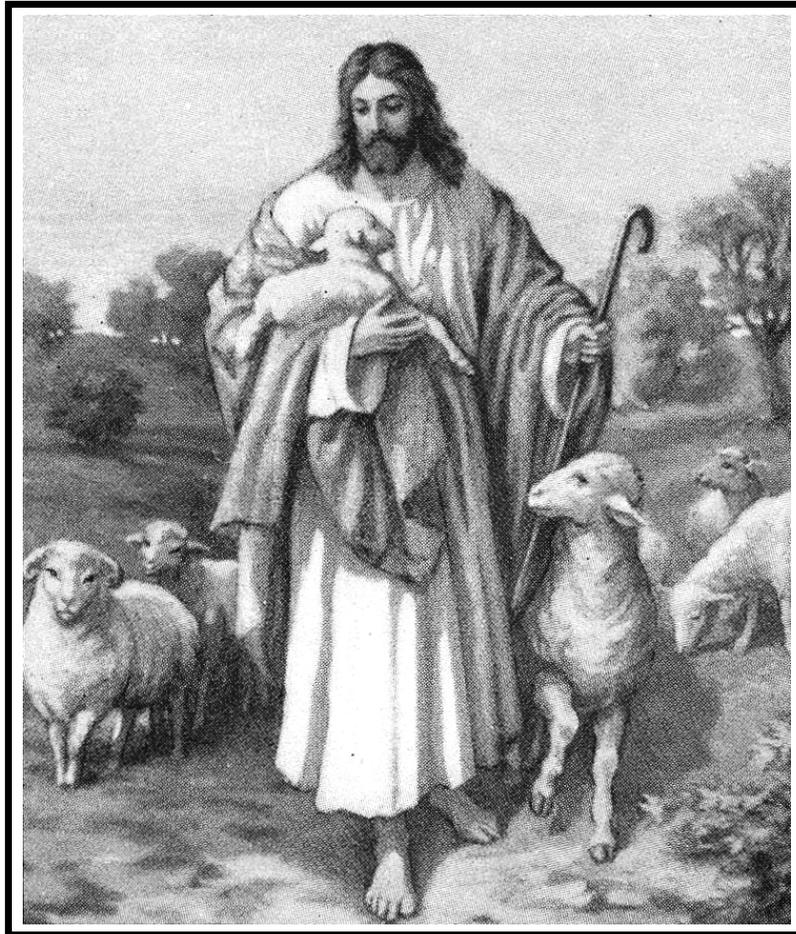


L.C.C.F. NEWSLETTER



No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it,

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Volume 25 Number 3

Sola Scriptura-Sola Fide-Sola Gratia

(By Scripture alone-By Faith alone-By Grace alone)

LCCF NEWSLETTER

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The LCCF Newsletter is a bi-monthly publication of the Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship. Faith should be followed by confession, and together with Christians of all times, the members of the LCCF publicly confess the truth of God's Word as found in the faithful, historic confessions of the church. By the grace of God, the LCCF traces its heritage to the Lutheran Reformation through the Synodical Conference. Following the example of the early Lutheran church, the members of the LCCF have found it necessary to fight the good fight of faith by responding to those controversies surrounding the dissolution of the Synodical Conference with confessions true to the inspired Word of God. We want to continue in what we have learned and have become convinced of, because we know those from whom we have learned it (2 Timothy 3:14). We invite all inquiries into our confession, our fellowship, and our publications. As a small group of Lutherans, it is our hope that all who read this little publication would scrutinize our confession, test it by the truth of Scripture, and, finding it faithful, would make it their own through the tender mercies of the Lord.

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GOD RULES

Introduction:

The events of this world would seem to suggest at times that there is no God who rules. If God does not rule, what is the alternative? There would be confusion and disorder. If God does not rule, then we could say that things happen by chance. If God does not rule, we could also speak of either being lucky or unlucky. Then we also could wish someone good luck instead of wishing them the Lord's blessings.

Whether we believe in being lucky or depend on the Lord's blessings will determine how we

cope with the various evils in this world. This world is a very evil place and it's always getting more evil. There are wars between nations, and there is fighting in many places. There is stealing by theft, robbery, or fraud. There is much sexual immorality such as adultery and fornication. There is homosexuality and lesbianism that God calls a perversion. Sexual immorality often results in abortion (babies being murdered before they are even born). It also often results in the marriage relationship being broken and ending in divorce. There is bad weather resulting in crop failure. There are hurricanes that result in many deaths and much property destruction. There are dishonest government officials. In many churches there are false teachers and false teachings. As time goes on, more and more churches ignore what God's Word teaches regarding women pastors. *"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent,"* 1 Timothy 2:11-12. Disregarding what is taught in various church bodies, all are being pressured to join together in one large church body (false ecumenical movement). This results in the persecution of little church bodies like our own LCCF when we insist on remaining in a separate



fellowship because God forbids religious unionism (doing church work with those who teach contrary to God's Word). *"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them,"* Romans 16:17-18; *"I appeal to you, brothers in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought,"* 1 Corinthians 1:10. In our own personal lives we experience sickness, problems and troubles of all kinds. Some of them are very difficult to go through or endure.

We can expect that unbelievers will be unable to cope with all these evils and that they will express their doubts that there is a God who rules everything. What about us as believers? Are we sometimes troubled because God allows all these bad things to happen? In this study we want to learn from the Bible that there is indeed a God who rules, and that he makes all things work out for his divine purpose and for the spiritual welfare of his dear children in Christ. When we experience troubles in our life, and don't know what to do, we have this comfort:

"The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express," Romans 8:26. *"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose,"* Romans 8:28. We want to be assured that Jesus in his state of exaltation rules over all things, and that whatever happens, be it ever so bad, he exercises his power to make it result in a blessing for the Holy Christian Church as a whole and all individual believers as members of that Church.

GOD'S POWER

"Our God is in heaven; he does whatever pleases him," Psalm 115:3. *"For the Lord Almighty has purposed, and who can thwart him? His hand is stretched out, and who can turn it back?"* Isaiah 14:27. *"With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God,"* Mark 10:27. Paul wrote that Abraham was *"fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised,"* Romans 4:21. Paul wrote a doxology *"to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine..."* Ephesians 3:20.

GOD'S JUSTICE

This means God does all things in a perfect and righteous way. *"He is the Rock, his works are perfect, and all his ways are just. A faithful God who does no wrong, upright and just is he,"* Deuteronomy 32:4. *"The LORD is righteous in all his ways,"* Psalm 145:17a. *"Righteousness and justice are the foundation of your throne; love and faithfulness go before you,"* Psalm 89:14. *"The LORD is upright; he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in him,"* Psalm 92:15.

GOD'S RULE

"This is the way he governs the nations and provides food in abundance," Job 36:31. *"God's voice thunders in marvelous ways; he does great things beyond our understanding. He says to the snow, 'Fall on the earth,' and to the rain shower, 'Be a mighty downpour.'" Job 37:5-6. "The breath of God produces ice, and the broad waters become frozen. He loads the clouds with moisture; he scatters his lightning through them. At his direction they swirl around over the face of the whole earth to do whatever he commands them. He brings the clouds to punish men, or to water his earth*

and show his love," Job 37:10-13. God can also send too much rain and by his control of the weather bring his judgments upon the land. God is to be praised for his rule over the nations. *"May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth. May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you,"* Psalm 67:4-5. The rebellious people are warned: *"He rules forever by his power, his eyes watch the nations - let not the rebellious rise up against him,"* Psalm 66:7. The Lord can destroy nations. *"The land trembles and writhes, for the LORD'S purposes against Babylon stand - to lay waste the land of Babylon so that no one will live there,"* Jeremiah 51:29. The Lord can bring proud nations and rulers to be completely in subjection to him. For 430 years the Israelites were slaves in Egypt under the rule of different rulers called Pharaohs. At the time of Moses the Lord showed his power and control over the Pharaoh and his country. He sent plagues on the land of Egypt, and he told Moses: *"I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my miraculous signs and wonders in Egypt, he will not listen to you. Then I will lay my hand on Egypt and with mighty acts of judgment I will bring out my*

divisions, my people the Israelites. And the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD when I stretch out my hand against Egypt and bring the Israelites out of it," Exodus 7:3-5.

GOD'S DIVINE GOVERNING OF EVIL

In the days when King Hezekiah ruled over Israel, Sennacherib, king of Assyria threatened to destroy Jerusalem. *"Then the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning - there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib king of Assyria broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there,"* Isaiah 37:36-37.

Jacob's son Joseph was sold by his wicked brothers and taken to the land of Egypt. Though Joseph was a slave, with the Lord's blessings he prospered in all he did. After several years had passed, at the age of 30, Joseph with the Lord's blessings was put in charge of the whole land by Pharaoh. When there was a severe famine in the land of Canaan, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt for food and they had

to appear before their younger brother Joseph, but did not recognize him. When Joseph revealed who he was, he told his brothers: *"And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. ... So then, it was not you who sent me here, But God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt,"* Genesis 45:5-8. When his brothers were fearful that Joseph would punish them for what they had done to him, Joseph told them: *"Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives,"* Genesis 50:19-20.

When Israel was threatened by the Moabites, Ammonites, and Meunites, King Jehoshaphat of Israel prayed: *"O LORD, God of our fathers, are you not the God who is in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. Power and might are in your hand, and no one can withstand you.".* 2 Chronicles 20:6. One of the prophets by the Spirit of the Lord prophesied, *"Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the LORD says to you: 'Do*



not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's," 2 Chronicles 20:15.

When some of the Jewish unbelievers tried to kill Jesus, we are told: *"At this they tried to seize him, but no one laid a hand on him, because his time had not yet come,"* John 7:30.

The Apostle Paul wrote to the believers at Corinth, *"So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it,"* 1 Corinthians 10:12-13.

After Peter and John were freed from prison, the believers' prayer included these words: *"Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen,"* Acts 4:27-28.

GOD'S RULE OVER

CIVIL GOVERNMENT

In the Old Testament times, Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon had a dream. He demanded of his wise men (*"magicians, enchanters, sorcerers and astrologers"*) that they not only interpret his dream but also tell him what his dream was. They told the king that no man could do this. Daniel told the king, *"No wise man, enchanter, magician or diviner can explain to the king the mystery he has asked about, but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries,"* Daniel 2:27-28. Daniel then interpreted the dream for Nebuchadnezzar. Daniel was one of four men chosen to serve the king. *"To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds,"* Daniel 1:17. When the mystery of the dream was revealed by God to Daniel in a dream, he said, *"Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his. He changes times and seasons; he sets up kings and deposes them,"* Daniel 2:20-21.

God says, *"By me kings reign and rulers make laws that are just; by me princes govern, and*

all nobles who rule on earth," Proverbs 8:15-16.

This is also true in New Testament times. Paul wrote, *"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves,"* Romans 13:1-2.

When Jesus was told by the Roman governor Pontius Pilate, *"Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you? Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above,'"* John 19:10-11.

CHRIST RULING

In the Old Testament in the book of Joshua we read what Joshua told his army commanders regarding five kings who had been captured, *"But don't stop! Pursue your enemies, attack them from the rear and don't let them reach their cities, for the LORD your God has given them into your hand. ... Come here and put your feet on*

the necks of these kings," Joshua 10:19 & 24.

David wrote, *"The LORD says to my Lord: 'Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet,"* Psalm 110:1.

Jesus is praised as the one who sustains *"all things by his powerful word,"* Hebrews 1:3.

Paul wrote about the exaltation of Jesus, *"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father,"* Philippians 2:9-11.

That Jesus is seated at God the Father's right hand means that he is, *"far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way,"*



Ephesians 1:21-23.

Jesus is at *"God's right hand - with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him,"* 1 Peter 3:22.

CHRIST'S KINGDOM

Jeremiah prophesied, *"The days are coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness,'"* Jeremiah 23:5-6.

Under Christ the King in his kingdom we have his Holy Word as our weapon to fight against the enemies of our soul and to defend God's Word. *"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ,"* 2 Corinthians 10:4-5.

God's Word promises steadfast believers in Christ *"a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,"* 2 Peter 1:11.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, when we are sick or have other serious problems, when we suffer persecution as members of Christ's *"little flock"*, let us not forget what God promises us: *"We know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* Romans 8:28-33. May this promise give us the spiritual strength to endure steadfastly through all the evils of this life until God takes us to our home in heaven.

-M. H. Eibs

SACRED MEDITATIONS

by Johann Gerhard

Continuing the Sacred Meditations of Johann Gerhard rewritten in the language of our day, No. 8 in a series based on Gerhard's Meditations, #41 on page 235.

THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN PATIENCE

Patience will triumph at last.

REST in the Lord, O devout believer in Christ, and bear patiently the cross the Lord lays upon you. Think of the awful suffering of Christ when he had to endure crucifixion. He suffered in behalf of all people, and was made to suffer by all and in all things. He suffered for all, even for those who despised his holy passion and trampled under foot the blood of the covenant, counting it an unholy thing. *"Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think a man deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son of God under foot, who has treated as an unholy thing the blood of the covenant*

that sanctified him, and who has insulted the Spirit of grace?" Hebrews 10:28-29. He suffered at the hands of all. He was delivered up for all. *"He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all - how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?"* Romans 8:32. He was stricken. *"Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities,"* Isaiah 53:4-5. He was forsaken by his heavenly Father. *"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"* Matthew 27:46. He was deserted by his disciples whom he loved. *"Then all the disciples deserted him and fled,"* Matthew 26:56. He was rejected by the very people to whom the promise of the Messiah was given. *"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor. 'Barabbas,' they answered. 'What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ?' Pilate asked. They all answered, 'Crucify him!'"* Matthew 27:21-22. The Jews chose a robber, Barabbas, instead of Christ, their Messiah. He was crucified by the Gentiles (Romans soldiers). He suffered for the sins of all mankind, and so the whole human race was



guilty of his death. He suffered also, in every possible way that is beyond our imagination. His soul was exceedingly sorrowful, even to the point of death. **"He said to them, 'My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death,'" Matthew 26:38.** He was overwhelmed with a sense of the divine judgment, as he was forsaken by his heavenly Father. His body sweat, as it were, drops of blood. **"Being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground," Luke 22:44.** His head was crowned with thorns; his lips tasted the bitter myrrh they gave him to drink, his hands and feet were pierced with nails. **"Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet," Psalm 22:16;** his side was lacerated with the spear; his whole body was scourged and stretched upon the cross. Oh, how unseemly it would be that the Lord should suffer in this way, while we live in undisturbed joy! Oh, how unseemly it would be that our Savior should be severely punished for our sins, and we should continue to take delight in them! How unjust it would be that the head of the body should be afflicted, and the rest of the members should not suffer with it! No, rather, it was

necessary and proper for the Christ to suffer and then enter into his heavenly glory. **"Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" Luke 24:26.** So also we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. **"We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," Acts 14:22.**

Think of the reward held out to us that is beyond our imagination! **"I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us," Romans 8:18.**

Whatever our suffering may be here on earth, it is only for a time - no, it is sometimes but for a day - but the glory that awaits us is forever and ever. God knows perfectly all the bad things that happen to us, and some day he will bring them all into judgment. **"For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil," Ecclesiastes 12:14.** Oh, how distressing it would be for us to appear at the Last Judgment when everyone in the universe is before the throne of Christ the Judge without us having any evidence that we suffered for his sake! **"He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away**

the tears from all faces, Isaiah 25:8. *"The Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes,"* Revelation 7:17. *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away,"* Revelation 21:4. O happy tears, which such a hand of such a Lord shall wipe away! O blessed cross, that shall in heaven be exchanged for such a reward! Scarce ten years did King David spend in exile, but for forty he ruled in his kingdom. *"In Hebron he reigned over Judah seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah thirty-three years,"* 2 Samuel 5:5. Here we may see prefigured the brevity of our life of suffering, and the unending glory which is to follow. It is but a mere point of time after all in which the saints of God, often objects of the world's pity, suffer the hardships of the cross; for *"weeping may remain for a night, but rejoicing comes in the morning,"* Psalm 30:5.

Also consider the tribulation which the saints of the past have endured. Think of the patriarch Job; *"So Satan went out from the*

presence of the LORD and afflicted Job with painful sores from the soles of his feet to the top of his head. Then Job took a piece of broken pottery and scraped himself with it as he sat among the ashes," Job 2:7-8; John the Baptist fasting in the wilderness, *"during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the desert."* Luke 3:2; Peter extended upon a cross, and James beheaded by the sword of Herod. *"He (Herod) had James, the brother of John, put to death with the sword. When he saw that this pleased the Jews, he proceeded to seize Peter also,"* Acts 12:2-3. Think of Mary the blessed mother of our Savior, standing with pierced heart under the cross. *"Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother,"* John 19:25. All this in some sense is a picture of Christ's Church. *"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you,"* Matthew 5:11-12. O glorious persecutions, which link us to the apostles and prophets, and to all the saints, yes to our blessed Christ himself. Let us patiently suffer then with the saints of God, who have

suffered in his cause; let us even rejoice to be crucified with those who have been crucified, that we may at last be glorified with those who have been glorified. If we are indeed sons of God, let not refuse to share the portion of the rest of his children. If we truly desire to be heirs of God, let us joyfully accept all that being heirs involves. But let us remember that as sons of God we are heirs not only of the joy and glory of the future life, but also of the sorrow and of the suffering of this present life, for ***"the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son,"*** Hebrews 12:6. He punishes our sins here that he may spare us punishment in the day of judgment; he lays tribulation after tribulation upon us here, that there he may bestow upon us an exceeding weight of glory; and, indeed, the reward far exceeds, in proportion, the persecutions we suffer here.

But consider the blessed advantages of the cross. It destroys the roots of worldly love in us, and implants the love of God in our heart. The cross works within our hearts a hatred of the world, and lifts up our minds to the contemplation of things heavenly and divine. If we deny our sinful flesh and its sinful deeds, the Holy Spirit lives within us; and as the world becomes bitter to our

souls, Christ becomes sweeter and sweeter. Greater, indeed, are the mysterious influences and blessings of the cross, since by it God calls us to contrition for our sins, to a true and holy fear of himself, and to the exercise of patience. When the Lord stands at our heart's door and knocks, let us open to him, and hear what he shall speak to our souls. Oh, the world and our sinful nature may look with contempt upon the cross, but to God and to the eyes of our inward spiritual nature it is glorious. What could be more miserable and disgraceful than the suffering and death of Christ, our Savior, in the eyes of the Jews; and yet what could be more glorious and precious than that same suffering and death of Christ in the eyes of God; since this is the price he paid for the atonement of the sins of the whole world? ***"Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world,"*** 1 John 2:1-2. And so the righteous man is afflicted. ***"The righteous perish, and no one ponders it in his heart,"*** Isaiah 57:1.

But how precious is the cross! ***"Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints,"*** Psalm 116:15. The Church, the bride of Christ, is black without (Canticles 1:5)* because of her

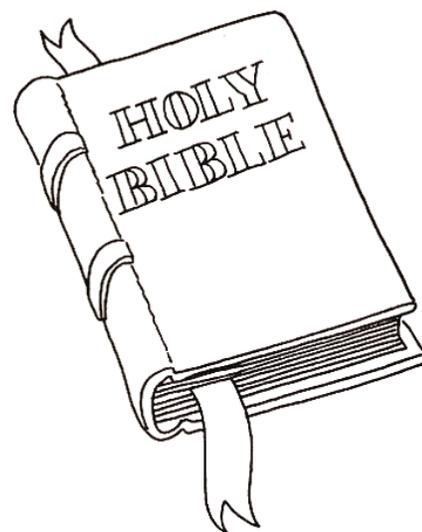
afflictions and persecutions; but within she is comely and beautiful, because she enjoys the consolations of the divine Spirit. The Church is as a garden enclosed (Canticles 4:12), and so is every faithful soul, since no one knows its beauty unless he is within it. And never shall we know fully and perfectly the consolations of the Spirit of God, unless the power of the sinful flesh over us is destroyed by affliction. If the love of the world fills our hearts, then the love of God can find no entrance into our hearts. A vessel already full cannot be filled with some new liquid unless it be first emptied. Let us therefore empty our hearts of the love of the world, that we may fill them with the love of God. So God, in sending the cross, seeks to destroy the love of the world in us, that the divine love may find place in our heart. The cross, moreover, leads us to prayer, and becomes the occasion for the exercise in us of Christian virtues. When the north wind blows upon the garden, its spices flow out (Canticles 4:16), and when persecutions sweep over the Church then are developed those special graces and virtues which are so pleasing to God. The beloved Bridegroom of the soul is white and ruddy (Canticles 5:10); white is his holy innocence, ruddy is the blood-

marks of his passion; and that the beloved bride of Christ may be made pure and white in her virtues, she is made ruddy by her sufferings for his name's sake. From the hardest stone of our afflictions divine grace can bring forth oil and honey, and from the bitter root of present suffering the sweetest fruit of eternal glory.

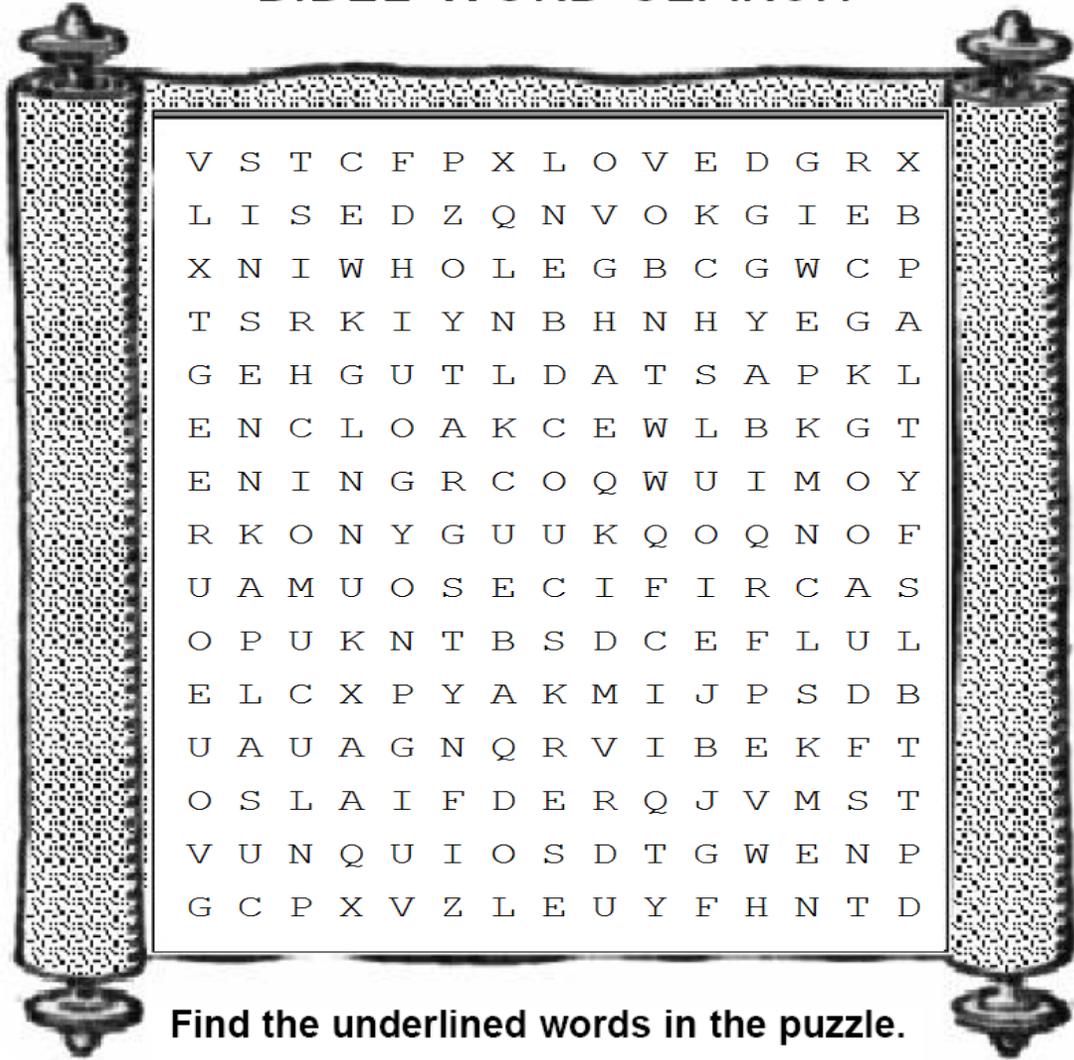
And to this eternal glory, O Lord Jesus, lead us on and on, and to its blissful enjoyment finally bring us! Amen.

* Canticles is from a translation of Solomon's Song of Songs.

- M. H. Eibs



BIBLE WORD SEARCH



"Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world,"

1 John 2:1-2.

WORSHIPING THE LORD

The Bible gives no information as to how Adam and Eve worshiped the Lord. We only have the early history of mankind and the fall into sin together with the first Gospel promise in the first chapters of Genesis. The Lord planted the Garden of Eden and put Adam there to take care of it. God told Adam that he could eat the fruit of any tree in the garden but not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in the middle of the garden. If this command was disobeyed the result would be death. Then the Lord created the woman from the body of Adam. Next is the fall into sin when Satan in the form of a serpent tempted Eve to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, telling her the lie that disobedience to God's command would surely not result in death. She was deceived and gave some of the fruit to Adam and he ate of it. This was disobedience to God's specific command and this is how sin came into the world. The Lord cursed the serpent above all livestock and wild animals in the world. Part of what the Lord told the serpent is in figurative language the first promise of the Savior (Genesis 3:15). After Cain killed his brother Abel, God gave Adam

and Eve another son named Seth. The Bible tells us, "*At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord,*" Genesis 4:26. Adam's son, Seth, had a son named Enosh. This was 235 years after creation, and it was during Enosh's lifetime that public worship services were instituted for the purpose of worshiping the Lord.

The first reference to building altars to the Lord is after the great flood in Noah's day. After the flood waters had receded and the earth was dry again, the eight people who had been saved, Noah, his wife, his three sons and their wives, and all the animals came out of the ark. "*Then Noah built an altar to the LORD and, taking some of all the clean animals and clean birds, he sacrificed burnt offerings on it. The LORD smelled the pleasing aroma and said in his heart: 'Never again will I curse the ground because of man, even though every inclination of his heart is evil from childhood,'*" Genesis 8:20-21. This was 1656 years after creation. (Bible History References, Rupprecht, CPH, 1947)

At the time of Noah the world had become exceedingly wicked and that is why the Lord sent the great flood in which all but eight people perished. Then after

the flood, God told Noah and his sons, ***"Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth,"*** Genesis 9:1. Noah lived 350 years yet after the flood. Soon the world became very wicked again. The majority of people worshiped other gods. The first reference to "gods" is found in Genesis 31:32: ***"Now Jacob did not know that Rachel had stolen the gods."*** (household gods) The first reference to idols is found in Exodus 20:4-6 where the Ten Commandments are recorded: ***"You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments."***

Much later in the Old Testament days the Lord gave the Ten Commandments to Moses on Mount Sinai, laws regarding the Sabbath Day, and instructions regarding the three annual festivals. Later on the Lord instructed Moses, ***"Tell the Israelites this: 'You have seen for yourselves that I have***

spoken to you from heaven: Do not make any gods to be alongside me; do not make for yourselves gods of silver or gods of gold. Make an altar of earth for me and sacrifice on it your burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, your sheep and goats and your cattle. Wherever I cause my name to be honored, I will come to you and bless you," Exodus 20:22-24. The Lord established the Covenant of the Law with his people. When Moses read the Law to the people, ***"they responded with one voice, 'Everything the LORD has said we will do.' Moses then wrote down everything the LORD had said,"*** Exodus 24:3-4.

We are told of formal public worship of the Lord when he gave very explicit instructions to the Children of Israel as to their worship in commanding them to build the Tabernacle as a sanctuary for the Lord. This applied to both the materials to be used in making the Tabernacle and what was to be in the Tabernacle. Of major importance was the ark in which the Testimony the Lord gave to them was placed. The Lord told them, ***"There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites,"***

Exodus 25:22. The Lord also gave explicit instructions for the building of an altar for making sacrifices to the Lord and an altar for burning incense. Aaron, Moses' brother, and Aaron's two sons were ordained as priests for service in the Tabernacle. Instructions for other articles in the Tabernacle were given by the Lord. The Lord commanded the people to worship him on the Sabbath (Saturday), saying, ***"Observe the Sabbath, because it is holy to you. Anyone who desecrates it must be put to death; whoever does any work on that day must be cut off from his people. For six days work is to be done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD,"*** Exodus 31:14-15. The Tabernacle, called ***"the Tent of Meeting,"*** Exodus 40:2, served as a place of worship for the Israelites through the period of the Judges (450 years) until the time of the kings of Israel. The Lord gave very exact instructions to the people as to how they were to worship him. Of the greatest importance was the offering of sacrifices on the altar. All the offerings were types or symbols of Christ's atoning sacrifice on the cross. ***"Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.***

But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy," Hebrews 10:11-14. This is why we teach that the masses offered on an altar in Roman Catholic churches again and again, day after day (which claim that Christ is sacrificed anew), is a false worship practice.

The Tabernacle, Tent of Meeting, served as the place of worship until the days of Solomon, King of Israel, when the beautiful temple in Jerusalem was built. The building began in the month of May, 1041 years before Christ was born. (Rupprecht) It took seven and a half years to build and 183,000 people were employed in building it. In 1926 it was estimated that the cost of construction was about \$2,450,000,000 in our money. (Rupprecht) This was a most magnificent building, exceeding in beauty and cost any other church building in the history of the world. Details of the construction and contents of the temple may be found in 1 Kings, chapter 6. This beautiful temple was destroyed when Israel forsook the Lord. The

city of Jerusalem was taken captive, and the people carried off into captivity. (See Jeremiah, chapter 52.) The temple was rebuilt after the captivity in Babylonia in 456 B.C. Then, in 20 B.C. Herod's temple was built, and this was destroyed when the Roman armies besieged Jerusalem in the year 70 A.D.

After the great persecution of believers in Christ mentioned in Acts, chapter 8, we are told, "***Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.***" Acts 8:4. The emphasis was on proclaiming the Word of God, not on a place of worship. We read nothing about church buildings being built in the Book of Acts, but we read much about Paul's missionary journeys and the spreading of the Gospel of Christ Crucified to many countries. There are several references to people worshipping in their homes such as "***Greet also the church that meets at their house,***" Romans 16:5. 1 Corinthians 16:19 refers to meeting in the house of Aquila and Priscilla. Colossians 4:15 mentions "***Nympha and the church in her house.***"

As the years went by, more and more false teachers appeared, until by the time of the reformation, churches had become

thoroughly corrupt, making Luther's work of reforming a dire necessity. During this time large and costly church buildings were erected. Outward things, such as church furnishings, altar and pulpit paraments, clerical vestments, were thought most important, but concern about purity of doctrine and church practice was lacking.

We in our day have no instructions from the Lord as to where we are to worship Him. We are not told by the Lord in the New Testament Scriptures that we must have a church building or what kind of building it should be. We have no church official who can tell us what we ought to teach and what we should do in our church practice. All our instructions come from the Lord himself as we find them recorded in his Holy Word. The only direct instructions we have for our New Testament worship is really this word of God: "***everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.***" 1 Corinthians 14:40. We thank the Lord that we are not under the Pope of Rome. He teaches that he, not Jesus, is the Head of Christ's Church on earth and he has issued all kinds of laws regarding worship. This is how the corrupt practice of offering up masses ("unbloody sacrifices of Christ's body and

Blood”) began. Because of these masses the Roman Catholic Church has priests with their special clerical vestments. Also to be mentioned are the monks and nuns with their prescribed duties, and the praying of the rosary addressed to Mary, not the Triune God.

We thank God for the blessing of the Reformation and the work of Dr. Martin Luther. Because of this the emphasis in our church is on doctrine, Christian teaching and education. The Bible speaks often and clearly of doctrine. Paul wrote to Timothy about that which was *"contrary to the sound doctrine that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God,*

which he entrusted to me," 1 Timothy 1:10-11. Paul told the young pastor Timothy, *"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers,"* 1 Timothy 4:16. Paul warned Timothy, *"For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear,"* 2 Timothy 4:3. Paul did not instruct Titus to be sure to be a good administrator of buildings and business in the church. Rather he told him about the work of a pastor, *"He must hold firmly to the*

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trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it," Titus 1:9. He also wrote, *"You must teach what is in accord with sound doctrine,"* Titus 2:1. False teaching and false teachers are to be conscientiously opposed. *"I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people,"* Romans 16:17-18. Jesus tells us, *"Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them,"* Matthew 7:15-16. By their false teachings you will know they are false prophets. This is certainly a clear warning also against the false ecumenical movement attempting to get all churches to join together in fellowship regardless of what they teach.

If the Lord blesses a congregation with a nice church building, that is a fine blessing to be appreciated. But the emphasis must be on the far greater blessing, the

Word of God in its truth and purity. It should be our concern to do all we can to promote the teaching of the Word of God as it is recorded in the Bible, and to invite others to share this blessing with us.

"Oh, grant that in your holy Word we here may live and die, dear Lord;

And when our life has ended here, receive us into glory there."

(Hymn 292:9 adapted)

-M. H. Eibs

THE 95 THESES OF MARTIN LUTHER AND INDULGENCES TODAY

On October 31, 1517, a teacher of theology in Wittenberg, Germany, invited others to debate indulgences. That set in motion actions which affected the entire world.

Martin Luther had earned a Doctor of Theology degree and was lecturing on various books of the Bible which led him into the truths which God's Word teaches. He was also preaching sermons in the parish church. In a previous trip to Rome, the seat of the Pope, he had been disturbed by the carelessness and corruption of the clergy.

His frequent preaching

encouraged moral reform of the church of his day. But that didn't have much effect until after October 31, 1517. His "95 Theses" had a far greater effect on the church and the world than he could have imagined. He posted this document, formally called "Disputation of Doctor Martin Luther on the Power and Efficacy of Indulgences" on the door of the castle church in Wittenberg. This was standard procedure for someone prepared to publicly debate a subject. He listed 95 points which he wanted to debate. As one reads the 95 Theses,* you discover that there are ideas he does not yet challenge as unscriptural. But his intention to debate a significant teaching of the Roman Catholic Church, which was the only visible church in Germany at that time, led to greater study of the Holy Scriptures. Finally he was excommunicated from the church. So his initial intention was not to start another church, but to reform the church of his day, the church headed by the Papacy.

An "indulgence" is the full or partial forgiveness of temporal punishment or punishment in purgatory due for sins which have already been forgiven. (NOTE: purgatory is not taught in Holy Scripture.) In 1517 indulgences were being sold in Germany

supposedly to aid the building of the New St. Peter's church in Rome, which still stands today. One seller of indulgences, Johann Tetzel, a Dominican monk, claimed that as the money fell into the coffer, a soul was released from purgatory.

Despite 491 years having passed since Luther challenged indulgences, they are still a significant part of Roman Catholic theology and practice. The church grants indulgences for saying the Rosary. "The faithful, whenever they recite a third part of the Rosary with devotion, may gain: An indulgence of five years." * (Archbishop of Philadelphia, July, 1961, in a pamphlet How to Say the Rosary, 1963)

But scripture teaches otherwise: "***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God – not by works, so that no one can boast.***" Ephesians 2:8-9 May God ever preserve the heritage of the Reformation.

* Copies of these documents are available on request. Please contact us through the address or telephone number or through any email address inside the covers.

Robert Mehlretter



Churches

**Christ Our Redeemer
Evangelical Lutheran Church**
C/O Pastor Mehlretter
County Road 33 & Birch St.
Mankato, MN 56001 507.345.4867
Worship– Nov-Apr Sunday 9:30 am
May-Oct Sunday 7:00 pm
Bible Class – One hour Earlier Sept-May

The Florida Group
c/o Mr. Robert C. Schroeder
2036 Eclipse Place
Chuluota, FL 32766 407.977.1240
*Please call for time
and place of worship*

**Good Shepherd
Evangelical Lutheran Church**
*Please call for time and
place of worship*
New Ulm, MN 56073
507.388-7103

**Faith Evangelical
Lutheran Church**
C/O Pastor Mehlretter
Sanborn, MN 56083 507.388.7103
Worship– May-Oct Sunday 10:00 am
(*Summer*) –Jun-Aug Sunday 9:00 am
Nov-Apr Saturday 10:00 am
Bible Class – One hour Earlier Sept-May

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For more information about our church body, take a look at the
following web page provided by a member of the LCCF.
<http://LutheranLCCF.org>

The Lutheran Conference of Confessional Fellowship



THE PURPOSE OF OUR CONFERENCE :

To preach the Gospel within the context of upholding all of Scripture;
To establish and provide for a godly fellowship among congregations and
pastors.

THE CONFESSIONS OF OUR CONFERENCE :

We accept without reservation the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the verbally inspired Word of God, and therefore as the sole and only infallible rule of doctrine and life. We also confess the following:

The Apostles' Creed
The Nicene Creed
The Athanasian Creed

**WE CONFESS THE SYMBOLS OF THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AS
PUBLISHED IN THE BOOK OF CONCORD OF 1580, BECAUSE
THEY ARE A TRUE EXPOSITION OF THE WORD OF GOD:**

Luther's Small Catechism
Luther's Large Catechism
The Augsburg Confession
The Apology of the Augsburg Confession
The Smalcald Articles
The Formula of Concord

WE SUBSCRIBE TO THESE MORE RECENT CONFESSIONAL STATEMENTS

The Brief Statement of the Missouri Synod of 1932
Concerning Church Fellowship (Church of the Lutheran Confession, 1961)
Concerning Church and Ministry (Church of the Lutheran Confession,
1962)
Concerning the Theology Involved in the Fraternal Benefit Society Issue
(The LCCF, 1983)