

WE APPRECIATE THE MEANS OF GRACE

The Means of Grace and Mission Work

The Word of the LORD Grows!

Acts 1:1-3 "The former account I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach until the day in which He was taken up, after He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments to the apostles whom He had chosen, to whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God." Acts 28:30,31 "Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him. "

Many have suggested that the conclusion to the book of Acts is missing, lost or never finished. After all we have been told about Paul's missionary journeys, arrest, trial, and imprisonment, why aren't we told about the conclusion? But this is the myopia that results from staring at man's accomplishments instead of God's, that therefore can not see the whole theme, plot and climax of Acts:

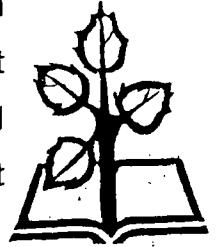
The Word of the LORD Grows!

The Holy Spirit summarizes the message of Acts in its opening lines: Jesus is preaching the kingdom of God. The last verses of Acts emphasize He still is. The whole climax of Acts is then just this that Jesus is still preaching the Kingdom of God. His Word is the powerful scepter that announces, establishes, and preserves His Kingdom. (Acts 6:7, 9:31, 12:24, 16:5, 19:20, 28:31) The plot of every page of Acts is that Jesus Kingdom on this earth did not end with His death or His resurrection and ascension. Every page demonstrates all authority in heaven and on earth is His NOW (Mt. 28:19f). Every page demonstrates He is making disciples through baptism and the Word NOW. Every page demonstrates He is with us NOW and always, to the ends of the world, even to the end of the age. Jesus public teaching began in Nazareth with the declaration, "Today the Kingdom of God is come to you" (Lk 4:18f). Acts closes with Jesus bringing that same invitation through Paul to Rome and to you, "Today the Kingdom of God is come to you".

Thus these two powerfully conclusive verses emphasize: **THE WORD OF THE LORD IS NOT BOUND.** Yes, Paul is bound. He was bound for over two years in a Judean dungeon. He was shipwrecked. He

has been imprisoned in Rome for two more years. What kind of a LORD and kingdom is this if He doesn't have the power to free His own apostle?

But look again. As His Word promised, Jesus has brought Paul safely to Rome. In an age when prisoners had no rights. Paul is actually granted the freedom to live in his own quarters and preach the Word freely to the world. In fact, Philippians demonstrates that his very imprisonment was the opportunity for the whole prison guard and the household of Caesar to hear the word Word (Phil.1:13, 4:22). Instead of Rome using others as it typically did, Rome is used by Christ to spread His Word into all parts of the world.

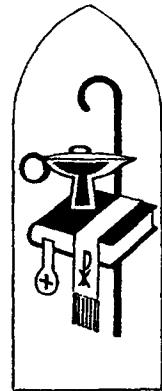


Acts shows the Word was not bound by persecution but like a great wind hitting a roaring fire the sparks spread everywhere burning with the power of the Spirit. Paul himself had tried to confine its fire to Jerusalem and quench it there. But way off on the road to Damascus its sparks landed on him, set him on fire and spread more sparks throughout the world. Yes once again in Rome many of the Jews rejected the Kingdom invitation of the Word. But even in their rejection they became what they would not be willingly, witnesses to the truth of Christ's Word. Prophesy was fulfilled with judgment falling on those who would not hear (Matthew 23,24).

Many would object, Paul could have done so much more if he had not tried to cross cultural barriers, been alert to felt needs and the receptivity axis.^a They are offended in the apparent limitations of Paul's ministry. Are we tempted to model our ministries after the world, the false teachers, the worldly successful? It was the beginning of the end for Israel when they wanted to be like the nations around them and have a King. It could be argued, and they did, that God would still be their King, they'd still believe in Him and rely on His Word alone. But God did not see it that way. "They have rejected Me!" (1 Sam.8:7) Saul claimed He saved the best sheep and oxen to honor God. But God did not see it that way. "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice" (1 Sam. 15:22). The God fearing Reformer King Asa was so outraged that anyone would suggest his treaty with Syria against Israel was not showing trust in the LORD (not a good way to provide more opportunities for gospel outreach) that he threw Hanani in prison. But God did not see it that way. He had sent Hanani with the warning, "You ... have not relied on the Lord" and the reminder "For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him." (2 Chr.16:7-9). The greatest danger to our faith is not outright denial but accommodation to the world. The first step of the

heart in that direction sets us on the slippery slope of trusting their ways and methods of success while we call on the name of the LORD.

Theology is to be the faithful application of God's Word, Law and Gospel, to create and nurture faith in Christ through the Word and Sacraments unto everlasting life. But when practice determines theology instead of the other way around, that practice quickly becomes an aping of the latest sectarian success story.^b Our goal is to preach the gospel, nothing more and nothing less, the good news that God has declared sinners righteous for Jesus sake. "There is nothing more and everything else is less."¹



This world has certainly concluded that the Word of God is bound. They have relegated it to antiquity, proved it unreliable, and identified all who rely on it to be hopelessly blind in the superstition and ignorance of the dark ages. We may indeed join the world in laughing at the Englishman who dresses in a tuxedo in a tropical rain forest at the right hour of dinner. But will we join the world in laughing at those who dress in, rely on, the Word of our KING to rule our whole life. As Citizens of Heaven (Phil 3:20) our mission is to create little colonies of Heaven in our homes, schools, and churches where we daily delight in our Father's love, renew and rehearse His saving truths. If we send our children to be trained by this savage world or let it take over their training right in the colony, what can we expect but that they themselves will become savages of this world! No prison of this world has been able to bind God's Word: not Rome's bars, Diocletian's fires, or Voltaire's pen. "The Word of God is the anvil that has worn out ten thousand hammers".

Did you ever consider why Jesus patiently waited forty years to bring His foretold judgment on Jerusalem? Yes, He graciously saved a remnant. But more, He graciously demonstrates to us that this most intense, ferocious opposition of the Jews to the gospel could not bind His Word, but only fulfill it. The Word is not bound. Its preaching the Kingdom of Christ, let us grow and go with it.^c

THE WORD OF GRACE IS THE POWER OF THE LORD! Many would object, Paul could have done so much more with greater status, funding, and marketing strategy than he had available as a prisoner. They are offended in the apparent weakness of the Word. But Paul stood at Rome just as Jesus had stood in Nazareth: not in the might or power of man but only in the power of the Word of

¹ John Pfeiffer, Delegate Conference devotion, June 5th 1995.

the LORD. Our call is to be witnesses (Acts 1), literally martyrs. Our goal and expectation is not to be the exalted and empowered world leaders. The sweet wine of earthly success is so intoxicating and addictive but Jesus calls us back to the sober reality of being faithful martyrs of the world-rejected King. Our Lord's marketing strategy is complete foolishness to the world. He did not send the angels



to the Jerusalem Gazette but to despised shepherds who made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this Child. He did not call the educated and influential but fishermen who spoke about the things they had heard and seen. What is startling about the coming of the Kingdom of God is that Jesus was not like the politicians and religious hucksters of this world. He did not quarrel or cry out in the streets (Mt 12:19). But the good news got around quite well, didn't it? The Word grew by the power that is inherent in it. May our publicity not proclaim ourselves but herald the glad tidings of God.

Many Jews at Rome as at Nazareth were offended in Jesus humanity, even His servile humanity. They wanted their Savior to have dramatic power over Caesar, to right every wrong in this world, and to spread a rainbow of economic prosperity for them. They wanted more than a Savior who would enter this world in a manger, live under the law, accept affliction and die on a cross. The gospel of Christ crucified remains a stumbling block (I Cor. 1:23) to man. Portraying the gospel, the mission of the Church, as a band-aid for the problems of this world is a deceptive bartering of the gospel (2 Cor. 2:17) that distorts the source, need, focus, and purpose of the gospel itself.^d

They were offended in His message giving the blessings of His Kingdom, the forgiveness of sins and eternal life, in grace to those who have nothing to give in exchange. They wanted more than the grace that announced: in Christ your sin is removed, your guilt is covered, your sickness is healed, and the Kingdom of righteousness, peace, and joy is yours. Wanting more than grace they hardened their heart against the impulse of the Holy Spirit and the ability to receive the Kingdom which the Spirit brings only through that Word of grace. The gospel of Christ crucified remains foolishness (I Cor. 1:23) to man. Portraying the gospel, the mission of the Church, as something that can be made attractive to natural man is denying the cross. (1 Cor. 1:18ff)

Jesus Kingdom Lordship is not written in the politics of this world - not in eliminating abortion, nuclear warheads, or cruelty to animals. His Kingdom power remains the Word that announces to those

imprisoned in the stagnant cesspool of sin, "Christ has set you free and made you God's own holy child". That Kingdom power does not remove the mangers and crosses of this world but consecrates them by and for His grace. All the mighty signs of Pentecost were there to call attention to the Word of Christ crucified and arisen again (Hebrews 2:3,4). The Church created at Pentecost had one formula, plan and goal for mission work: "they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). It is through that Word alone that the successive Pentecosts of Acts come to men. "My Word shall accomplish what I please and prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Is. 55:11).

Any plan or sign, that becomes a substitute for relying on Christ's grace revealed alone in the Word and Sacraments, is from the Devil (John 15,26,16:14). Christ's Kingdom is coming to us when God gives us His Holy Spirit so that by His grace we believe His holy Word and lead a godly life here in time and hereafter in eternity.² The one vision which is to sustain and guide us is of the HOLY, HOLY, HOLY upon His throne dispensing forgiveness (Is. 6). The Spirit's foremost mission goal is that the Word is taught "in spirit and in truth" (Jn 4:24, 8:31, Mt 28:20). Behold what a powerful message the Gospel is. It robbed Athene of her glorious Parthenon, "great" Diana of her splendid temple, and toppled all the gods and goddesses of Greece and Rome from their heavens. Paul was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. He raised the banner of the Cross over a world lost in sin and the Word of Lord Grew. When Jesus speaks the winds and the waves obey, the sick, lame, and palsied are healed and even the dead come back to life. When He gave His life on the cross, to save us, the sun hid its light, the earth quaked, rocks split open, believers came forth from their graves, the veil in the temple split from top to bottom, jeering Jews smote their breasts, and Roman soldiers said: Truly, this is the Son of God! No obstacle, not the gates of hell themselves can prevent the witnessing of the Word from bearing fruit. For Jesus Himself is powerfully speaking through that Word. I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God to salvation" (Rom. 1:16).

Do you want more in your Savior than One who in the grace that brings your eternal salvation also calls you to accept economic squeezes, pressing afflictions, or family anguish with contentment? Wanting more than grace, the Jews became witnesses that grace despised is grace lost. Jesus came riding in the clouds of Heaven in judgment upon them and Jerusalem. The power in preaching the Kingdom of Christ is the Word of



² Martin Luther, The Small Catechism, Explanation to the Second Petition.

grace. Lest we lose it, let us grow and go with it .

It is extremely interesting that Acts 28:30 suggests the two years of Paul's imprisonment have ended. In other Words apparently Luke knew the outcome of Paul's trial, yet leaves us hanging in suspense. The Spirit does not tell us the outcome as an emphatic demonstration that this is not the story of Paul and his missionary journeys but of the Word of the LORD growing from Jerusalem even to the world. This climax reminds us that **THE LORD EQUIPS THE INSTRUMENTS OF HIS WORD.**

Paul was an instrument of that Word who Jesus would continue to comfort, renew and equip just as He did in the past. God's Word intervened on the road to Damascus, the gospel was revealed to Him that He might preach Christ (Gal 1:11-17), and holding fast the faithful Word (Titus 1:9) equipped Him for every situation. The Holy Spirit does not anoint plans but people. He is not poured out on methods but on believers. He does not bless goals but the preaching of the Word. The humble pastor portrayed in Luther's Sacristy Prayer "is a far cry from the strutting modern religious entrepreneur, whose mastery of 'scientific' technique guarantees him x per cent of statistical success for y percent of 'effective' effort".^{3 e}

Paul had one formula, plan and goal for mission work: "glorify the Word" (Acts 13:48). His sermon at Antioch delighted in the promises of the Word fulfilled, in the salvation the Word assured, and the power the Word revealed. Confidence in the power of that Word led him to preach with the authority of the Lord and the joy of the Spirit. He preached the Word continually and when He went on He arranged for the preaching of the Word to continue (Acts 14:21-23). The preaching of the Word will then be our highest priority. For only through His Word (John 17:17) does the LORD "give us His Holy Spirit so that by His grace we may believe His holy Word and lead a godly life here in time and hereafter in eternity".⁴ Our highest priority will then be to surround our families, schools, churches and all who will listen with the Word of the Kingdom. The preaching of the Kingdom of God is not intended to be either a carnival offer of clowns and cotton candy nor a dusty dry reading but a heralding with power which demonstrates we are among those so touched by its power that we are seizing it to

³ Kurt Marquart, The Church, Vol IX in the "Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics" series edited by Robert Preus, p. 123, cited by D. Lau, "The Relation of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of All Believers in regard to Current Lutheran Debates", The Journal of Theology, 12:95, p. 24.

⁴ Martin Luther, The Small Catechism, Explanation to the Second Petition.

ourselves forcefully (Lk 16:16, Mt. 11:12). "Preaching is sacred warfare, a titanic, life-and-death struggle with the Word for the minds and souls of the hearers, in the face of the triple alliance of demonic powers, world, and flesh (Mt. 13, II Cor. 10:4,5)" .⁵ Open the Word and let the LION of Judah roar with power about the grace of the LAMB of God.

"Be busy about preparing the best meal ever - Go on eating the Word yourself.

From the best ingredients ever - God's Words are the Apples of Gold.

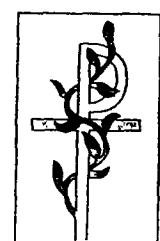
In the most careful way ever - Set them in frames of silver.

For the best guests ever - Kings and Priests in God's Kingdom.

To provide the best dessert ever!"⁶ - The Peace that passes human understanding.

With a third lesson in threes (The first was the denial and the second the restoration of Peter): "What God has cleansed you must not call common" (Acts 10:15), Jesus equipped Peter to open up the tents of Shem for the Spirit to bring Japheth in. Our flesh has the strong tendency to look at the sinfulness of the world and consider ourselves superior, an exclusive club to be walled off from the sinful world. Only Christ's impartial salvation daily equips us to set prejudice, partiality, and apathy aside and open the tents of the gospel. No matter how full His agenda, how pressing His responsibility, how personally tired He was, Jesus always had an eye open for that one lost lamb. The essence of mission work is not a program but personal concern - not sending out someone else but reaching out ourself - not adding numbers to a church but restoring one to the Father. In Christ's personal shepherding of you and me we are daily renewed and equipped for the unique mission of ever seeking that one lost sheep, to the praise of Christ not ourselves.

With three lessons in oppression (Acts 13,14) Jesus equipped Paul to glorify the Word alone at all times. In Antioch Paul preached the gospel and a mob ran him out of town. In Iconium he preached the gospel and a mob gathered to stone him. In Lystra he preached the gospel and a mob did stone him and leave him for dead. In Derbe he preached the gospel and returned to each of those cities that had persecuted him preaching the gospel. Persecuted in one city he went on preaching to another. Where did



⁵ Kurt Marquart, "Church Growth" vs. Mission Paradigm: A Lutheran Assessment, A Luther Academy Monograph published by Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX 1994, p. 84.

⁶ Roland A. Gurgel, "The Sermon, The Best Meal Ever", 1991 Pastoral Conference.

Paul find the commitment to set out again with bandaged head and blackened eye? In that Word "To you the Word of this salvation has been sent" (Acts 13:26). God sent His Son to die for your sins and raised Him from the dead that by Him you might have everlasting life. Paul delighted in detailing all the prophecies of Christ fulfilled, in seeing a seed of faith arise in the midst of persecution and in revealing that the rejection by many was itself a fulfillment of God's Word. Jesus warned about measuring success in earthly results even if it was Satan falling like lightning from heaven and said, "Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Lk 10:20). ^g Daily building on the Rock of Christ's Word creates compassion not sentimentality, conviction not self advancement, and confidence not arrogance. The Word creates in man the conviction that expresses conviction in the Word. Yet in our day Christian leaders glory in subjective experiences and community activities, clowns and comedy, group encounters and practical methods, cell groups and 12 step programs. The Word warns that those who do not glorify the Word will "marvel and perish" (Acts 13:41).

With a lesson in threes the Holy Spirit intentionally records that Paul was forbidden, prevented, and struck out (Acts 16:6,7,8) so that we would lift up our eyes to watch for the unveiling of the Lord's unsearchable judgments. The LORD now opened the door for the rising of the Sun of grace over the continent of Europe, "Come over to us" (Acts 16:9). Yet according to God's wisdom it arose in a humanly unspectacular way. Though three divine revelations brought them to Philippi they went for some days without any contact at all. There were no news headlines, no multitudes, no church building, no programs, no bands and no mass conversions, but just a few ladies gathered at the river. But these ladies did not despise the day of small things. Filled with all the riches of God's Kingdom, they were freed from this world's competitive scramble to hold the treasures of this dying earth and the facade of self righteousness and moved to live the contagious generosity of God's grace. Through these humble beginnings the LORD made it clear for all Europe: "My Kingdom comes not through cathedrals, organizations, goals and plans of man, but through reliance on My Word to create, guide and preserve. I come to you not in the rending wind, nor shaking quake, nor consuming fire but in the still small voice of My Word" (I Kgs 19). ^h

Paul was confronted by the most appealing philosophies of man in Athens and the most appealing pleasures of man at Corinth. But with a lesson in three the Lord called Paul not to be fearfully swayed from preaching Christ and Him crucified alone (1 Cor. 2:2). "For I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city"



(Acts 18:10). A flower has many petals growing out of one sturdy center to make one beautiful flower together. So faithful preaching has many petals all held together in the one sturdy focal point of Christ alone. But any petal that does not originate and remain in that focal point, no matter how brilliant or appealing it may look, is not part of that flower and will fade and rot. Through the ages Christians and churches have often lost this one central focus. Reformation is the continual need to stay focused in Christ. In Luther's day weeds had grown up covering the flower of Christ and secondary matters had replaced the central focus of Christ. We are only heirs of the Lutheran Reformation if we are daily turning our life back to the central focus of Christ alone. Institutional amnesia is the sad state of most of Christianity and most of Lutheranism. It does not know its past, its source or its focus and so it can not know its present, its future or its life. Denying the centrality of sin and grace in Christ most Lutheran churches have adopted a therapy model of helping people resolve their own problems. They view the world as a friend, the devil as a myth and sin as the result of poor toilet training. But our problem is not primarily the difficulties of life in this world. Our problem is us, me, the sinful wretch that I am. That problem is only solved in the Father's redemption model of washing me clean in Christ and in Christ making me His own child. Yet following the therapy model of man, churches have become social clubs where people gather for companionship and entertainment. They have become charity groups caring for the poor and downtrodden. They have become political groups to fight injustice. There are other groups which will do all of these things. There is one thing which no other group is society can do. Unless those who have come to know Christ proclaim Him to the world as the way to God, there is no one to do it. Christ alone washes and cleanses man in His holy blood and He does this alone through His Word and sacraments. He and His Word is our past, our source and our focus. Walking in His Truth gives us a present with the ultimate purpose, bringing others into the future of eternal life through Christ alone. Paul carefully weighed all the wisdom of man and affirmed we are only a flower, beautiful, eternal, and well pleasing to the LORD, when daily reforming all to Christ and His Word alone.

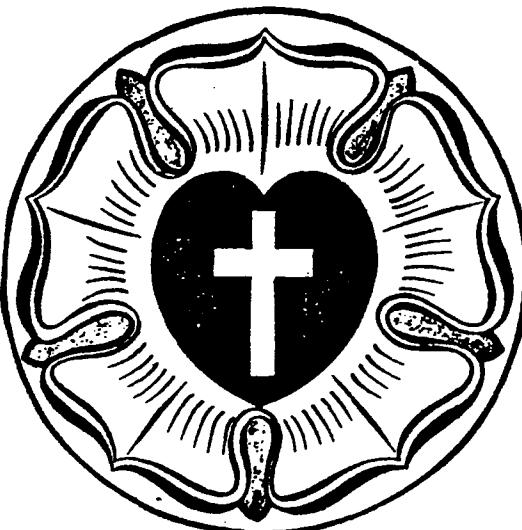


Both the oppression by the world and the progression of political action tempt us to put our trust in man's plans, weapons, and actions. But the "weapons of our warfare", Paul reminds us, "are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," (II Cor. 10:5). Jesus had the power to make stones bread. He could have

really won the following of men by floating down out of heaven off the pinnacle of the temple. Take note it is the Devil that here invented "entertainment evangelism". Jesus affirmed, "Man shall live by every Word of God." (Matthew 4). It was Jesus submission to the will of the Father enduring evil, even unto death on the tree cursed with our sin, which won the victory for us. Its only in His victory that "they shall not overpower us". "If God spared not His only Son, will He not give us all good things. Yes even then in all tribulation, we are more than conquerors, in Jesus Christ who loves us" (Rom 8:31ff). The Word is the divine impetus of God, a mighty onward movement of revelation, designed to carry man with it from glory unto glory. Reliance on fleshly weapons is a compromise with Satan. Through reliance on the Word alone in the midst of oppression, Jesus equipped Paul to preach in Caesar's house, the whole Roman Guard, Rome and the world. No matter where we are or how difficult the circumstances of our life may be Jesus is equipping us through His Word to preach His Kingdom to others.

Like Jesus and Paul it is in fact only when the Word makes us servants to the will of God that we are equipped to preach the Kingdom. For its power does not lie in the might and intellect of man but in the Spirit who gives the faith to believe: "My Jesus died for me. My sins are forgiven. My salvation is secured and I belong to God." There is no end to the book of Acts. For Jesus will never fail to equip His people for preaching the Kingdom of Christ. Let us grow and go with it for every tongue will proclaim Jesus is Lord to the glory of the Father, either willingly or unwillingly. Which will it be for you?

To God alone be the Glory.



CLC CONVENTION
Eau Claire, Wisconsin
June 17-21, 1996
John Ude

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ENDNOTES

a. The Church Growth Movement is "The science that investigates the nature, function, and health of Christian churches as they relate specifically to the effective implementation of God's Commission to "make disciples of all the nations" (Matt. 28:19). Church growth is simultaneously a theological conviction and an applied science, striving to combine the eternal principles of God's Word with the best insights of contemporary social and behavioral sciences, employing as its initial frame of reference the foundational work done by Donald McGavran and his colleagues.⁷ It was started by Donald McGavran in India in a reaction against the social gospel that had lost its authority and mission. In 1972 these principles were transferred to work in the United States. Prominent in its principles are the "Homogeneous Unit Principle" (Work within cultural barriers), "Felt needs" (reach people by offering remedies for perceived needs) and the "Harvest Principle" (science and sociology can determine conversion receptivity). It errs in the following:

- .1. It is virtually silent about God's forgiveness.
- .2. It never proclaims objective, universal justification in Christ.
- .3. It makes faith a decision man makes to identify with a social group: "I accept. I submit. I evangelize." It measures discipleship by obedience and responsible church membershipis not simply faith in Christ .
- .4. It is all about growing a church rather than the Word growing the Church. So their numbers may have very little to do with the LORD adding to His Church such as are saved.
- .5. It separates conversion from the means of grace and teaches how you can come to the Holy Spirit and a religious experience rather than how the Holy Spirit comes to you. It views the Word and Sacraments by themselves as dull and boring. So it makes entertainment, crowd psychology, and pagan frenzy its means of grace. Scripture shows the treasure is that God comes to us in His Word and through it brings us to heaven, that the medium and attitude do affect the content and that the LORD calls for a joyous faith that listens to His Word with watchful and sober hope. CGM discards the treasure for animal heat.
- .6 It sets goals for conversions and other divine matters. Scripture says the Spirit blows where He will.
- .7. It determines its message by societies "felt needs" and so cuts the heart out of God's Word, avoids law and so perverts the gospel into a new law of man renewing himself. Those who know the least about faith determine

⁷ Wagner, C. Peter, Editor with Win Arn and Elmer Towns, Church Growth: State of the Art, Wheaton IL: Tyndale, c. 1986, p. 284.

its expression.

.8. It sets up levels of Christianity. This mixes justification and sanctification.

.9. It confuses the priesthood of all believers with the public ministry.

.10. It looks to man's abilities, spiritual gifts, to energize the church, rather than the Word and Sacraments.

.11 It accommodates cultural idolatry and prejudice instead of promoting the transcultural, transcendent Word of God's Salvation.

.12 It is completely unionistic maintaining: creeds are to be discarded, all denominations are equal, theology only matters if it encourages or prevents church growth and numerical growth will occur. Scripture shows their idea that the removal of the divisions in Christianity will cause masses to rush in trivializes sin and grace and that their focus on the relevance of the message rather than the authority of that message is idolatry.

b. Those that argue for adopting Evangelical style to compete in the marketplace while maintaining Lutheran substance have already rejected Lutheran substance.⁸ "The real secret of true and God-pleasing growth is plain evangelical, biblical, confessional integrity."⁹ It has been argued that "the best approach to the Church Growth Movement" is the "spoiling the Egyptians" which God commanded in Exodus 12:36.¹⁰ This argument does recognize the importance of discerning the errors of the CGM and that this false teaching may be more subtle therefore more dangerous than secular philosophies. However it fails to recognize the fundamental difference between the Egyptian's physical possessions and CGM's spiritual philosophies and between God's command to spoil the Egyptians and His command to not even listen to false prophets (Jer. 23:16). God commanded the children of Israel to spoil the Egyptians. Concerning material things which are used for idolatry God makes it clear that the creation itself is "good, and nothing is to be refused if it is received with thanksgiving; for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer" (1 Tim. 4:4,5). With the command to spoil the physical God provided for Israel's journey, the temple and the encouragement of their faith. God's command concerning false teaching is "What is the chaff to the wheat?" (Jer. 23:28). Luther could say that his enemies were his best teachers because they forced him back into scripture. Certainly in that sense we can learn from the AntiChrist. But we do not determine to spoil his treasures. In spiritual teaching the Word of God is the only treasure. And that treasure is being perverted by CGM and the AntiChrist. The "spoiling of the Egyptians" rationale is really then a slipping on the slope of accommodating the world, trusting their ways and methods instead of the Word alone. "Dr. Mann remarked, "he would not eat poisoned bread, though there was much good flour in it."¹¹

"Especially in periods of indifference to doctrine and creeds and confessions the faithful Christian is required to be very careful not to give the impression that he approves or tolerates the false position of the heterodox. When our people are told on every hand that the divisions in Christendom are not serious, that basically every church is good and that one religion is as good as the next, that all roads lead to heaven, and that the differences in teaching are only theological hair-splitting - what can they be expected to believe when even orthodox teachers and leaders join with heterodox in religious seminars, address each other's conventions, work together on joint committees for various religious projects, etc., etc. The trumpet must not give an uncertain sound."¹²

c. Shall not our practice flow purely from God's Word and our prayer be: Grant, we beseech You, Almighty God, unto Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom which comes down from above, that Your Word, as befits it, may not be bound, but have free course and be preached for the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, that in steadfast faith we may serve You and in the confession of Your name abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, Our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Ghost, every one God, forever and ever. Amen.¹³

⁸R. Krause, All things to all men, WLQ, Spring 1996, p.97.

⁹ Kurt Marquart, "Church Growth" vs. Mission Paradigm: A Lutheran Assessment, A Luther Academy Monograph published by Our Savior Lutheran Church, Houston, TX 1994, p. 143.

¹⁰ David Valleskey, "The Church Growth Movement", Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly, 88:2, p.115.

¹¹ F. Bente, American Lutheranism, 4 vols, The United Lutheran Church, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1919, II, P. 121, cited by Gregory Jackson.

¹² Concerning Church Fellowship, Church of the Lutheran Confession, 1961, p. 35.

¹³The Lutheran Hymnal, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO, c. 1941, p. 14.

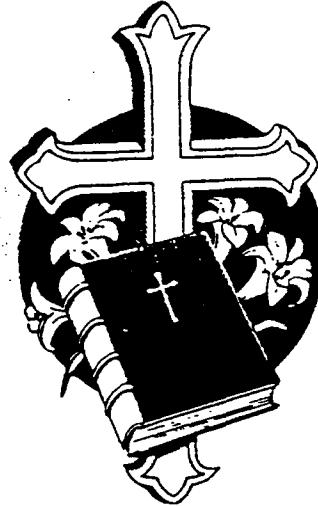
d. The "social gospel" falsely starts with the present need and stays with the present need. The CGM falsely starts with the present need as the power to produce man's change. Jesus certainly showed love and compassion for man in need and used human earthly needs as an opportunity to witness to our real need and its solution. His focus (John 4) is immediately on the spiritual need and the Spirit's power in the word. But whenever man made those "felt needs" the focus Jesus rejected and avoided it (Mt 16:20, Lk 12:13, Mk. 9:9, Jn 6:26ff). But in CGM "How-to" seminars far surpass actual Bible study. Thus CGM becomes more a means of meeting human needs than glorifying God. "The felt needs approach is inherently dangerous to the Gospel message understood as the message of the forgiveness of sins." ¹⁴

e. O Lord God, dear Father in heaven, I am indeed, unworthy of the office and ministry in which I am to make known Thy glory and to nurture and to serve this congregation. But since Thou hast appointed me to be a pastor and teacher, and the people are in need of the teachings and the instructions, O be Thou my helper and let Thy holy angels attend me. Then if Thou are pleased to accomplish anything through me, to Thy glory and not to mine or to the praise of men, grant me, out of Thy pure grace and mercy a right understanding of Thy Word and that I may also diligently perform it. O Lord Jesus Christ, Son of the living God, Thou Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, send Thy Holy Spirit that He may work with me, yea, that He may work in me to will and to do through Thy divine strength according to Thy good pleasure. - Amen. (Luther's Sacristy Prayer)

f. "Nothing keeps the people with the church more than good preaching" (Apology XXIV, 50, German).

g. "The southern Baptist preacher likes to try to strengthen faith in his hearers by always talking about faith. But what really strengthens the Christian's faith is the message of the cross and the empty tomb. To strengthen faith we don't preach only about faith. How can we then increase in our people a real, genuinely scriptural and God-pleasing zeal for sharing the Word with others? It is not done by constantly harping on missions, missions, missions, and comparing how we have fallen short in this endeavor to other denominations. But this desire to share Christ with others comes from the faithful proclamation of law and gospel." ¹⁵

h. "Let our only goal be this, that we remain faithful to Christ and His teaching, and that we diligently use the means He has supplied for church growth, namely, the means of grace. "There is no other way of winning souls for the Church and keeping them with it than the faithful and diligent use of the divinely ordained means of grace. Whatever activities do not either directly apply the Word of God or subserve such application we condemn as 'new methods,' unchurchly activities, which do not build, but harm, the church (Brief Statement of 1932, #22)".¹⁶



¹⁴ Robert Koester, Law and Gospel: The Foundation of Lutheran Ministry with reference to the Church Growth Movement, published by Robert koester, Oct. 1989, pp 98-106.

¹⁵ Stephen Kurtzahn, "The Role Of Law And Gospel In Evangelism", Journal of Theology, 12:95, p. 48.

¹⁶ David Lau, "The Relation of the Public Ministry and the Priesthood of All Believers in regard to Current Lutheran Debates", The Journal of Theology, 12:95, p.24.

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