

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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**“Now IS
Christ
risen from
the dead!”**

—1 Corinthians 15:20





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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.

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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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Why Was It Necessary for Our Savior to Be True God?

*“Without controversy, great is the mystery of Godliness:
God was manifest in the flesh.” — I Timothy 3:16*

It is indeed a great *mystery* — a fact that defies human reason and exceeds the ability of human understanding to comprehend it — that the eternal “*Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16), without beginning and without end, could have (and would have deigned to have) been “*manifest in the flesh*,” to have *taken upon Him the form of a servant* and to have been *made in the likeness of men* (Philippians 2:7). Nevertheless, on the basis of clear and unmistakable Scripture, we recognize and profess the sacred truth that, for our redemption and salvation, **the eternal Son of God**, the “*only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth*” (John 1:14b), “*the Word*,” as John calls Him by inspiration of the Holy Ghost, “*became flesh and dwelt among us*” (v. 14a). It is the holy incarnation of the **Son of God** that we celebrate on Christmas Day, a “*mystery*” that is indeed “*great*” and yet “*without controversy*,” a fact not to be disputed, denied or even argued about. Sadly, however, as we pointed out in our article in the previous issue, all too many who celebrate Christmas either miss the “*mystery*” altogether or outright deny it and regard Christmas merely as the commemoration of the birth of “the baby Jesus” who would grow up to be a great teacher, a spiritually-gifted healer, a social activist reaching out to the poor and disadvantaged, a preacher of love among human beings struggling to achieve

peace in their lives, a philosopher whose ideas were far ahead of His time, and “providentially” a martyr to His own cause when political opponents mistakenly resented His influence among the people, rejected His testimony that He was the long-promised *Messiah*, and “*killed the Prince of Life*” (Acts 3:15). Thus we recognize the great tragedy, even among nominal “Christians” who are acquainted with the Scriptures, that many have bought into the so-called “social gospel” of modernism and deny that “*the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger*” (Luke 2:12) was truly “*the Son of God*” (Luke 1:35), “*God manifest in the flesh*” (I Timothy 3:16), “*very God of very God ...being of one substance with the Father*” (Nicene Creed), and regard Him merely as a fellow human being.

But the question “Why did our Savior *have to be True GOD?*” and the reasons why this is a primary fundamental doctrine of our faith is absolutely *critical* to our *redemption* and *justification*, and is therefore a fitting focus of our meditation in this holy season of Lent.

The question is asked certainly by those who find themselves in “*controversy*” regarding “*the mystery of Godliness*” and muse about whether the incarnation of God was even possible in the first place, but then also by those who speculate as to whether God could have reconciled sinful man to Himself without a Savior who was “*Christ, the Lord*” (Luke 2:11). Let us first of all, to set aside any “*controversy*,” settle on the fact clearly set forth in Scripture that, “*when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son, made of a woman*” (Galatians 4:4). The “*mystery of Godliness*” became a **fact of record** when “*God was manifest in the flesh.*”

In the **Old Testament** Scriptures, the promised Savior and anointed Redeemer or *Messiah*, the “*Seed*” of the woman (Genesis 3:15), Abraham’s “*Seed*” (Genesis 22:18; cf. Galatians 3:16), “*Shiloh*” (Genesis 49:10), “*the Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6), was consistently identified as **True God**, “*the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Savior*” (Isaiah 43:3), “*the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father*” (Isaiah 9:6), “*my Lord*” (Psalm 110:1; cf. Matthew 22:43-45), David’s “*righteous Branch*” and “*a King*” whose name should be called, “*The Lord, our Righteousness*” (Jeremiah 23:5-6), etc. Those were “*the Holy Scriptures*” specifically identified by St. Paul as having been known by Timothy since childhood, as having been “*given by inspiration of God*” (II Timothy 3:15-16), and as being “*able to make [Timothy] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus,*” **Jesus the Messiah**. “*To Him [“Jesus Christ...Lord of all” (Acts 10:36)] give all the [Old Testament] prophets witness, that through His Name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins*” (v. 43).

And the **New Testament** Scriptures throughout continue to identify God's *Anointed One*, the Redeemer, "*the Christ*" [Hebrew: "*Messiah*"] as **True God**, "*The [Eternal] Word*" and the **Creator** of "*all things*" (John 1:1-5), the "*only begotten of the Father*" (v. 14); and the same Scriptures positively identify Jesus of Nazareth, born of the Virgin Mary, as "*the Son of God*" (Luke 1:35); they confirm it time after time in His teaching and in His miracles, at His baptism and transfiguration in the voice of God the Father from heaven, in the confession of His disciples, in His own unequivocal testimony (in passages too numerous to cite here), and in His sworn testimony in court which was used by His enemies as "evidence" of His "*blasphemy*" (Matthew 26:63-66; Mark 14:61-64; Luke 22:70-71; John 10:33-39; 19:7). Those who dare to claim that "Jesus never said that He was the Son of God" are manifestly (and willingly) ignorant of the Scriptures! We can rightly ask them (as Jesus asked the Pharisees in Matthew 19:3), "*Have ye not read??*"

The Scriptural evidence, both in the Old and New Testaments, is overwhelming that Jesus of Nazareth **IS** in fact "**true God** begotten of the Father from eternity and also **true man** born of the Virgin Mary," our Lord and our Redeemer (Luther, *Second Article*, "What does this mean?"). The evidence is incontrovertible that establishes, supports and sustains as **true** "*the mystery of Godliness,*" namely, that "**God** was manifest in the flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16), the mystery that is necessary to be believed for our salvation.

Having then conclusively demonstrated who our Savior **was** from all eternity and indeed still **IS** to all eternity, we now ask, as we asked in our previous article (January-February 2017) concerning the Savior's true humanity, **WHY** was it **necessary** that He be also **true God??**

We reiterate in consideration of that question that, according to His eternal, holy, perfect, impartial and uncompromising **JUSTICE**, God demands **perfection** of every human being (Leviticus 11:44; 19:2; 20:7; Matthew 5:48; etc.), including **perfect obedience** to His **holy Law** (Luke 10:28; Romans 10:5; Galatians 3:12), a demand which He is perfectly entitled to make of those whom He created "*in righteousness and true holiness*" after His own image (Genesis 1:26-27, 31; Ephesians 4:24; etc.). Indeed, God's **perfect JUSTICE** demands **perfect righteousness** on the part of every soul of man for entrance into His heavenly kingdom (Psalm 1:5-6; Matthew 13:43; 25:46b; Luke 10:28; etc.).

Tragically, through the fall of man into sin (Genesis 3:1ff.) and Adam's disobedience (Romans 5:19a) "[*the (Greek)*] **many** were made sin-

ners.” “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23). “*There is none righteous, no not one; there is none that understandeth; there is none that seeketh after God; there are all gone out of the way; they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (vv. 10-12). “*There is not a just man upon earth that doth good and sinneth not*” (Ecclesiastes 7:20). “*Therefore by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin*” (Romans 3:20). No human being is **capable** of the righteousness demanded by God for reconciliation, for forgiveness, for justification, for eternal salvation. Therefore the Psalmist writes by inspiration of God: “*None of **them** [sinful human beings] can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious*” (Psalm 49:7-8a).

In order to avert the **dire consequence** of sin upon all mankind, namely, that since “*all have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23), since “*there is none righteous, no, not one*” (Romans 3:10; cf. Ecclesiastes 7:20), and since “***no man** is justified by the Law in the sight of God*” (Galatians 3:11) and therefore **no man** is worthy of eternal life, that all men be **DAMNED** as “*the wages of [their] sin*” (Romans 6:23a), God devised a way in which He could **justly, rightly, and legitimately** impute righteousness to the unrighteous (Romans 4:5) that they might be saved. In order to reconcile the entire world of the ungodly unto Himself (II Corinthians 5:19) without partiality (Acts 10:34), He had to insist that the demands of His divine justice were satisfied without reducing its legislative requirements; and He had to demonstrate the extent of His divine mercy without requiring works as a partial payment for the exercise of His favor.

Thus it was **necessary** that God “anoint” as His *Messiah*, as His *Christ*, as the Redeemer of mankind (I Peter 1:20), “***His Son***” (Galatians 4:4a), “***the Lord our Righteousness***” (Jeremiah 23:6b), to **take our place** under the Law and to **do for us, in our stead**, what we are *incapable* of doing, namely, to “***keep the whole Law** and [NOT] offend in one point*” (James 2:10), “*so [that] by the obedience of One [namely, “the Holy One of Israel,” (Isaiah 43:3)] shall [the] many [the ‘all [who] have sinned and come short of the glory of God’] be **MADE righteous***” (Romans 5:19). “*The redemption of their soul is **precious***” (Psalm 49:8a), and only **the Son of God** Himself was capable of **perfect compliance** with the Law and capable of offering to His heavenly Father His **active obedience** so that **His righteousness** could be imputed to sinful mankind as God’s free gift to cover all their iniquities and transgressions (Psalm 32:1-2; 85:2-3; Romans 4:6-8) and to remove those sins from His holy sight and remembrance (Isaiah 38:17; Hebrews 8:12).

Moreover, **God's perfect JUSTICE** also demands **full retribution** and **unremitting punishment** for sin upon every soul of man and for any and every transgression of the Law in thoughts, desires, words and deeds (Ezekiel 18:4b), as well as for the guilt incurred because of Adam's transgression, including man's inability because of "original sin" to be perfect and holy (Romans 5:18, 19a). It was therefore **necessary** that our Savior be **true God**, so that His **passive obedience** as He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows (Isaiah 53:4), His **suffering and death** in which He endured "*the wages of sin*," the agony of the damned (Matthew 27:46), as our *Substitute*, would be **sufficient punishment** according to God's justice to pay the penalty of **our** guilt and the guilt of **all mankind**. Thus it **had to be** that "**Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God**" (I Peter 3:18). Thus it **had to be** that Christ as "**true God** begotten of the Father from eternity," the "*Lamb without blemish and without spot*" (I Peter 1:19), "*slain from the foundation of the world*" (Revelation 13:8b), became "*the Propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world*" (I John 2:2). **What a price** was **necessary** for our redemption, justification and salvation — the fact that **GOD had to die**, in the person of Jesus Christ!!

Finally, it was **necessary** that our Savior be **true God** so that He could **destroy death and the devil** for us. The writer to the Hebrews tells us by inspiration of the Holy Ghost that we human beings, since the fall of Adam and Eve, have, by virtue of sin and the fear of sin's "*wages*" (Romans 6:23), been "*subject to bondage*," bondage to "*him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*" (Hebrews 2:14-15). It was hell, the place of "*everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels*" (Matthew 25:41), that had been the abode of Satan since he and his evil angels rebelled against God shortly after their creation. Hell is quite literally a "prison house" of confinement in "*chains of darkness*" (II Peter 2:4), "*everlasting chains under darkness*" (Jude 6), a place of permanent abandonment by God in which all unbelievers share the fate of their father, the devil, upon temporal death (Luke 16:22b-23) and continuing into eternity after the Last Judgment (Matthew 25:41 and 46). **Eternal death** in hell is "*the wages of sin*" (Romans 6:23), what each and every sinner has earned and well deserves because of his transgression of God's Law; and to that punishment he is in "*bondage*" by nature according to God's justice (Galatians 3:10).

Redemption from "*the curse of the Law*" (Galatians 3:13), redemption from the curse of eternal death, is not possible for **man** to achieve, as the Psalmist declared by inspiration of God, "*None of them* [human beings] *can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious*" (Psalm 49:7-8a). Therefore our Redeemer **had to be true God** in order to pur-

chase our release from the “*bondage*” to which God justly curses all sinful mankind, from the “*bondage*” that Christ, as **true man**, took upon Himself as our Substitute when He was “*made under the Law*” (Galatians 4:4; cf. Isaiah 53:8; II Corinthians 5:21; I Peter 2:24; Galatians 3:13), and from which He, as **true God**, “*redeemed*” us (I Peter 1:18) with the price that His Father’s justice demanded, the price that no mere man could render, the price not valued in terms of cold, hard cash, the price not payable “*with corruptible things as silver and gold*” (v. 18a), “*but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot*” (v. 19). Thus the **God-Man**, Jesus Christ, the only truly-precious One, by **His** innocent **suffering and death**, won “*the victory*” over sin, “*the sting of death,*” as Paul calls it in I Corinthians 15:56a, and from the curse of the Law in its wages, which he calls “*the strength of sin*” (v. 56b), so that the “*bondage*” to which we and all human beings were subject by nature is now **broken**. We have been “*delivered*” by Him from the “*fear of death*” and the threat of the prison house of hell, and Satan is now defeated and has no power rightfully to accuse us before God (Romans 8:33-34). As prophesied of old (Genesis 3:15), Christ, *the woman’s Seed*, “**God... manifest in the flesh**” (I Timothy 3:16), “*accomplished*” [tetelēstai, John 19:30 (cf. John 17:4)] the bruising of Satan’s head (which man could never do), as the propitiation of God’s justice for man’s reconciliation (I John 2:2; Romans 5:10; II Corinthians 5:19; etc.), the very purpose for which Christ was “*manifested*” or made known in the fullness of time: “*For this purpose the Son of God was manifested that He might destroy the works of the devil*” (I John 3:8), “*that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life*” (John 3:16b), no longer living in “*fear of death,*” no longer “*all [his] lifetime subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:15). Instead he will have for His very own, by faith in God’s mercy for Christ’s sake, “*peace with God*” (Romans 5:1), the “**righteousness**” that Christ earned for every soul of man (Romans 5:18) imputed to him by faith (Romans 3:22; 4:3; Isaiah 61:10; etc.), and all the blessings of redemption purchased and won for all by His innocent suffering and death (John 1:29; II Corinthians 5:15a; I John 2:2) and received by faith in His merits alone (Acts 10:43; 26:18; Galatians 3:14; James 1:12; etc.): **Forgiveness of sins, life and salvation!**

Since Christ hath full atonement made
and brought to us salvation,
each Christian therefore should be glad
and rest on this foundation:
“Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead;
Thy death is now my life indeed,
for Thou hast paid my ransom.”

“O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!!” (I Corinthians 15:55-57). That victory was **won** by *“His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,”* who was *“declared to be **the Son of God** with power...by the resurrection from the dead”* (Romans 1:3-4). That *“victory”* was **manifested** when *“our Lord Jesus Christ,”* quickened from the dead on Easter morning according to His Word (John 2:19 and 22; Matthew 17:9b, 20:19; Mark 8:31, 9:9 and 31, 10:34; Luke 18:33; 24:7, 46), descended into hell, not to suffer but to declare His victory over His enemies! That *“victory”* was **demonstrated** *“by many infallible proofs”* (Acts 1:3) when He visibly rose from the dead and appeared to His disciples as *chosen witnesses* (Acts 10:40-41) to the fact that God *“for our justification”* (Romans 4:25) had accepted the sacrifice of His Son for the reconciliation of the world (II Corinthians 5:19; I John 2:2; cf. *Catechism* Q/A 152C). That *“victory”* is **assured** personally to all believers by Him *“who shall change our vile body that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body”* (Philippians 3:21), like unto Him who is *“the Firstfruits [the Prototype] of them that slept”* (I Corinthians 15:20). It is *because* Jesus Christ is truly **the Son of God**, who won for us the victory over sin, death and the devil, that all true believers shall on the Last Day rise with glorified bodies to everlasting life in heaven!

Jesus lives! The victory's won!
 Death no longer can appal me.
 Jesus lives! Death's reign is done!
 From the grave Christ will recall me.
 God is faithful! Doubting hence!
 This shall be my confidence!

(TLH 201, 1 and 2, adapted)

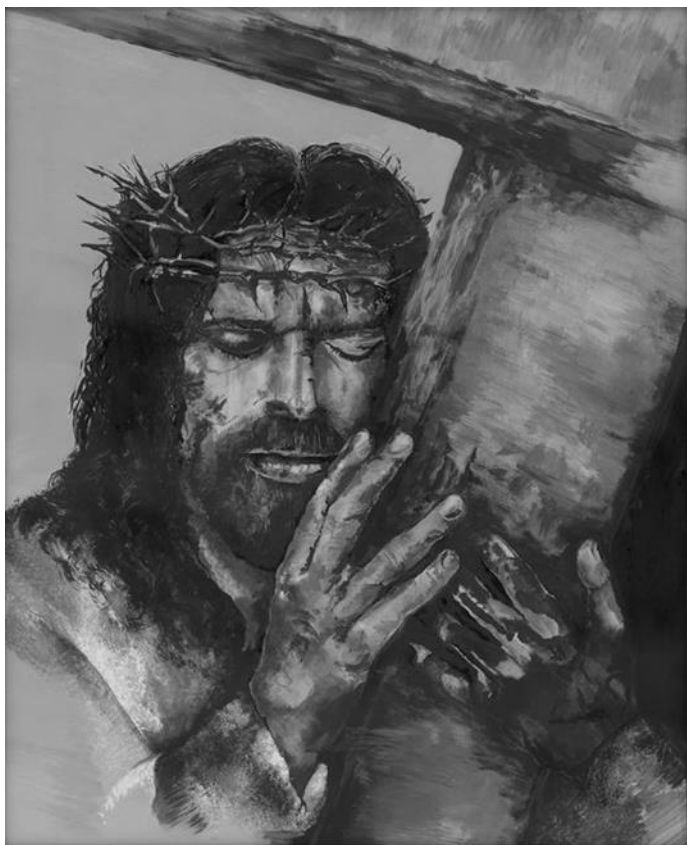
— D. T. M.

“The right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and man of the substance of His mother, born in the world; perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting; equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, and inferior to the Father as touching His manhood; who, although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ — one, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking the manhood into God; one altogether, not by confusion of substance but by unity of person. For, as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ, who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; He ascended into heaven; He sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty, from whence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.”

—*Athanasian Creed* (Excerpted)

The All-Sufficiency of Christ's Passive Obedience for Our Redemption

*"Now where remission of these [sins] is,
there is no more offering for sin."* —Hebrews 10:18



We

Lu-

therans are often accused of being “obsessed with terminology” when we teach and discuss the doctrines of Holy Scripture, terminology that is nowhere found in the Bible and terminology that hopelessly confuses all but professional theologians with its complexity. And our most reactionary critics, particularly from among the sects, allege that this ter-

minology amounts to a stumblingblock [an offense, *skandalon*] which discourages simple people from studying Christian doctrine and may even prevent them from being saved and from coming to the knowledge of the truth (I Timothy 2:4). In point of fact, however, terminology which briefly and accurately describes a Biblical truth or a doctrinal concept is merely a short-cut intended to *simplify* that which otherwise might require a lengthy explanation. Actually, *most* of our terminology is taken directly from the words of Holy Writ [terms like *redemption* (Romans 3:24, etc.), *justification* (Romans 4:25, etc.), *sanctification* (I Thessalonians 4:3), *regeneration* (Titus 3:5), *inspiration* (II Timothy 3:16), and the like]. No one seems to have trouble with *secular* terminology that describes everyday processes and concepts (*aerobic* exercise, *internal combustion* engines, *microwave* ovens, and *Internet* access), but Christ's *vicarious atonement* and His *passive obedience* in particular, as rendering payment-in-full for the sins of the world, is just "too much." The critics need a *reality check*, and they would do well to spend their time in searching the Scriptures (John 5:39) rather than in striving about words to no profit (II Timothy 2:14)!

The word "atonement," found well over seventy times in the Bible, means, according to its dictionary definition, "satisfaction given for wrongdoing" and, theologically understood in the light of the New Testament, "the effect of Jesus' sufferings and death in redeeming mankind and bringing about the reconciliation of God to man" (*Webster's New World Dictionary*, 2nd College Edition). "Vicarious" means "taking the place of another thing or person; endured, suffered, or performed by one person in place of another" (Webster, *op. cit.*). Thus, the term ***vicarious atonement*** simply describes *the payment-in-full* that our Savior rendered to God as the ***Substitute*** for sinners in order to ***satisfy divine justice*** — the "*propitiation*" or all-sufficient compensation which He Himself *became* (I John 2:2) and which He offered to God (Hebrews 9:14) in the stead of sinful mankind in view of which God reconciled the world unto Himself, "*not imputing their trespasses unto them*" (II Corinthians 5:19). Thus Christ, as the Substitute for sinners, fulfilled **BOTH** the **legislative** demands of God's Law (e.g., "*Ye shall be holy!*" Leviticus 19:2) by His life of perfect righteousness (His ***active obedience***, i.e., what He *DID*) **AND** the **punitive** demands of God's Law (e.g., "*The soul that sinneth, it shall die,*" Ezekiel 18:4) by His suffering and death (His ***passive obedience***, i.e., what He *ENDURED*). It is the latter, His "***passive obedience***," that we address in particular when we speak of Christ's work of **redemption**, what He did *literally* to "**buy sinners back**" from "*the curse of the Law*" (Galatians 3:10, 13), namely, from "*the wages of sin*" (Romans 6:23), from everlasting death in hell.

In order properly to understand this concept, it is necessary to recognize and acknowledge **an undeniable fact** —undeniable because it is stated

in the plain words of Holy Scripture in passage after passage: “*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*” (Romans 3:23); “*There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not*” (Ecclesiastes 7:20); “*They are all gone aside; they are altogether become filthy; there is none that doeth good, no, not one*” (Psalm 14:3; cf. Psalm 53:3); “*Death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned*” (Romans 5:12); “*If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His Word is not in us*” (I John 1:10); and “*We [even we Christians] are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags*” (Isaiah 64:6). Consequently it is **impossible** for sinful men, by what they themselves **DO**, to “pay off” their Divine Creditor for their iniquities and transgressions and sins, to assuage His righteous wrath against them, and to escape the just consequences that His holy Law prescribes as **punitive satisfaction** for their sins: “*The wages of sin is death*” (Romans 6:23), eternal death in hell. When a person suffers sin’s wages, he languishes in that inescapable “*place of torment*” forever (Luke 16:23, 28) and can never enter into eternal life; for “damnation” and “salvation” are mutually exclusive. And, since we are unable to save *ourselves* from the curse of the Law, so we are also incapable of helping or ransoming or redeeming *anyone else* by any sacrifice of our own, since it would not be “*precious*” enough to satisfy God’s justice and to secure *anyone’s* release from the curse of the Law. The Psalmist writes: “*None of them [i.e. sinful mortals] can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him; for the redemption of their soul is precious*” (Psalm 49:7-8). Thus Luther found, on the basis of Scripture, that a bogus “indulgence” from punishment, purchased on behalf of oneself or on behalf of another, is useless for remitting the consequences of sin and is a fraud perpetrated upon panic-stricken souls seeking to avoid sin’s wages apart from (or in addition to) the redemptive merit of Christ.

But “*Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the Law, being made a curse for us*” (Galatians 3:13). As the Substitute for sinners, Christ bore the guilt of all mankind, as if He Himself had been the transgressor; for “[God had] made Him who knew no sin to be sin **for us**, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (II Corinthians 5:21). Thus “*Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God*” (I Peter 3:18). The Law condemns both sin and the sinner; and, apart from Christ and His vicarious atonement, God hates both sin and the sinner (Psalm 5:5). God declares according to His justice: “*The soul that sinneth, it shall die!*” (Ezekiel 18:4) and “*The wages of sin is death!*” (Romans 6:23). “*Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them!*” (Galatians 3:10). Therefore the Prophet Isaiah says that the people who witnessed the Messiah’s suffering and death, as He was

“numbered with [or counted as being one of] *the transgressors*” by the execution detail on Calvary’s hill who crucified Him between two malefactors, “*did esteem [regard] Him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted*” (Isaiah 53:4). They regarded the suffering “*Christ, the King of the Jews,*” to be guilty-as-charged of blasphemy “*because He made Himself the Son of God*” (John 19:7) and therefore receiving not only the punishment of the Roman state but the punishment of **God Himself**. And so it was; for the Savior cried out from His cross (in fulfillment of Psalm 22:1), “*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me??*” (Matthew 27:46). As our Substitute, Christ was “*made to be sin for us*” (II Corinthians 5:21), **WAS** in fact guilty of the sins He had taken upon Himself, and was bearing, in our place, *vicariously*, the full brunt of God’s fierce wrath against sin and against the sinner. Thus Peter writes in his first epistle, chapter 2, that “[*Christ*] *His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness, by whose stripes ye were healed.*” (v. 24).

Therefore we Christians treasure, as a Scripture reading for Good Friday, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, as the “classical” prophecy of Christ’s *vicarious atonement* in His **PASSIVE OBEDIENCE**, as “**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. ...The Lord hath laid on **Him** the iniquity of **us all**. For the transgression of **my people** was **He** stricken. ...He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise **Him**; He hath put **Him** to grief. ...He shall see the travail of **His** soul and shall be **satisfied**; by **His** knowledge shall my righteous Servant justify **many**; for **He** shall bear **their** iniquities.” (Selected verses). And the Scriptures remind us that this *vicarious* satisfaction of God’s punitive justice was not just for Israel according to the flesh, but **for us** as well, and for **all mankind**. John the Baptist pointed to Jesus and declared: “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of **the world**” (John 1:29). The Apostle Paul stated it in the simplest of terms: “He died for **all**” (II Corinthians 5:15). And Peter writes of the precious value of His sacrifice: “Ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things as silver and gold..., but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world” (I Peter 1:18-20). Indeed, Christ became “the propitiation for **our** sins, and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the **whole world**” (I John 2:2). “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the **ungodly**. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth His love toward **us**, in that, while we were yet **sinner**s, Christ died for **us**” (Romans 5:6-8).

In the Old Testament, animals were slaughtered and offered as sacrifices to God, as tokens or symbols of the one Sacrifice that would truly atone for sin. They were precursors of the Savior's perfect sacrifice of Himself on the tree of the cross, "*but the body [the real thing] is of Christ*" (Colossians 2:17). The Passover lamb slaughtered at the time of the Exodus, whose blood was painted on the doors of the houses of the Israelites and whose flesh was eaten in haste by the people as they were about to be delivered from bondage in Egypt, is the very *best example* of that symbolism. Christ Himself, as a function of His *active* obedience, obeyed the command of God that the Passover be celebrated as a perpetual memorial of Israel's deliverance; and He and His disciples *ate the Passover* together (Matthew 26:17ff.; Mark 14:12ff.; Luke 22:11ff.) one last time (Luke 22:15-16) on "*the same night in which He was betrayed*" (I Corinthians 11:23). And immediately after finishing that symbolic supper, He instituted His *real Supper* of the New Testament, giving them His *true body* to eat and is *true blood* to drink "*for the remission of sins*" (Matthew 26:28). The connection between the Passover lamb and the "*Lamb of God*" (John 1:29) is inescapable when we read St. Paul's words in I Corinthians 5:7, "*For even Christ, **our Passover**, is sacrificed for us.*"

The wonderful Epistle to the Hebrews is truly the divine textbook that reveals and explains the relationship between the Old Testament with its symbolism and the New Testament with its fulfillment. Very particularly, the holy writer by inspiration of God explains the function of the priests of the Tabernacle (and later of the Temple), according to which they offered up sacrifices of slaughtered animals (bulls, goats, heifers, etc.) "*year by year continually*" (Hebrews 10:1) as visual reminders of the only sacrifice that *truly* atoned for sin, the sacrifice of Christ Himself. "*For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins*" (v. 4). However, "*by [God's] will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ **once for all**. And every [Old Testament] priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But this man [Christ], after He had offered **one sacrifice** for sins **forever**, sat down on the right hand of God, from henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For **by one offering** He hath perfected **forever** them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that He had said before, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days,' saith the Lord. 'I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.' Now where remission of these is, **there is no more offering for sin.***"

Christ's **one sacrifice** in atonement for the sins of the world was perfect and complete; redemption was made "***once for all** [people]*" (Hebrews

10:10) and not merely a “down payment” of sorts which we must supplement by our own works of merit. God now looks upon us differently than His justice would require apart from Christ’s redemptive work, and He is able to be gracious and merciful unto us without transgressing His divine justice, *“for He hath made Him who knew no sin to be sin FOR US, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him”* (II Corinthians 5:21 —Note that the word order here corresponds to the grammar of the Greek text.). Why had God “forsaken” **Him** on the cross? Why did **He** have to endure the God-forsakenness of damnation for the sins of the world imputed to Him? *“Now **once** in the end of the world hath **He** appeared to put away sin BY THE SACRIFICE OF HIM-SELF”* (Hebrews 9:26). Thus *“Christ also hath **once** suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that **He** might bring us to God”* (I Peter 3:18).

Since Christ has full atonement made
and brought to us salvation,
each Christian therefore should be glad
and build on this foundation:
Thy grace alone, dear Lord, I plead;
Thy death is now my life indeed,
for Thou hast paid my ransom!

(TLH 377, 6)

—D. T. M.



The Resurrection of Christ: Evidence of our Justification

"[Christ] was raised again for our justification."

Romans 4:25

Concerning the festive day of Christ's mighty resurrection from the dead, it is truly our great privilege to declare with the Psalmist: *"This is the day which **the Lord** hath made! We will rejoice and be glad in it!"* (118:24). For not only does the happy event we celebrate on Easter Sunday lift our spirits to lofty heights of exultation after the somber season of Lent; not only does the resurrection of our Savior completely vindicate Him as the very Son of God, whose doctrine is the unassailable truth; but the fact of Christ's bodily resurrection from the dead is absolutely **central** to the Christian faith, **basic** to the forgiveness of our sins, and **essential** to our hope of everlasting life with Him in heaven!!

Scoffers and skeptics who either deny outright or cast doubt upon the resurrection of Jesus are merely ignorant fools who can't recognize a simple fact when it stares them in the face! Why, the evidence is so overwhelmingly *in favor* of the resurrection that anyone who objectively examines it and puts the bias of unbelieving skepticism to the test of **evidence invariably** comes to the conclusion: *"He is risen! He is risen indeed!"* —And those so-called "theologians" who masquerade under Christ's name and yet play "fast and loose" with the Holy Scriptures, question their authenticity, inerrancy and authority, and deny the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead on Easter morning— they are **doubly** ignorant fools! For the Apostle Paul says in no uncertain terms, as we read in Paul's first letter to the Corinthians: *"If Christ be **not** risen, then is our preaching VAIN, and your faith is also VAIN! Yea, and we are found **false witnesses** of God, because we have testified of God that He **raised up** Christ!"* (I Corinthians 15:14-15). Whom do such "wolves in sheep's clothing" think they are jerking around??

No, my dearly-beloved, rejoicing Christians, our preaching is **not** "vain;" our faith is **not** "vain" or useless! Our confidence in Christ, our risen Savior, is **not misplaced** in Him! Our hope in Christ is **not** "in this life only," but in that which is *to come*! And we have the firm assurance that, for Jesus' sake, all our sins and iniquities have been **forgiven** and are buried in the tomb where our Redeemer lay because, as we learn from the title-text of this article, *"[Christ] was raised for [better translated, because of] our justification."*

To be sure, if Jesus Christ had gone through all the vicarious anguish and mockery and torture and death He endured *"because of our offenses,"* as St. Paul writes in the first portion of the verse before us, and

then, as the scoffers and so-called “modernistic theologians” dare to claim, was left by God to rot in His grave, Paul says in I Corinthians 15:17, “*our faith [would be] vain,*” we would be “*yet in our sins,*” and Jesus would have been the biggest **fraud** and **failure** the world had ever seen!! **Nothing** would have been “*finished*” or “*accomplished*” at all, despite Jesus’ triumphant cry from His cross (John 19:30)! And we would be plain **fools** for clinging to His cross, for trusting in the merit of His atoning sacrifice, for believing that “*the blood of Jesus Christ, [God’s] Son, cleanseth us from all sin.*”

But, my dear fellow-sinners and rejoicing believers, **have no fear** that God suddenly “trashed” His eternal decree of redemption, “wrote off” the suffering and the death of His only-begotten Son as having been a “bad idea,” was somehow “disappointed” with Jesus’ active and passive obedience in the place of sinners, deemed His vicarious sacrifice to have been **insufficient** on “second thought,” “called the whole thing off,” and **took back** the forgiveness which He granted “*in Christ*” to all mankind—yea, **rescinded** the reconciliation of the world unto Himself (II Corinthians 5:19) which He effected in eternity already (II Timothy 1:9; Titus 1:2; I Peter 1:20) in view of what His Son would accomplish in time (Revelation 13:8)! —God is not the “fool” that unbelievers make Him out to be! “*Christ is risen! He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!*” — And **why??** Why did God raise Him from the dead on the third day? — Not only to prove that Jesus is the Son of God ...not only to prove that His Word is the truth ...not only to show that He is capable of raising *our* bodies from the grave on the Last Day; ...but “*[Christ] was raised again for [i.e. because of] our justification,*” Paul writes in our title-text.

“*Justification*” is forgiveness, put in its simplest terms. By raising Jesus Christ, His only-begotten Son, from the dead, God the Father testified to all the world that His plan of redemption had been carried out to His full satisfaction; that He accepted the sacrifice of His Son as payment-in-full for the sins of the world; and that His perfect justice had been satisfied— both as to its **demands** and as to its **penalties**.

You see, God is not only perfectly merciful, gracious, and loving, although He *is* all those things—but only in Christ, our Savior. He is also perfectly holy and just. **Perfect justice** doesn’t simply “write off” our offenses. **Perfect justice** isn’t satisfied with an “attempt” at righteousness which falls short of the mark of the holiness that God demands! God took His justice out on Christ as our Substitute, demanding **perfection** of Him **in our place**, demanding not only that He fulfill the *legislative* demands of His Law in our place (by His *active* obedience), but demanding that He **pay** “*the wages of sin,*” the *punitive* requirement, in our stead (by His *passive* obedience). And, when Jesus **did all that**, when

He “**accomplished**” [*tetelestai* (John 19:30)] that with His holy life and with His innocent suffering and death, **God’s justice** had been **served**. His purpose all along, his *merciful* and *gracious* purpose “*in Christ*” (II Corinthians 5:19) was to justify the world, to forgive “**all men**” their trespasses, to remit their guilt, and to declare them righteous and reconciled unto Himself. This purpose Jesus made possible by His all-sufficient atoning sacrifice, **accepted by God** in your place and mine in **eternity already** (Rev. 13:8b), even though Jesus accomplished it *in time* (Galatians 4:4). You see, God being **God** (and not some odds-maker in Las Vegas!!) did not have to wait to see first whether His Son, in whom He is “*well-pleased*” (Matthew 3:17; 17:5; II Peter 1:17), would be able in time to **make good** on the eternal decree of redemption and to accomplish man’s atonement! It was already a “done deal” as far as HE was concerned! That’s why Adam and Eve, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah and all the patriarchs, yea, all the believers in the Old Testament, did not have to be consigned to some *limbus patrem* or “temporary holding tank of the fathers,” to wait for the resurrection of Jesus from the dead before they could have the forgiveness of their sins and justification in the sight of God!

“*[Christ] was raised again because of our justification,*” because God had already granted full and free forgiveness to all the world “*in Christ,*” because Christ’s sacrifice had earned it, because in the resurrection of His Son, God openly validated Christ’s vicarious atonement and declared it to have fully propitiated His justice! “*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,*” Paul writes in II Corinthians 5:19, “*not imputing [that is, not charging] their trespasses unto them.*” God’s act was a “forensic” or legal one, like that of a governor or president who grants a full and free pardon to a **guilty person** who was already charged under the law, indicted, tried, convicted, and sentenced to death by justice. “*If Christ be NOT raised,*” St. Paul declares by inspiration of God, “*your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins*” (I Corinthians 15:17) —for THEN reconciliation has **not** occurred; justification has **not** taken place; God has **gone back** on His Word; He still charges your sins against you; and “*through fear of death*” —living in constant terror of eternal death as the “*wages of sin*” (Romans 6:23a) — you and I would “*all our lifetime [still be] subject to bondage*” (Hebrews 2:15), looking forward in terror to the prisonhouse of hell!! “*But now IS Christ risen from the dead!*” (I Corinthians 15:20); “*He was raised again for OUR justification!*” —“**BECAUSE OF OUR justification,**” **BECAUSE** God had unilaterally, on *His* part, declared the **whole world** forgiven, righteous, and just in His holy sight **for Jesus’ sake**, in view of what Jesus perfectly and completely “*accomplished*” (John 19:30) in the stead of and on behalf of **all mankind!!**

Believe it! It’s absolutely true! You have **God’s Word** on it! **Cling to it** in childlike, simple, and humble confidence, as to the best news

ever to strike your ear! “Son, [daughter], be of **good cheer!** Thy sins be **forgiven thee!**” Your justification is an **accomplished fact** as witnessed “by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (I Peter 1:3). Now, says Paul in II Corinthians 5, verse 20, “*be ye reconciled to God*” by **laying hold** on that pardon **by faith**, by the confidence of the heart created by God Himself (Philippians 2:13) through the power of the Gospel (Romans 1:16) to reach out, as it were, with an undeserving hand to **grasp** and to **make your very own** the greatest gift ever bestowed, free and unencumbered, purchased and won by Christ, your risen and ever-living Savior, “*who was delivered because of your offenses, and was raised again because of your justification!*” **Rejoice**, and let the song of your grateful heart of faith burst forth and confidently declare with the hymnwriter:

“He **is** arisen!” Glorious word!
Now **reconciled** is God, my Lord!
The gates of heaven are open!
My Jesus did triumphant die,
and Satan’s arrows broken lie;
destroyed hell’s direst weapon!
Oh, hear! What cheer!
Christ, **victorious**, **RISETH glorious!** Life He giveth!
He was dead, but see, He **LIVETH!**

(TLH 189)

— D. T. M.



Walking with the Risen Savior in His Word

“And they said one to another, ‘Did not our heart burn within us while He talked with us by the way and while He opened to us the Scriptures?’” —Luke 24:32



Many of us have hanging in our homes the beloved painting of Jesus walking with two disciples on the way to Emmaus on Easter afternoon. And, although the occasion itself is specifically connected to the Savior’s mighty resurrection from the dead, and the content of their conversation was a discussion of what had just happened in Jerusalem and how all those things had been prophesied of old in the Holy Scriptures of *“Moses and all the prophets”* (v. 27), both the image of that intimate walk with the Savior and the content of His “Bible class” are truly timeless. As we wistfully look at the three figures standing on that dusty road shaded under the lush canopy of the forest, we can almost hear strains of “Abide with Me! Fast Falls the Eventide” (TLH 552) and imagine *ourselves* enjoying that blissful communion with the Lord Jesus and then inviting Him to spend even more time with *us* in *our* Christian home and family circle (v. 29).

We would hope, of course, that the picture has *just such* significance for us and for our dear people and is not merely decor to be displayed and dusted — as are many family Bibles on coffee tables and in book cases. And yet, Christian art, pictures and images should not just serve as *sentimental* “triggers” to evoke superficial emotionalism in us. For it is a cunningly-devised myth (II Peter 1:16a) and therefore a deceptive error that there is a “closer walk” with our Savior that involves something MORE than His indwelling presence (John 14:23) which we have by faith in Him (Ephesians 3:17a), a walk that requires “feeling” His presence and “experiencing” Him in our lives. And, closely attached to that error, is the false teaching (also a cunningly-devised myth) that God communicates with us apart from His written and spoken Word, the *Holy Scriptures*, and that therefore we should want to have, look for, and even expect personal, special revelations from our Savior as evidence of our communion with Him. Those who accept and trust in this latter myth often speak of prayer as a “dialog” with God in which they speak with Him and in which He answers them directly apart from the

Scriptures. We apply to all such the term “enthusiasts” [German: *Schwärmer*] to identify their fanatic, anti-Scriptural position and their insistence that the Holy Ghost works in the hearts of men apart from the Gospel and the Sacraments as the “means of grace.”

Jesus said to Thomas, who had demanded to *experience* His risen Savior with his *senses* (John 20:25): “*Blessed are they that have NOT **seen** and YET have **believed***” (v. 29b). The writer to the Hebrews defines faith as “*the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things **NOT seen***” (11:1); and that faith is created, strengthened, and preserved in us by the Holy Spirit of God **through His Word** (John 17:17, 20; I Peter 1:23; Romans 1:16; 10:17; John 8:31-32; I Peter 1:5; etc.), a “*more sure Word of Prophecy*” (II Peter 1:19) than even **eye-** and **ear-**witness testimony. Therefore, when Christ dwells in our hearts by faith (Ephesians 3:17a), we have His sure promise: “*Lo, I am with you [believers] **always**, even unto the end of the world*” (Matthew 28:20b) — “*whom having **not seen**, ye love; in whom, **though now ye see Him not**, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory*” (I Peter 1:8).

It is, of course, significant that even the two disciples walking with the risen Savior on that road to Emmaus did NOT **really** “see” Him **at all**, did not even recognize Him, “*while He talked with [them] by the way;*” for “*their eyes were holden that they should not know Him*” (Luke 24:16). When, therefore, we Christians pray the Savior to abide with us, when we utter that prayer also in our hymns and spiritual songs, we do not look for a visual manifestation, nor for an auditory manifestation, nor even for an emotional manifestation of Him that we can “experience” or perceive with our senses. For we already have **BETTER-THAN-THAT** in the certainty of His promises. We have His *mystical* presence with His indwelling in our hearts (Ephesians 3:17a); we have His personal *illocal* presence, also according to His human nature, “*even unto the end of the world*” (Matthew 28:20b); we have His *sacramental* presence in the Holy Supper of His true body and blood which we eat and drink in, with and under the visible elements of bread and wine (I Corinthians 11:24ff.); and we have His *repletive* presence, according to which He fills all things with His divine power and majesty (Ephesians 4:10). Concerning the Savior’s **presence** among us, therefore, we should “*be not faithless but believing*” (John 20:27b).

What was even **more striking** to the Emmaus disciples than the fact that they had actually walked with their risen Savior, in His visible presence, without even realizing it, was the **content** of their **conversation** with Him and what He had **revealed** to them. Note their words in our title-text: “*Did not our heart burn within us while He **talked** with us by the way and while He **opened to us the Scriptures?***” Though He seemed to

them to be “*only a stranger*,” they shared with Him the information that made them sad (v. 17), the fact that they had trusted in Jesus of Nazareth as a great prophet and as the Redeemer of Israel (vv. 19 and 21), the tragic news that the Jews had delivered Him to be condemned to death and had crucified Him (v. 20), and their almost vain hope — on the basis of the women’s testimony and that of Peter and John — that He had perhaps risen from the dead, but that no one had actually *seen* Him. You see, His mere “presence” did nothing to allay their fears. to comfort them, to convince them, and to focus their “*holden*” eyes on His promises. He “lit into them,” as we sometimes say, with a forceful admonition concerning their foolish reticence “*to believe*” ..NOT what their friends had told them, not what their hearts hoped for, not what their “gut” was revealing to them, but rather “*all that the prophets have spoken*” (v. 25). For, as Abraham had said to the rich man in hell concerning his unbelieving brothers, “*If they hear not Moses and the prophets* [that is, the written Scriptures], *neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead*” (Luke 16:31). It would not be His mere “presence” that would persuade them, nor a mere “appearance” to them “*at meat*” in Emmaus (v. 30) and later that evening to the ten disciples in Jerusalem (vv. 36ff.). For Jesus had “*showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them*,” Luke tells us in Acts 1:3; and yet the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is denied still today despite those “*infallible proofs*.”

The mere **perception** of Christ’s presence with us, whether real or imagined, is **NOT** what enables us to “*walk in Him, rooted and built up in Him and **stablished in the faith** as [we] have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving*” (Colossians 2:6-7). But the Psalmist confesses to the Lord: “*Thy Word is a **lamp** unto my feet and a **light** unto my path*” (119:105); His Word is that perfect illumination “*whereunto [we] do well that [we] take heed, as unto a **light** that shineth in a dark place*” (II Peter 1:19). And the Lord Jesus states in His prayer to His heavenly Father: “*Thy Word is **truth***” (John 17:17). “*Everyone that is of the **truth** heareth **My voice***,” He testified to Pilate (John 18:37). Therefore if we are to be His true followers (John 10:27), those who walk in Him (Colossians 2:6), those who are His “*disciples indeed*,” who “*know the truth*” and are *made free* thereby from soul-destroying error, Jesus tells us: “*Continue in **My Word***” (John 8:31-32). For “[we] are built upon the foundation of the **apostles and prophets** [the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments], *Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone* [the essential, central, and indispensable *keystone* or *capstone*], *in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, in whom [we] also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*” (Ephesians 2:20-22). If Jesus is to abide in us and we in Him, then it is **His Word** that must abide in us (John 15:7) as the only source and standard of the “*one faith*” (Ephesians 4:5), “*the faith which*

was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3), *“the doctrine which is according to Godliness”* (I Timothy 6:3; cf. 4:6).

If we hear Jesus’ Word and refuse to follow it, we foolishly build upon a foundation of *“sand,”* He says (Matthew 7:26) and should expect a great fall (v. 27), a fall about which we have been amply warned (I Corinthians 10:12), a fall *“from [our] own steadfastness”* (II Peter 3:17) into doubt, misgiving, unbelief and despair! How do we avoid that catastrophic collapse of our faith? Peter writes that if we truly want to beware of *“being led away with the error of the wicked”* and falling from faith, we need to *“grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ”* (v. 18) — growth which comes only from that perfect, pure, and essential spiritual *“milk”* which God Himself has given to us for our sustenance (I Peter 2:2).

No wonder the hearts of Cleopas and his fellow disciple *burned within them* as Jesus *“talked with [them] in the way,”* while they were walking along the road with that *“stranger in Jerusalem”* who they imagined to be ignorant of all the things that had transpired on the first Good Friday and on that very Sunday morning! It was not Jesus’ PRESENCE; it was His **WORD**! No wonder their hearts *burned within them* as Jesus, the *“stranger,”* *“opened to [them] the Scriptures”*! It was NOT the “vibes” of Jesus’ PRESENCE that warmed the cockles of their hearts, but the spiritual heat generated in them by the Holy Spirit through the **SCRIPTURES**, the Scriptures which *“are able to make [us] wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus”* (II Timothy 3:15).

The hearts and minds of those who refuse to **walk with the risen Savior IN HIS WORD** will never *“burn within [them]”* with the knowledge of the truth, with the surety of salvation, with the comfort of the Gospel, with steadfastness of faith, with *“the peace of God which passeth all understanding”* (Philippians 4:7), and with the ready ability “under fire” to *“give an answer to every man that asketh [them] a reason of the hope that is in [them] with meekness and fear”* (I Peter 3:15). Instead they will be as unsteady, as uncertain, and as ungrounded as a paper boat on a breezy pond, *“tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness whereby they lie in wait to deceive”* (Ephesians 4:14). We have heard of their own mouths NOT the *“oracles of God”* (I Peter 4:11) but the *“good words and fair speeches”* (Romans 16:18) of rationalism, subjectivism and emotionalism that leave them without *“an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast”* (Hebrews 6:19) — the *“good words and fair speeches,”* however, *“whereby they lie in wait to deceive”* the unwary (Ephesians 4:14b), and, in the case of shepherds, whereby they destroy their own flocks (Jeremiah 25:34; Ezekiel 34:2-10; etc.)!!

Instead of proclaiming **rock-solid Scripture** upon which to base **true surety**, we hear their uncertain, equivocating buzz-words again and again: “We *consider* this to be the truth...” “we *perceive* this to be right...” “we are *not comfortable* with the use of this passage...” “the *maturity of my faith* enables me to distinguish between true and false doctrine...” “we believe that the strict application of a clear passage of Scripture is an *overemphasis* and is an *unevangelical* policy...” “I find as a pastor and theologian that trying to follow the *logic and thinking* of a false prophet is *helpful*...” “we *deplore* the use of Romans 16:17;” etc.

It is even dangerous to quote “orthodox fathers” indiscriminately, giving the impression that just because they wrote or said something, it must be true. The “fathers” dare never become our authority! When we cite them, we should be careful to limit our acceptance of their words and of their judgment, saying, for example, “as Luther [Walther, Chemnitz, Quenstedt] rightly points out in conformity with Scripture... on the basis of Holy Writ,” etc. Even our *quia* subscription to the *Book of Concord* (1580) is predicated on the fact that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of the **Word of God** in those matters which they treat. However, we cannot give, nor do we require, a *quia* blanket subscription to the writings of our “fathers.”

By God’s grace and with His help, “*let **US** hold fast the profession of **OUR** faith without wavering, for He is faithful that promised*” (Hebrews 10:23) — “*hold fast*” with the strength that only **His Word** supplies; “*the profession*,” speaking “*as the **oracles of God***” (I Peter 4:11); “*of our faith*,” that **ONE** faith “*built upon the foundation of the **apostles and prophets***” (Ephesians 2:20); “*without wavering*,” steadfastly anchored on the Rock of our Salvation and His precious **Word** “*which liveth and abideth forever*” (I Peter 1:23). “*For He is faithful that promised*” — promised in His faithful **Word**: “*Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life!*” (Revelation 2:10b).

“*Abide with us, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent*” (Luke 24:29).

Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
for ‘round us falls the eventide;
nor let Thy Word, that heavenly Light,
for us be ever veiled in night!

In these last days of sore distress
grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness;
that pure we keep ‘til life is spent
Thy Holy Word and Sacrament!

Oh, keep us in Thy Word, we pray;
the guile and rage of Satan stay!
Oh, may Thy mercy never cease;
give concord, patience, courage peace!

The haughty spirits, Lord, restrain,
who o'er Thy Church with might would reign
and always set forth something new
devised to change Thy doctrine true.

A trusty weapon is Thy Word,
Thy Church's buckler, shield and sword.
Oh, let us in its power confide
that we may seek no other guide!

Oh, grant that in Thy holy Word
we here may live and die, dear Lord!
And, when our journey endeth here,
receive us into glory there!

(*TLH* 292, selected verses)

— D. T. M.



(Series:

tion and Application of the Ten Commandments)

Exposi-

IV. The Fourth Commandment

“Thou shalt honor thy father and thy mother, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.”

(Note in our Catechism’s wording above the combination of the Old Testament citation in Exodus 20:12 and the New Testament revision of the “*promise*” in Ephesians 6:2–3 — without contradiction, both “*given by inspiration of God,*” I Timothy 3:16.)

Nowadays it has become quite common to observe children acting very disrespectfully to their parents in public—openly defying them, mocking them, and sometimes even ordering them around as if the parents were under the authority of the children. Such behavior is certainly shameful on the part of the children, but it is also a shameful thing when parents *allow* their children to act in such a way without correction. And even though *Christian* children should stand out as being much different in this regard from their unbelieving peers—all to the glory of their heavenly Father (Matthew 5:16, Philippians 2:13)—yet on account of their sinful flesh even Christians frequently break the Fourth Commandment and can benefit greatly from its consistent application in their lives. A nice outline of what the Scriptures teach concerning the Fourth Commandment is found in the *Small Catechism* of Dr. Martin Luther, where he rightly points out that God requires children to give their parents *honor*, to *serve* and *obey* them, and to hold them in *love and esteem*.

To *honor* parents means to value them highly and respect them. They are to be honored as God’s own representatives—as the ones that He

has specifically chosen to have authority over their children in the home. Children should be on guard against the temptation to follow the negative examples that they see on T.V. or in the world around them of children showing little or no respect at all for their parents. Christian children should understand that their worldly acquaintances, and even their fellow Christians on account of their sinful flesh, will sometimes show very bad examples that they should not emulate, because it would displease their Lord and Savior (John 14:15). It is also important to remember that the divine command to *honor* parents is directed to the *heart* of the children, not merely to their outward behavior. Obviously, children are not rightly honoring their parents if they only superficially submit to their authority while they are mocking or despising them in their hearts. The Lord commands: “*Hearken unto thy father that begat thee, and despise not thy mother when she is old*” (Proverbs 23:22). And since God perfectly knows the heart of every individual, He knows exactly when children are breaking the Fourth Commandment in ways that are not even visible to human observers.

Likewise, in order for Christian children to *serve* their parents in a God-pleasing way, their *heart* needs to be cheerfully involved in that service. They should not look for ways to remain idle or disengaged from the service of their parents with the excuse that they have not yet been given specific orders from Mom or Dad. On the contrary, without first needing a command to do so, they should be moved by love to seek out ways of helping their mother and father—doing for them such things as contribute to their happiness, assistance, care, comfort, aid, and support. “*Let them learn first to show piety [i.e., Godliness] at home and to requite [i.e., repay] their parents; for that is good and acceptable before God*” (I Timothy 5:4). Such service should be carried out willingly and gladly by Christian children as part of their service unto the Lord.

Because God tells children to *obey* their parents, believing followers of God are minded, according to their *new man*, to conform their behavior to the express wishes of their father and mother—doing what they command and refraining from doing what they forbid. Children are not to think that they have the right to refuse obedience or to make their obedience contingent upon their own personal conditions being met—such as, obeying only if their parents ask nicely and say “please,” or obeying only if they can be convinced that the decision of their parents is the wisest or most fair course of action, and so on. It is important for children to be reminded (and also regularly to remind themselves) that obeying their parents “*in all things*” (Colossians 3:20) is part of their loving obedience to the Lord (Ephesians 6:1; John 14:15). Consequently, to disobey their parents would be to disobey the Lord God Himself, who also threatens to punish disobedient children. “*The eye that mocketh at his father, and*

despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it" (Proverbs 30:17). The only time when a Christian child should disobey his parents is when he is commanded by them to sin against the Lord (Acts 5:29).

Being required to obey their parents will not seem like such a heavy burden if the children truly "*love and esteem*" them "as precious gifts of God" (Catechism Q/A 57, D.). But the devil, the world, and the sinful flesh all seek to undermine such filial love, and instead promote an attitude of opposition, resentment, and bitterness in the heart of a child toward parental authority. Children can become quickly frustrated with their parents when they are required to do things that they really do not enjoy doing (such as homework), or when they are required to stop doing what they very much want to continue doing (such as playing video games). Resentment of the authority of their parents often leads children to act out in sinful ways unbecoming of Christians, and to long for the day when they will finally be free from the parents' rules and control. Children should, instead, focus on the great blessings that the Lord gives them through their parents, and thus grow in their appreciation for mother and father. Ultimately, the way to increase true Christian love for parents is to direct the children to the boundless love of God in the Gospel of Christ. After they have been rebuked for their sins and rightly understand that they deserve eternal hell-fire on account of their numerous transgressions of the Fourth Commandment (as well as all the other Commandments), then their contrite hearts are to be comforted by the sweet Gospel of forgiveness through Jesus' blood and righteousness. If that message of God's grace is received in believing hearts and is truly appreciated by the children, they will love their Savior very much, and will also grow in love for their parents, who are the representatives of the Lord in the home.

One of the ways that God impressed upon His people in the Old Testament how much He hates the breaking of the Fourth Commandment was by setting forth severe punishments to be carried out by the civil authorities upon those who would blatantly dishonor their mother or father. For the child who would lash out violently against his parents, and for the child who would curse his parents, the punishment was *death* (Exodus 21:15, 17). That *political law* was to be followed as long as the Israelites were a *theocracy* — a government directly ruled by God even in political matters. Furthermore, the Lord showed the Children of Israel how much He values the keeping of the Fourth Commandment by attaching to it a special promise concerning future prosperity in the land of Canaan. "*Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee*" (Exodus 20:12). In the New Testament, the promise was re-

phrased in order to have direct application for true Christians throughout the world: *“Honor thy father and mother (which is the first [foremost] Commandment with promise); that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth”* (Ephesians 6:2–3).

Because the Bible draws such close parallels between the duties of children to their parents and the duties of employees to their employers (Ephesians 6:5–8; Colossians 3:22–24), as well as the duties of citizens to their government (Romans 13:1–7; I Peter 2:13–14), these points are rightly categorized under the Fourth Commandment, which taken in a general way deals with *all the authorities that God places over us* in the various areas of life. Those who do not learn to respect God’s representatives in the home will likely not respect other authority figures either, such as those at school, in the work place, or in the state. This, obviously, will not benefit them when it comes to getting an education, holding down a job, or staying on the right side of the law. Thus even from a purely earthly standpoint, there are definite benefits for those who learn in their youth to honor their parents and apply those lessons as they progress through life. Not that God wants Christian children to be motivated purely by self-interest to follow the Fourth Commandment; but to help overcome the objections of the flesh, it can be profitable to point out earthly benefits associated with the following of God’s Commandments (as the Lord Himself does in Ephesians 6:3). No one should despise the divine promise, *“that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth;”* nor should anyone think that this promise is disproved by cases of Christian children who die at a very young age. Certainly the Lord may choose, in His all-wise and gracious providence, to afflict a Godly child with a physical cross that may result in an early death; and that, just like all the chastenings that the heavenly Father lays upon His beloved children, is to be regarded as a special manifestation of God’s love, specifically designed for the spiritual and eternal welfare of His elect (Romans 8:28; Hebrews 12:6).

Though not specifically addressed in the Fourth Commandment (which focuses on the children’s duties toward their parents), a related doctrine is what the Lord requires of parents toward their children. Immediately after children are commanded to honor their parents in Ephesians 6:1–3, the following command is given: *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath; but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord”* (Ephesians 6:4). Likewise, immediately after God tells children to obey their parents in Colossians 3:20, He says: *“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged”* (Colossians 3:21). Notice that the fathers (not the mothers) are specifically addressed in both of these sections, because they are the God-appointed heads of their households; but obviously the divine instruction that is

here set forth applies equally to mothers and all with parental authority (guardianship) as well.

Sadly, sometimes parents *are* guilty of provoking their children to sin against the Fourth Commandment, when, for instance, they treat their children in a mean and unfair way that demonstrates contempt more than love. However, it should never be thought that *consistent, loving discipline* is to be blamed for provoking children to wrath. Sadly, physical discipline, such as spanking, is generally criticized and excoriated by most parenting “experts” nowadays—being regarded as ineffective and counter-productive (at best) or even abusive and immoral (at worst). But whether Christian parents choose to spank or use other forms of disciplinary correction, they should understand that the Bible does *not* discourage physical discipline at all, but rather *encourages* it in such passages as: “*He that spareth his rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes [i.e. at times, occasionally]*” (Proverbs 13:24); and again: “*Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying*” (Proverbs 19:18); and again: “*Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him*” (22:15); and again: “*Withhold not correction from the child; for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod and shalt deliver his soul from hell*” (Proverbs 23:13–14). In this matter it is very important to remember that proper discipline is motivated by the parents’ *love* for their children and is compared to how our good and gracious heavenly Father *chastens us* in love—using afflictions to serve our **good**. “*Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not?*” (Hebrews 12:6–7; see also Job 5:17; Proverbs 3:11–12; Revelation 3:19).

It is most certainly good and proper for parents to insist that their children conform to Fourth Commandment principles and not turn a blind eye to blatant violations of this divine command. But when parents require their children to obey and honor them in obedience to the Lord’s Fourth Commandment, it is crucial that the parents themselves provide a consistent Christian example in their own lives. It is very offensive if the impression is given to the children that the only time Mom and Dad seem to care about the Law of God is when they are citing the Fourth Commandment in rebuke of the children. That would obviously appear to be very self-serving and hypocritical on the part of the parents if the Bible is only ever cited when it is convenient for them to use it in demanding compliance and respect from their children. On the other hand, if the children can clearly see that the parents, as genuine Christians, put their love for the Savior into practice in their lives and insist

that the Lord Jesus and His Word be honored and followed in their home, then the children should be able to understand and appreciate the consistency when their parents insist that the children also submit in love and cheerful obedience to their Redeemer's commands—including the command that father and mother be honored by them. And Christian children, according to their *new man*, will also themselves sincerely desire to follow the Fourth Commandment as a fruit of their faith.

May the Lord continue always to guide the children and parents in our Conference according to His holy Commandments and move them by His tender mercies in Christ Jesus to submit themselves in humble and loving obedience unto Him and to the authorities He has placed over them.

Oh, blest that house where faith ye find
and all within have set their mind
to trust their God and serve Him still
and do in all His holy will!

(*TLH* 625, v. 2)

—P. E. B.



*Vain the stone, the watch, the seal!
Christ has burst the gates of hell!
Death in vain forbids His rise;
Christ has opened Paradise!*

—TLH 193, 3

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