment, the ransom paid to God for the world of sinners *“with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot”* (I Peter 1:19), - *“to show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy”* (I Peter 2:9-10). What a powerful, clear message of the Gospel of Christ being the motivation for living a Godly life when we read, hear, and digest the priceless words of II Corinthians 5, verses 14-15: *“The love of Christ constraineth us, because we thus judge that if One died for all, then were all dead; and that He died for all, that they which live [all true believers, the sheep of Christ] should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them and rose again.”*

What alone motivates us, the children of God, to love our God more than our spouse, our children, our other relatives, our friends, our money, our job, our home, our reputation? Is it the threats, the demands, and the standards of God's Law? Oh, no! It is and will always be, by the grace of God, His undeserved and unearned love toward us in Christ Jesus. The Apostle John, moved by the Holy Ghost, wrote down this confession of the followers of Christ: "*We love Him because He first loved us*" (I John 4:19). **What motivates us**, the sheep of Christ, to "*hallow*" (Matthew 6:9) God's name, avoid wickedness (Genesis 39:9), and "*serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life*" (Luke 1:74b-75)? The answer is always the same: What God has done for us in and through Christ Jesus (Luke 1:74a; Matthew 20:27-28; I Corinthians 6:20; Romans 12:1-2).

Parents, remember this in how you teach and motivate your children! **The standard of the Law has its God-given place**; it determines what your children are to do and not to do. But, do not forget that **only the Gospel of Christ, the Gospel of the grace of God can properly motivate your lambs and sheep of Christ to do and to follow the standard of God's Law** in gratitude for all that has already been done for them by their dear Savior. The Apostle Paul was God's instrument in writing down these always-timely words in Titus 2: "*The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men [universal grace], teaching us [who, by God's grace, have been brought to receive, by faith, this universal grace] that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and Godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar [special] people, zealous of good works*" (vv. 11-14).

Thirdly, legalism is adding on to God's moral Law and then binding consciences to those additions. In the closing chapter of Holy Scripture, the Savior Himself, with the Apostle John as His writer, set forth this clear testimony: "*I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book*" (Revelation 22:18-19; see also Deuteronomy 4:2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:6). Legalism usually does "its wicked work" by **adding on** to

God's Commandments in such ways as commanding tithing, restricting the day of worship to the Sabbath (Saturday), requiring days of fasting during certain times of the church year, declaring that the use of any alcoholic beverage, even in the Lord's Supper, is sinful, etc.

It is **NOT** legalism when there is proper, Scripturally-based practice which "flows out of" and is built solely on God's moral Law. When organizations or religious groups, such as the Scouts and the Masonic Lodge (The Shriners) **reject** the truth that there is only one God (and none other – I Corinthians 8:4)), and/or that there is only one way to heaven (John 14:6; Acts 4:12), it is **NOT** legalism to expose, oppose, and reject them. It is **NOT** legalism when gambling and cheating are identified as sins against the Seventh Commandment. Also, it is **NOT** legalism when Sixth Commandment principles are properly and faithfully applied to modern, worldly, and lustful dancing because of its romantic embrace outside of marriage (Proverbs 5:20), because of its flesh-pleasing movements and gyrations (Romans 7:18; Galatians 5:24; I Peter 2:11), and because of giving offense to others (Matthew 18:6ff., Mark 9:42ff., Luke 17:1-2, Romans 16:17). So, we repeat the opening sentence in this paragraph: It is **NOT** legalism when there is proper, Scripturally-based practice which "flows out of" and is built solely on God's moral Law.

It is **NOT** legalism when there is proper, Scripturally-based practice which "flows out of" and is built solely on God's moral Law.

Fourthly, legalism is making the Law of God (and not the Gospel of Christ) predominate in all teaching and preaching. Oh, what a terrible thing when such legalism takes over the pulpit and the classroom in a Christian congregation. On the other hand, what a wonderful thing it is when the sweet Gospel of God's grace in Christ Jesus predominates in both the pulpit and the classroom. The Apostle Paul was **not** a legalist, or a promoter of legalism, as is evident from his testimony to the Corinthian Christians: "*For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and Him crucified*" (I Corinthians 2:2). Does this mean that Christian pastors are to teach and preach no Law to their people? Of course not, for Jesus Himself declared "*that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations*" (Luke 24:47). However, the teaching and preaching of God's Law is to serve **only to prepare souls** for the teaching and preaching of

the Gospel. Galatians 3 expounds this truth so clearly when it tells us that “*the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*” (v. 24). The real goal in faithfully preaching God’s Law is to ready the hearts of the hearers to receive the Gospel of the forgiveness of all transgressions of the Law on account of the once-for-all substitutionary obedience, suffering, and death of Christ Jesus for the world of sinners (Hebrews 10:10; I Peter 3:18; Galatians 4:4-5; II Corinthians 5:15; I John 2:2), for the salvation of precious souls (John 3:17-18). And this Gospel never stops announcing to us “*the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, [who] though He was rich, yet for [our] sakes He became poor, that [we] through His poverty might **be rich***” (II Corinthians 8:9). Oh, how all Christian pastors need to continue focusing in their teaching and preaching on these “*good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*” (Luke 2:10).

We, “*by the mercies of God*” (Romans 12:1), must diligently and willingly “*abhor*” (Romans 12:9) the evil of legalism and cheerfully “*cleave*” (Romans 12:9) to the evangelical proclamation and application of the Gospel of God’s grace toward us undeserving sinners on account of the vicarious satisfaction of Christ Jesus; for the heart of the Gospel is our justification before God merited by Christ, and it must ever be our only motivation for following the standard of God’s moral Law (I John 4:19; II Corinthians 5:14-15; Luke 1:74-75) in genuine gratitude for our salvation by grace, for Christ’s sake, through faith (I Peter 1:18-19; Galatians 3:13; II Corinthians 5:19; Romans 3:24; 5:18; John 3:16-18; Titus 3:4-7; Ephesians 2:8-10; I Peter 2:9-10)! And furthermore, with “*the love of Christ*” (II Corinthians 5:14) constraining and motivating us, let us gladly and thankfully be “*in awe*” (Psalm 33:8b) of God’s holy Law, faithfully teaching and applying it (Jeremiah 23:28; Matthew 28:20) without shame and without fear (Psalm 25:2-3a; Luke 1:74), doing so for the glory and praise of our gracious God (I Corinthians 6:20; Psalm 116:12-14) and for the great profit of souls (II Timothy 3:16; I Corinthians 14:26c). This Gospel motivation, rather than legalism (law-ism), shines through so brilliantly in the closing verses of I Corinthians 15, where the apostle, moved by the Holy Ghost, wrote down this divine exhortation: “*Thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. **THEREFORE**, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord*” (vv. 57-58)!

—R. J. L.

How *Antinomianism* Militates against the Gospel

*“Now we know that what things soever the Law saith,
it saith to them who are under the Law,
that every mouth may be stopped, and
all the world may become guilty before God.”*

—Romans 3:19

In our Catechism [CPH, 1943) we define the **Gospel**, according to Scripture, as “that doctrine of the Bible in which God tells us the good news of our salvation in Jesus Christ” (Q/A 16, p. 43). That Gospel or “good news” [Greek: , ὕμνος <(X884@>] German: *Evangelium*, Old English: *Evangel*] was announced by the Christmas angels in their message to the terrified shepherds outside of Bethlehem: “**Fear not, for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the City of David a Savior, which is Christ, the Lord... Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men!**” (Luke 2:10-11;14). It is the “good news” that “**the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men**” (Titus 2:11), that “**God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them**” (II Corinthians 5:19), and that “**all**” are “**justified** [forgiven and made right with God] **freely** by His **grace** through the **redemption** that is in Christ Jesus” (Romans 3:24). By means of His *vicarious atonement* (Isaiah 53; II Corinthians 5:21), wherein “*He died for all*” (II Corinthians 5:15) and laid down both His perfect righteousness (Romans 5:19) and His holy “*precious blood*” (I Peter 1:18-19) as the payment in full (Romans 3:25; I John 2:2) for our redemption, Christ purchased and earned for all mankind God’s gracious forgiveness (Ephesians 1:7); and God, being completely just and fair, having had His justice completely **satisfied** by the merits of His only-begotten Son, graciously forgave the sins of all mankind and unilaterally reconciled the world unto Himself (II Corinthians 5:19a). He also made known to all men (Romans 10:18) “*the Word of reconciliation*” (II Corinthians 5:19b), the “good news” of this reconciliation, the “*good tidings of great joy*” (Luke 2:10), “*the word which [lit. as good news] is preached unto you*” (I Peter 1:25).

What make the **Gospel** so perfectly *wonderful*, so unspeakably *comforting*, and the enduring source of “*great joy*”... “*to all people*” (Luke

2:10) is the great contrast between its “*good tidings*” and the *horrible news* that is conveyed to sinful men by the **Law** of God, that doctrine of the Bible in which He “tells us how we are to be and what we are to do and not to do” (*Small Catechism*, Q/A 15, p. 42), and in which He proclaims His righteous wrath against sin and His condemnation of the sinner according to His divine justice. The Law declares the fact that “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). Since the fall of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3), all men are conceived in sin (Psalm 51:5), “*born of the flesh*” (John 3:6a), and “*are all gone aside; they are all together become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no not one*” (Psalm 14:3). “*They are all under sin,*” St. Paul writes in Romans 3:9; and in the following verses he goes into considerable detail to point out the terrible “downside” of men’s miserable condition by nature, including the fact that “*the way of peace have they not known*” (v. 17). Moreover, by nature, man is spiritually blind (I Corinthians 2:14), spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1), and spiritually at enmity with God (Romans 8:7) and therefore unable to merit God’s favor, to reconcile himself to God, or to justify himself before God by the deeds of the Law (Romans 3:20; Galatians 2:16a; 3:11a; etc.). And in Romans 6:23 Paul adds the “bottom line” for all sinners, namely, the pronouncement that “*the wages of sin is death,*” eternal death, everlasting separation from God, shame, contempt, and unspeakable torture in the damnation in hell.

Antinomianism is that very enemy of the Gospel of Christ which nullifies or compromises the Law, and thus it makes the promise of none effect (Romans 4:14ff.). “Antinomianism” means literally “against the Law.”

Moreover, the Law and the Gospel are so completely and diametrically **opposed** to one another that any attempt on the part of sinful man to *reconcile* them or to *bridge* them is not only hopeless but is counterproductive as far as his ultimate salvation is concerned. St. Paul writes: “*By the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight*” (Romans 3:20); “*for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the Law; but the Scripture hath concluded all under sin*” (Galatians 3:21-22a). Man is simply incapable of gaining God’s favor by obedience to the Law, and even the *desire* to do so deprives man of the *grace* of God by which alone he is can be saved: “*Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the Law, ye are fallen from*

grace” (Galatians 5:4). *Grace*, God’s unmerited favor toward poor, wretched, and helpless sinners, is His *gift* —earned by Christ and offered freely to all men in the Gospel. *Works*, man’s efforts to earn God’s favor by obedience to the Law, are hopelessly defective in their ability to satisfy God’s justice; and “*all our righteousnesses,*” even the good works of believers, “*are as filthy rags*” in the sight of God (Isaiah 64:6) as far as meriting anything from Him and are therefore completely ineffective in bringing about reconciliation with Him. Works and grace are therefore mutually exclusive as being causes or even factors in our salvation: “*If by grace, then is it no more of works, otherwise grace is no more grace,*” Paul writes in Romans 11:6a. If salvation is truly a gift, then no one has to work for it. The nature of a gift is that it is freely given. What has to be earned is no gift. “*But if it be of works, then is it no more grace; otherwise work is no more work*” (v. 6b). If one indeed has to work for it, it constitutes earned wages; it is not a gift or an unearned bonus.

When, however, the Law of God, with what it demands, forbids, and pronounces as punishment upon the sinner, is *compromised*; when its demands become mere *advisories*, its prohibitions mere *warnings*, and its threats *emptied of their terror*; then the importance of the Gospel is compromised as well. If the vast chasm between God and men, between His perfect justice and man’s total depravity, is reduced to any degree whatsoever, the need for the Gospel is reduced to the very same extent. Then indeed Christ’s vicarious atonement was not *absolutely necessary* to earn God’s favor, and God’s unilateral justification of the world for Christ’s sake, was not *unquestionably essential* for the salvation of sinful men. (Read and study, for example, Romans 5:12-21.) Then reconciliation between God and men is, in the last analysis, the “two-way street” that semi-pelagians and synergists have always claimed it to be in opposition to God’s explicit revelation!

Antinomianism is that very enemy of the Gospel of Christ which nullifies or compromises the Law and thus makes the promise of none effect (Romans 4:14ff.). The word “antinomianism” means literally “against the Law” [Latin: *anti* = against; Greek: <: @H= law]. And we can group antinomians into four basic categories: **a)** Those who write off the Law of God *altogether* as the absolute standard of right and wrong, as the unbending measuring stick of righteousness, as the uncompromising requirement of God upon men for their justification, and as the expression of divine wrath upon all who transgress its precepts and prohibitions, upon all who are less than perfect in their *na-*

ture and in their works. **b)** Those who, because of their false understanding of such passages as Romans 6:14b and I Timothy 1:9-10, claim that the Law of God is not for *believers* but only for the *unregenerate*, and that therefore Christians need not concern themselves with it at all as far as being curbed by it in their flesh, as far as being shown by it their sins and their need for a Savior, and even as far as being regulated by it in their lives of sanctification. **c)** Those who claim that the Law of God, as far as Christians are concerned, does not serve as a *curb* since their flesh has been effectively "*crucified*," that it functions as a *mirror* only to remind them of their need for a Savior but not to make them feel any need for contrition and repentance for their sins, and that as a *rule* it is only advisory. It is these who are quick to accuse their pastors of preaching "too much Law," as if the Law of God in its fierceness were not intended for believers, and as if the preaching of the Law to Christians were an unnecessary "browbeating" to "make them feel guilty." And finally **d)** those who insist upon the right to pick and choose *which* of God's laws apply to them, and whether in fact the *application* of God's Law *in principle* can be made to thoughts, words, and deeds which are not specifically named in Holy Scripture.

Antinomians... accuse of "legalism" anyone who applies the principles of God's Word objectively, appropriately and evenhandedly to behavior, to words, and to situations which they insist upon judging subjectively, not according to the norm of Scripture but according to the norm of human reason.

This latter type of antinomianism is particularly prevalent among those who attempt to insulate their behavior, their favorite pursuits, and their personal choices against the stigma of "sin." The antinomians in this category commonly accuse of "legalism" anyone who applies the principles of God's Word objectively, appropriately and evenhandedly to behavior, to words, and to situations which they insist upon judging subjectively, not according to the norm of Scripture but according to the norm of human reason. A "classic" case in point is that of the "Statementarians" (the signers and supporters of *A Statement* in 1945) who "deplored" the fact that Romans 16:17 had been applied by the *orthodox* theologians in the Missouri Synod to the practice of fellowship (joint prayer, etc.) between individual professing Christians not truly united in doctrine and practice. They sought to create an artificial dif-

ference between sinful religious unionism practiced *corporately* (that is, between churches and church bodies) and the *very same* indiscriminate practice between *individuals*. If the latter practice were to be condemned as “sinful,” they moaned, families would be divided, relationships could be destroyed, extended families would suffer unnecessary disruptions at baptisms, confirmations, and at weddings, not to mention at the table on Thanksgiving Day, Christmas dinner, and other social occasions. Moreover, that application of Scripture, they complain, would prohibit Christians from joining glee clubs and community choirs for the joint singing of religious music (cantatas, chorales, *The Messiah*, etc.), from Christmas caroling with friends and neighbors who belonged to heterodox churches, and from praying *with* a sick acquaintance at his bedside in the hospital. “How *COULD* you *condemn* such things?? That’s downright *legalistic!*!”

Antinomians... in their effort to nullify the Law and minimize sin, create their own arbitrary distinctions between sins as to their *seriousness*.

The very same rationalistic argument is made against condemning as “sinful” the joining of lodges and similar orders, the Scouting organizations, the Gideons, and the Salvation Army. “Just because those organizations are based on certain principles, have certain features, and hold to certain positions that are contrary to Scripture, can’t we join them, identify ourselves with them, participate in their programs, recognizing the “dangers” posed by their errors without, however, having to “*avoid them*”?? Selective antinomians “deplore” the condemnation of abortion as murder and homosexuality as an abomination in the sight of God; and they label it “legalistic” to condemn as “sinful” the use of ouija boards, civil disobedience of unpopular and even unjust laws, wildcat strikes against employers, gambling in its many forms from gaming to the lottery, modern worldly social dancing, as well as the violation of illicit drug, traffic, fireworks, and even littering ordinances (Cf. Romans 13:1; I Peter 2:13ff.). And yet, ALL of those practices involve “*the transgression of the Law*” (I John 3:4), **God’s Law**, which tells us plainly what we are to do and not to do as our **moral obligation**; and identifies “*the transgression of the Law*” as “*sin*.”

Moreover, in their effort to nullify the Law and minimize sin, they create their own arbitrary distinctions between sins as to their *seriousness*. Some would advance the argument that “fine” idolatry is not as *serious* a sin as is “gross” idolatry, that a frivolous oath is not as *offensive* to

God as perjury, that a moving violation while driving is not as *egregious* a sin against the Fourth Commandment as is treason, that a romantic embrace between those not married to one another (Proverbs 5:20) is not the same violation of the Sixth Commandment as is fornication in the sight of God (but compare Matthew 5:28 for an even “lesser degree” of adultery), and that allegations of wrongdoing without proof are not “*false witness*” to the same extent as outright slander. The possibilities of “splitting the difference” in such a manner are as endless as the fleshly heart is capable of “ethical creativity” or self-serving rationalism.

And how consistently selective antinomians *couch* their rationalistic musings, their magisterial use of reason over God’s clear Word, and their subjective judgment of what is right and wrong in “*good words and fair speeches*” designed to “*deceive the hearts of the simple*” (Romans 16:18)! Not only do they brand the proper application of clear Scripture as “legalism,” so that naive Christians (Hebrews 5:12-13) throw up their hands with gasps of horror at the very prospect of being browbeaten by the Word of God; but they flatter their hearers (II Timothy 4:3) by proposing to leave it up to their Christian conscience, to their sanctified opinion, to their Spirit-created judgment to determine what is and what is not sinful. “We shouldn’t create **lists** of things to be avoided and things to be done!” they say. While this *sounds good* to those who don’t want to be told what to do and what not to do, the Bible is literally FULL of such lists from cover to cover! Compare, for example, St. Paul in Ephesians 5:3ff. and in Galatians 5:19-23; compare, for example, the entire Book of Proverbs! “Pastors shouldn’t treat their people like **children** who need someone to tell them how to live.” That kind of talk *panders* to the arrogant fleshly heart of man that despises instruction (Proverbs 1:7, etc.), while the Word of God itself instructs us and speaks to us “*as unto children*” (Hebrews 12:5; I John 2:1; etc.), and has been given by God Himself for that very purpose (II Timothy 3:15-17; 4:2; etc.), inasmuch as we ARE, by grace through faith in Christ Jesus, His “*children*” (Galatians 3:26), and should *love* to be treated as such (Hebrews 12:5-8)!

“We shouldn’t create **lists** of things to be avoided and things to be done!” say the antinomians. While this *sounds good* to those who don’t want to be told what to do and what not to do, the Bible is literally FULL of such lists from cover to cover!

But how does such *antinomianism* militate against **the Gospel**?? Let us remember that the Gospel is the “good news,” the unfathomably wondrous and most comforting news, to poor sinners “*that [their] warfare [with God] is accomplished, that [their] iniquity is pardoned, [that they have] received of the Lord’s hand double for all [their] sins*” (Isaiah 40:2). Therefore, any and every effort to depreciate the Law, to compromise it, to minimize it, to attack its perfect standard and to forbid its proper application ALSO depreciates, compromises, minimizes and attacks the Gospel since the *need* for it has been depreciated. A “truly sanctified” Christian, after all, so they claim, doesn’t commit truly “egregious” sins, doesn’t engage in “really sinful” behavior, and therefore has less to repent of in the last analysis than those whose “*flesh is weak*” (Matthew 26:41b). To the antinomian, “less to repent of” leaves a person feeling “less guilty,” and “less guilty” is a “good place to be.” Such an attitude, however, flies directly in the face of Isaiah 64:6, Romans 7:18, Romans 3:19-20, Galatians 5:4, and a host of other passages which clearly show that believers cannot claim “lesser guilt” on the basis of their works, though they can, should, and do claim “*no condemnation*” on the basis of the imputed righteousness of *Christ* (Romans 8:1), which is theirs by faith (Romans 4:2-8).

Any and every effort to depreciate the Law, to compromise it, to minimize it, to attack its perfect standard and to forbid its proper application ALSO depreciates, compromises, minimizes and attacks the Gospel since the *need* for it has been depreciated.

Since the Gospel is the good news of salvation as God’s free gift to poor sinners, “*not of works, lest any man should boast*” (Ephesians 2:9); since it tells of Christ’s vicarious atonement and intercession “*for the transgressors*” (Isaiah 53:8-12); since it publishes to all sinners the glad tidings that Christ redeemed them “*from the curse of the Law*” (Galatians 3:13); since it proclaims God’s unilateral reconciliation of the world unto Himself in Christ, “*not imputing their trespasses unto them*” (II Corinthians 5:19); since it declares God’s justification of “*the ungodly*” for Christ’s sake (Romans 4:5); and since it brings to poor sinners the “*good cheer*” of forgiveness (Matthew 9:2) and the “*joy of...salvation*” to every believer; **what DAMAGE is done to the precious Gospel** by those who compromise the demands of the Law, who depreciate the transgression of the Law, and who minimize the curse of the Law!! For without the Law, there is **no sin** (Romans 4:15). With-

out the Law, sin is nothing to be taken **seriously** (I Corinthians 15:56). Without the Law, eternal death is not “*the wages of sin*” (Romans 6:23). And without the Law, which reveals sin (Romans 7:7), there is no “*curse*” (Galatians 3:10), death has no “*sting*,” and sin has no “*strength*” or serious consequences (I Corinthians 15:56). Therefore, without the Law, there is **no need** for the **GOSPEL!** Indeed, without the Law, there is **no desire** for the **GOSPEL!** *Anti-nomianism*, therefore, militates against the Gospel by devaluing the goodness of its news, the gladness of its tidings, the magnitude of its power unto salvation, and the peace and joy it brings to troubled hearts!

What DAMAGE is done to the precious Gospel by those who compromise the demands of the Law, who depreciate the transgression of the Law, and who minimize the curse of the Law!!

May God, for Jesus’ sake, preserve us from the vicious trap of this false teaching and its cunning practice, lest we be deceived and seduced by it into misbelief, despair, and other great shame and vice! Let us instead, being led by the Spirit of God, confess boldly with the Apostle Paul from the New Man within us: “*I delight in the Law of God after the inward man*” (Romans 7:22), and with the Psalmist: “*O, how I love Thy Law! It is my meditation all the day. ...Through Thy precepts I get understanding; therefore I hate every false way*” (Psalm 119:97, 104). The Law is, after all, the **curb** whereby God checks to some extent the coarse outbursts of sin in the world, including the sins wrought by our old evil flesh (Romans 7:14-19); it is the **mirror** which shows us our sins and the wrath of God and thus reveals our desperate need for a Savior (Romans 3:19-20; 7:7; Galatians 3:22); and, for those who have already been regenerated by the saving power of the Gospel, God’s Law is the **rule**, that is, the norm and standard, which shows to true believers which works belong to a Godpleasing life, which works are truly “good” in the sight of God, though not meritorious of salvation, and which works, motivated solely by the grace of God, as the fruit and evidence of saving faith, “*show forth the praises of Him who hath called [them] out of darkness into His marvelous light*” (I Peter 2:9). God grant us ever to treasure His Holy Law as that which makes the honey of His Gospel taste ever that much sweeter in our mouths unto life everlasting! (I Peter 2:2-3).

—D. T. M.

Looking forward to Lent...

Let Us SEE Our Blessed Redeemer in His Holy Passion!



“They understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things which were spoken.” —Luke 18:34

On Wednesday, February 21st, we mark the beginning of another holy Lenten season —a period of six weeks during which we give special attention to the study of our Savior’s *Great Passion*, His suffering and death for the sins of the world, keeping before our mind’s eye the **REA**-**SON** for Jesus’ **supreme sacrifice**, namely, that, in the words of St. Paul to the Romans, “*He was delivered for **our offenses***” (Romans 4:25).

In preparation for this holy Lenten season, we see in the verses just preceding our “title-text” the Lord Jesus lovingly taking aside His disciples to give them a *preview* of the events that lay ahead for Him, to *show* them what all would be done to Him in Jerusalem, and to explain *why* all these things **had to be** accomplished. And yet, in spite of Jesus’ clear words and explanation, the poor disciples simply didn’t get the point; they didn’t *understand*; they didn’t *SEE!* They were suffering from *spiritual nearsightedness and dullness* which kept them from seeing the **true nature** of His redemptive work on their behalf, now soon coming to its full accomplishment in His suffering and death on the cross. As we now also find ourselves facing Jesus’ *Great Passion* in the Lenten season just before us, let us examine in this portion of St. Luke’s Gospel account, for our own warning and benefit, the reasons why the spiritually blind do not recognize their own Redeemer.

The disciples’ lack of spiritual understanding which Luke describes is not *total* blindness (or the absence of saving faith), but a *partial* spiritual blindness or *visual handicap*, as it were, because of which the full knowledge of the truth is *impaired*. For Jesus’ disciples were indeed *true believers* in Him, having been called, enlightened and sanctified by His Holy Spirit through the Gospel. And they clung to Him in simple childlike faith, though at times its weakness brought them to the point of real jeopardy and even to temporary loss of faith itself, as in Peter’s

case, who not only *rebuked* Jesus concerning His suffering and death (Matthew 16:22ff.) but later also *denied* Him before men (26:70ff.).

All of us, because of the weakness of our flesh, suffer from spiritual blindness to *some degree or other*, inasmuch as we do not perfectly know, rightly understand, and fully appreciate every single truth of God's Holy Word; and, because of that very weakness in our spiritual sight, we often find ourselves not all that interested in *becoming* enlightened, in *learning* more, in *searching* the Scriptures, and *growing* in grace. Consequently, some of that blindness remains and handicaps our faith, actually endangering it and making us an easy prey for Satan! That's precisely **why** we must apply to our blindness the precious "*eye salve*" of the Gospel to heal and strengthen our eyes of faith

We often find ourselves not all that interested in *becoming* enlightened, in *learning* more, in *searching* the Scriptures, and *growing* in grace.

Consequently, some of that blindness remains and handicaps our faith, actually endangering it and making us an easy prey for Satan!

(Revelation 3:18) and pray in humble faith with the Psalmist: "*Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law!*" (119:18), lest we remain blind to certain precious truths and at length, God forbid, fail even to **see** and **recognize** our precious Redeemer! For this was the terrible jeopardy into which the disciples placed themselves when they **blindly** resisted the fulfillment of divine prophecy in Jesus, the Messiah, in spite of His longsuffering and pains-taking efforts to help them **see**!

Luke records the incident as follows: "*Then He took unto Him the twelve, and said unto them, 'Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of Man shall be accomplished.'*" Jesus had taught these dear disciples of His for about three years; and, in the process of patiently instructing them concerning His person and work, He had shown them in detail how the prophecies of the Old Testament about the promised Messiah to come actually *pointed to Him*. He had talked about Moses and said, "*He wrote of Me*" (John 5:46). He had spoken of Isaiah, David, Jonah, and the other prophets who had served as the mouthpieces of God Himself to foretell the coming of His *Anointed One*, the Redeemer of Israel. And yet, as they now set out on their last journey together, headed for the city of Jerusalem and the fulfillment of all these

prophecies in Jesus' impending passion, Luke tells us: "*They understood none of these things.*" Although they had learned most of these wonderful prophecies from their youth up, as had Timothy (II Timothy 3:15), as have also most of US, and had heard them clearly applied to JESUS in His very own words; and, although they had confessed Him to be "*the Christ, the Son of the living God*" (Matthew 16:16), they suddenly **WENT BLIND**, as it were, to the **real significance** of all these prophecies; and they **failed to see** Jesus, their Redeemer, revealed in these words of Holy Scripture!

The Jews of our day and time still do not recognize Jesus of Nazareth as the true Messiah of God, because they do not **see** Him in the Old Testament prophecies. They are, of course, **TOTALLY BLIND**, inasmuch as they reject Him outright in unbelief, and continue to close eyes, ears, and heart to His precious Word, which is able to save their souls! They regard Isaiah chapter 53, for example, as referring to the suffering of the *Jewish people* at the hands of their enemies, rather than as what it *in fact is*, namely, a prophecy of the Messiah's **vicarious atonement** for the sins of the world. —Now we might expect that kind of perversion of Scripture from the unbelieving Jews, but *from Jesus' own disciples??* —Oh how *even the slightest degree* of spiritual blindness can endanger our faith if left to grow like spreading cataracts to close out the precious light of God's pure Word!! Let us, therefore, vigorously fight against any inclination on our own part to be *complacent* and *indifferent* about our growth in grace and Christian knowledge, lest by such despisal of the Means of Grace we too fall prey to even greater blindness and lose sight of our Redeemer altogether in the glorious prophecies of His Word, and have it one day written of **us**: "*They understood none of these things, neither knew **they** the things which were spoken.*"

Let us vigorously fight against any inclination on our own part to be *complacent* and *indifferent* about our growth in grace and Christian knowledge, lest by such despisal of the Means of Grace we too fall prey to even greater blindness and lose sight of our Redeemer altogether.

But there is another reason why the spiritually blind do not recognize their own Redeemer, and that is that they find His entire suffering and death *repugnant* and *disgusting*, so that they look away from His cross and thus lose sight of the price He paid to reconcile us vile, unworthy

and wretched sinners to His heavenly Father!

The unregenerate children of this world, who suffer from *TOTAL* spiritual blindness in their unbelief, refuse to admit even their **need** for a Savior, a Redeemer; for they rely upon their own goodness, merit, and worthiness for favor with God. They are so utterly oblivious to their wretched spiritual condition in His holy sight that, even when staring into the flawless mirror of God's indicting Law, they see no sin, no shame, no iniquity in themselves whatsoever.

Now if even the fierceness of God's Law will not crush their pride and soften their hardness of heart and bring them to their knees in terror of His punishment, what effect indeed will the **Gospel** have on such people?? The Bible tells us that the precious good news of Christ's *vicarious atonement* for the sins of the world is "*foolishness*" to the Greeks and a "*stumblingblock*" to the Jews (I Corinthians 1:23). They feel **no need** for it; and they utterly reject it in unbelief as silly, ridiculous, completely unnecessary, and even disgusting! Thus they blind themselves "*lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them,*" St. Paul writes in II Corinthians chapter 4. Is it any wonder, then, that the writer to the Hebrews exhorts **US**, saying, "*Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; but exhort one another daily, while it is called Today, lest any of you be hardened thru the deceitfulness of sin! For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end!*" (Hebrews 3:12-14). May God grant that to us for Jesus' sake, as we continue in His Word to grow in grace and strength of faith by the power of the Holy Ghost unto life everlasting!

But we note yet in Luke's verbally-inspired words that, although the disciples' blindness and dullness had not yet **destroyed** their faith, it had **weakened them severely**, so that "*they understood none of these things.*" They were literally teetering on the very brink of disaster, so that even as Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, "**all the disciples,**" the Bible tells us, "**forsook Him and fled**" (Matthew 26:56; Mark 14:50). In their weakness they could not bear to see their Champion so mistreated, abused, and tortured, even though Jesus had tried to prepare them and to strengthen them well ahead of time. In their blindness, they blocked out from their understanding, so that they could not see it in their mind's eye, what Jesus was so clearly describing, speaking about **Himself**: "*He shall be delivered to the Gentiles, and shall be mocked and spitefully entreated, and spitted on; and they*

shall scourge Him, and put Him to death; and the third day He shall rise again.” Not only had the disciples failed to see Jesus as their suffering Redeemer and Savior in the prophecies of the **Old Testament**; they even looked away with revulsion from **Jesus’ own prophecy** of the *very same things*! For a scourged, mocked, crucified *Substitute-for-sinners* (as Isaiah had so clearly described Him in his 53rd chapter) was **inconsistent** in their blind thinking with the glorious **earthly Messiah** they had envisioned, their Savior from the Romans, their Meal-ticket through life, and the ready Healer of their bodies —even more valuable than a Physician of their souls!

No wonder the Savior had spoken so sharply to Peter in rebuke of this very thinking —just after that bold disciple had confessed Jesus to be “*the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). For when Jesus began to show the disciples then already how He would have to go up to Jerusalem to suffer and die and be raised again the third day (just as He repeated the same thing here, as Luke records His words), “*Peter took Him,*” Matthew tells us, “*and began to rebuke Him, saying, ‘Be it far from Thee, Lord! This shall not be unto Thee!’ But [Jesus] turned and said unto Peter, ‘Get thee behind me, Satan! Thou art an offense unto Me! For thou savorest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men!’*” (16:22-23). And yet, even after that sharp rebuke, in which the Lord warned that this blind, worldly kind of thinking was the **devil’s** work, yet **now** just before Jesus’ passion, these disciples **STILL** “*understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them; neither knew they the things which were spoken.*” — And that blindness *stuck with them* even after Jesus’ mighty **resurrection from the dead**, when He called them “*fools and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!*” (Luke 24:25) —yea, to the very day of His **ascension into heaven** forty days later when they supposed He would at that time “*restore again the kingdom to Israel*” as some kind of temporal Messiah (Acts 1:6)! Not until the Holy Spirit powerfully removed the stubborn spiritual cataracts from their eyes on the Day of Pentecost did they truly understand the “plan of salvation” and its **necessary cost** to their Redeemer!

Now *we too* in all honesty and humility must confess ourselves as well to be “*fools*” and often “*slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken.*” For, due to the weakness of our old sinful flesh, we frequently find ourselves groping about in spiritual nearsightedness to understand things concerning our salvation, looking often in all the wrong places to find the sayings that seem hidden from our eyes, and, at the

same time, reluctant to study, to search, to grow, and to abound in the priceless wisdom of God's Word! Like so many who are spiritually blind to divine truths, we often imagine ourselves in our foolishness to be *fully sighted* in spiritual matters, *adequately knowledgeable* concerning the doctrines of Holy Scripture, and *keen* in our *spiritual insight* — so much so that we don't NEED to grow! We can be our own authority, our own guide, our own teacher. Yes, sinful pride is **Satan's tool**, whereby he nurtures just such attitudes in the heart of many a Christian! And the really tragic thing about the blindness he creates is that it is so DECEPTIVE! "*Wherefore,*" writes Paul to the Corinthians (and also to us), "*let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed, lest he fall!*" (I Corinthians 10:12). The nearsighted person who rejects diagnosis and refuses to wear glasses **thinks** he can see just fine! Not until he falls on his face does he recognize just how blind he has been! And for some, *spiritual* knowledge, *spiritual* sight, comes **too late**; for Satan has already devoured them; and they are lost eternally!

And so, as the Savior comes to us this Lenten season and invites us: "*Behold, we go up to Jerusalem*" —to witness once again in the pages of His holy Word *what great things He has done for us and for our salvation*— instead of despising the age-old *Passion History*, read again in our churches during the coming weeks for our learning, as something "we know already" (having heard it from our youth); instead of passing off special Lenten meditations, sermons, and services as so much "re-hash" of "old material," let us learn from our consideration of Luke's inspired words before us to **relish** the Savior's precious instruction, and to **pray** as we hear and study and learn and grow in His grace: "*Open Thou **our** eyes!*" (Psalm 119:18); "*Lord, increase **our** faith!*" (Luke 17:5); yea,

Lord, in loving contemplation
fix our hearts and eyes on Thee
till we taste Thy full salvation
and Thine unveiled glory see!

(TLH 155, 5)

—D. T. M.



Remembering Luther's Death

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” —Hebrews 13:7



Luther's Grave in Wittenberg, Germany

February 18th — This date on the calendar certainly passes by virtually unnoticed with the vast majority of people. This would also probably be the case even with many who want to be known as Lutherans. But for at least a few who bear this name, February 18th does not pass by unheeded because it commemorates the death of Martin Luther,

God's hero of the Reformation, who died on February 18, 1546. Someone might ask: "Why should our *Concordia Lutheran* devote an article to the consideration of Luther, since he was only a man?" Indeed he was, but the Lord earnestly exhorts us in the title-text above to "*remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God, whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation*" (Hebrews 13:7). Those who have proclaimed the sacred truths of God's Word unto us in all of their purity should be held in the very highest esteem and love within our hearts. And if they were also very zealous in striving to live according to the Word which they preached, then we are also to follow their example. And no one since the days of the Apostle Paul has given us such an unsurpassed example as has Dr. Martin Luther. Listen to the words of Dr. Henry Halley, who is so well-known for his book, ***Bible Handbook*** (over 2 million in print), and who was not even a Lutheran: "*Martin Luther next to Jesus and Paul, the Greatest Man of all the ages*" (page 787).

To behold how Luther dies, we must go to his death-bed. We find Luther, not in the city of Wittenberg, but rather in Eisleben, the city of his birth. In January of the year 1546, Luther went to Eisleben at the invitation of the two counts of Mansfeld to settle a dispute between them. At that time, Luther, who was 63 years old and ill, readily accepted the invitation. On the 23rd of January, he left Wittenberg after he had

preached his last sermon in that city. His three sons and a servant accompanied him. Arriving in Halle, Luther was then joined by Dr. Jonas, his colleague and friend. The journey from Wittenberg to Eisleben was about 80 miles. After a very difficult and dangerous trip, Luther arrived in Eisleben, where he received a joyous welcome. Already the next day, the proceedings of the dispute between the two counts was to begin. The following weeks proved very trying. The tangled affairs of the princes and the constant wrangling of their lawyers taxed Luther's patience. In addition to these labors, he was asked to preach four times and participated in the observance of the Lord's Supper and the ordination of two pastors. Luther's friends noted that frequent references to death and of the life everlasting crept into his conversations, and several times he was observed standing before his bedroom window deeply lost in prayer.

On February 17th the dispute between the princes was finally brought to a happy conclusion. But during the day, Luther's sons and close friends had noticed his apparent fatigue and had urged him to rest. After the evening meal, his sons followed their father to his rooms; for they did not wish him to be left alone. Luther complained of sharp pains in his chest and was given some medicine. About nine o'clock, he fell asleep and slept quietly for nearly an hour. When he awoke, he seemed surprised that the others had not retired; but his friends were gravely concerned about him. About two o'clock in the morning, Luther suffered another attack; but it soon passed, and he again fell into a light sleep.

The third attack was much more severe, and the physicians who were quickly summoned knew that the end was near. Luther himself was also aware of this and told his colleague, Jonas, "I shall remain here in Eisleben where I was born and baptized." In spite of his weakness, Luther prayed and recited passages from Scripture. He prayed, "O my heavenly Father, one God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Thou God of all comfort, I thank Thee, that Thou hast revealed to me Thy dear Son, in whom I believe, whom I have preached and confessed, whom I have loved and praised, and whom the pope and all the godless persecute and blaspheme. I beseech Thee, Lord Jesus Christ, let my soul be commended unto Thee. O heavenly Father, although I must leave this body and be taken out of this life, I am confident that I **shall** be by Thee forever and no one can pluck me out of Thy hands." Luther recited John 3:16, "*For God so loved the world...*" Then he recited in Latin three times, "*Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit; Thou hast redeemed me, Thou faithful God.*" After that he became quiet and lay

there with his eyes closed. Dr. Jonas, his professor-friend, finally asked him, "Reverend Father, will you die in the name of Christ and the doctrine you have preached?" Luther replied, "Yes," so distinctly that the whole group heard it. Fourteen individuals were present in that room and witnessed his dying declaration. Luther then fell asleep in Jesus between two and three o'clock on Thursday morning, February 18, 1546.

The news that Luther had died soon spread far and wide. A funeral sermon by his colleague, Dr. Jonas, was held in the church in Eisleben, where Luther had preached his last sermon. His body was then taken back to the city of Wittenberg, where another funeral service was conducted in the Castle Church. Melancthon, another colleague on the faculty of the University, preached a very stirring sermon in which he compared Luther to Moses. He also pointed out the fact that Luther's anger had never been unloosed for personal gain or satisfaction but only when he saw that the Gospel was being hindered or the Christian faith maligned. After the service, Luther's body was lowered into the grave prepared beneath the floor of the church directly in front of the pulpit. (References: *Luther and His Times* by E. G. Schwiebert; *Martin Luther, His Life and His Labor* by William Dallmann; *Dr. Martin Luther, Lebensbild des Reformators* by A. L. Graebner)

What kind of faith did Luther have? Was it a faith that was simply based upon his own abilities or the feelings of his heart? Indeed not! By God's grace alone, his faith was built upon the firm and solid foundation of God's holy Word, the Word which will endure into all eternity. Luther did not trust his own wisdom, but he did trust God's Word. He was truly humble, for he willingly bowed to every word of Scripture. And, contrary to what many so-called Lutherans believe today, he firmly believed that every word in the Bible was God's Word and therefore without error. How unflinchingly he held to that Word! The Word of God was his comfort and hope in times of suffering and tribulation, his constant encouragement in the face of bitter opposition. The cause and the glory was not his, but God's. If Luther had preached and spread his own ideas and notions, then most assuredly we would be sinning, were we to follow his example; then he would have been nothing else than a tool of the devil. But, thanks be to God, he preached God's Word; and therefore our faith is not based upon Luther, the man, but rather upon God's Word, which, by God's enabling grace, he so courageously preached and confessed. How necessary that we hold steadfastly to that Word, lest we become like little children tossed to and fro with every wind of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14).

Luther's blessed death is a mighty incentive for us to follow his faith in God's Word. His faith rested so firmly in God's Word that he did not fight death, but rather he welcomed it as the transition from this vale of tears into the everlasting joys of heaven. He possessed the desire of the Apostle Paul: "*I have a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better*" (Philippians 1:23). The famous composer, Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750), had that desire and expressed the same in his well-known chorale, "*Komm süßer Tod!*" ("*Come sweet death*"). Do we possess such a desire? How many people are afraid to die; yes, how many simply do not want to die. If they are terrified of the prospect of everlasting damnation and do not place their confidence in Christ as their Redeemer from sin, death, and the devil, then, obviously, they do not possess saving faith in the Lord Jesus, who declares with an oath: "*Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life*" (John 6:47)! Many are so bound up in the things of this world and stubbornly cling to the corruptible things of this earth to such an extent that they do not want to leave it. On the other hand, some have such guilty consciences because of their sins that they fear to die and stand before the Judgment Seat of God. But every sincere Christian, living in daily repentance and being dressed by faith in the blood and righteousness of Jesus, has nothing to fear, "*for there is now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus*" (Romans 8:1). The Savior has washed all of our sins away with His holy and precious blood. He has destroyed the power of the devil, abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel so that we may die cheerfully, knowing that a glorious crown of righteousness awaits us. "*Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward*" (Hebrews 10:35). We shall see our dear Savior, who shall wipe away all our tears; and, with glorified bodies, we shall sing praises to all eternity unto "*the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world*" (Revelation 13:8)! for sinners, slain into all eternity!

Luther did not trust his own wisdom, but he did trust God's Word. He was truly humble, for he willingly bowed to every word of Scripture. And, contrary to what many so-called Lutherans believe today, he firmly believed that every word in the Bible was God's Word and therefore without error.

—M. L. N.

OFFICIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

It is my sad duty to announce that St. Stephen's Ev. Lutheran Church of Wilmot, South Dakota, has decided to follow its pastor in his sinful separatism from our fellowship (See *Concordia Lutheran*, Vol. LI, Nos. 11-2, November-December, 2006, pp. 202-203) by severing its fifty-five year relationship with our Conference. In a letter dated November 27, 2006, received by your president two months later because it had been mislaid by one of the Wilmot voters and was not sent until late in January, St. Stephen's stated that it had "decided to remove itself from fellowship with the Concordia Lutheran Conference" because, in its view, "there is not and has not been unanimity in the Conference congregations on this matter," that is, on the matter of modern worldly social dancing. What the congregation failed to state is that the alleged lack of unanimity was in large part caused by its own pastor who, according to his own admission, had hypocritically professed his *agreement* with us on the basis of God's Word but had for twelve years personally believed (and practiced) the very opposite while pretending to be our brother.

The congregation also stated: "When a casual intrusion of error becomes doctrine, then 'in vain do they worship Me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men' (Matt. 15:9)." Yet they fail to cite so much as one word from our published position (held consistently by orthodox Lutherans for well over 100 years, see *C. L.* cited above, pp. 204-207), fail to point out and establish from Holy Scripture any error in it, and fail to show that they have ever admonished us for it. There has been no "intrusion of error," *casual* or otherwise; and no error has ever "become doctrine" among us. Moreover, our consistent application of Sixth Commandment principles to lustful forms of entertainment is completely Scriptural. There has never been, nor is there at present, a so-called "doctrine of the dance" in our midst; but we continue by God's grace to hold that "whatever Scripture condemns, men dare not ignore, excuse or validate. Neither subjective judgment, common custom, social venue, or a claimed pious motive makes pure what God has forbidden" (*Reaffirmation of our Scriptural Position...*, 2004).

Finally, St. Stephen's stated: "Indeed, some of the congregations have not even been informed of the reason for Pastor Stallings' leaving the

Conference [June, 2004] two years after the fact. Is it that there is something to hide perhaps?" St. Stephen's and our readers are directed to the July-August 2004 issue of the *Concordia Lutheran* in which Pastor Stallings' defection was reported on in detail in an "Official Notice" and in the "Convention Digest," and in which the reaffirmation of our Scriptural position was printed in full. St. Stephen's lack of information is certainly not of our making.

—Rev. Edward J. Worley, President

Blasphemy!



The message that appeared just prior to the Super Bowl on the bulletin board of a Tinley Park, Illinois sectarian church is an example of blatant *blasphemy*. It demonstrates gross despoliation of God, trivializing His divine

majesty by making of Him a partisan sports fan. It shows irreverence toward His Word, attributing to Him in a parody of Genesis 1:14-19 a sports cheer. And it makes a mockery of His omnipotence by placing the result of a football game on a par with His creation of the lights in the heavens. Such trivialization of God and of His holy Word is not "cute." It does not belong to "a good sense of humor." Blasphemy is not only base, tasteless, and crude; it is a **gross sin** against God's Second Commandment (Exodus 20:7). In the Old Testament, according to God's political law, it was punishable with death by stoning (Leviticus 24:16), and its "wages" still today is eternal death in hell (Romans 6:23). Moreover, when those who purport to be "Christians" and to lead a "Christian life" engage in such blatant mockery of God and His Word, "*the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through [them]*" (Romans 2:17ff., specifically v. 24). From this preserve us, Heavenly Father!

—Ed.

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300 North Ridgeland Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302 Telephone: (708) 386-6773

Sunday School & Bible Class 9:00 a.m.
Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue
Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145

E-mail: robertjlietz@yahoo.com





*A Lamb goes uncomplaining forth,
the guilt of all men bearing;
and laden with the sins of earth,
none else the burden sharing!
Goes patient on, grows weak and faint,
to slaughter led without complaint,
that spotless life to offer;
bears shame, and stripes,
and wounds, and death,
anguish, and mockery, and saith,
“Willing all this I suffer.”*

TLH 142