

"OUR JUBILEE IN CHRIST"

REDEMPTION FOR THE PAST. HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.



Hope for the Future

"Don't worry Todd, this paper will simply serve to set the tone of our church body for the next fifty years." With a hefty dose of tongue-in-cheek, those were the words used to describe this assignment that was given and reluctantly accepted some six months ago. I was in a hospital waiting area with the family of a member of the congregation I serve in the St. Louis area at the time I took this phone call from Pastor Nolting. These family members had gathered around their dear wife, mother, and grandmother for what seemed like the umpteenth time over the past five years or so. You see this woman was not supposed to make it through the night...five years earlier. I had been teaching at the Arise and Shine Retreat when I was fortunate enough to be wandering through the one area of Cuivre River State Park that had cell phone reception when I received the phone call. It was her husband, asking if I could come to the hospital because Betty wasn't going to make it. Betty had undergone open heart surgery to repair an aneurism on her pulmonary artery in the "hope" of saving her life. A few days later, after what seemed to be a successful surgery, her condition started to deteriorate. After an ultrasound of her abdomen revealed big problems she was taken to the operating room for emergency exploratory surgery. The surgeon came directly from the operating room to Betty's husband to tell him the news that the portion of Betty's colon that had been spliced back together after a cancerous tumor had been removed some 15 years earlier had ruptured. It was at this point, some five years ago that the doctor told her husband that he had never seen anything like this and that she would most certainly not make it through the night.



Needless to say, the Lord had other things in mind. I arrived at the hospital in the late evening and sat with the family as we prayed for Betty and for God's will to be done. Every hour or so, the nurse would come out to tell us that her vital signs were holding steady. The doctor came in early that morning to check up on his patient. He came out to the ICU waiting room and announced that Betty's vital signs had steadily improved through the night and that they were going to stitch her back up and "hope" for the best.

Betty continued to improve and within a couple of weeks went home and was again in regular attendance at worship service and Bible study. Over the next few years Betty was back in the hospital for varying amounts of time to treat a variety of complications that became a routine part of her and her husband's life.

During those ensuing years Betty was like a city set on a hill. The Holy Spirit worked a faith and a hope in the heart of that woman that just begged for answer. Her unwavering faith in Jesus Christ as her Lord and only Savior produced a true and lasting hope for the future.

There were many days when I would stand outside the door of her hospital room waiting for the nurse or doctor to finish their business. It was always a joy to listen in as Betty served as an able ambassador of her Lord and Savior. She would often ask me why I thought the Lord was keeping her around. My answer always had something to do with the Gospel message that she had just shared with one of the many people whom the Lord brought into her life as she struggled.

On December 31st of last year, Betty's family gathered once again, but this time it was at a funeral home to rejoice in the midst of mourning the loss of their dear loved one.

Why do I tell this story as we gather here in convention and as we celebrate God's mercy, grace, and guidance over these past fifty years of the Church of the Lutheran Confession? Because it is stories like this one and countless others that could be told by member after member, and pastor after pastor, that demonstrate the point so beautifully that our hope for the future has nothing to do with the plans and promises of man. Betty's hope for the future was not founded upon the debate and decisions or the bold and courageous stand for the truth made by the founding fathers of the CLC. Her hope did not rest in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God, as did Isaiah's when he wrote:

*Woe to those who go down to Egypt for help,
And rely on horses,
Who trust in chariots because they are many,
And in horsemen because they are very strong,
But who do not look to the Holy One of Israel,
Nor seek the LORD!*

Isaiah 31:1¹

¹The New King James Version. 1982 (Isaiah 31:1). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



Betty's hope, like ours today, was built on nothing less than Jesus' blood and righteousness!

1. Our hope is built on nothing less
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
We dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
On Christ, the solid Rock, we stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

2. When darkness veils His lovely face,
We rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale
Our anchor holds within the veil.
On Christ, the solid Rock, we stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

3. His oath, His covenant, and blood
Support us in the whelming flood;
When every earthly prop gives way,
He then is all our Hope and Stay.
On Christ, the solid Rock, we stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

4. When He shall come with trumpet sound,
Oh, may we then in Him be found,
Clothed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne!
On Christ, the solid Rock, we stand;
All other ground is sinking sand.

Text: Edward Mote (alt)

Tune: Magdalen (hymn 370)

As we look back at the fifty years now past and look for some source of hope for the future, we do well as a church body and as individual Christians to focus our attention on God's saving word and our Savior as the only source of hope. We'll do so today by taking a look at a number of "stories" that reveal the faithfulness of our God. We find hope for the future by looking back at what God has already done for us!

Consider those early pastors and laymen of the CLC some fifty plus years ago as they considered the ramifications of the steps they were being led to take. We find the names of thirty of those pastors on page forty-one of the recently published history of the CLC². These men, their wives, and families, along with countless laymen and their families endured the scoffing, ridicule and uncertainty of the future as they sought to faithfully follow the LORD. Towards the end of the fourth chapter of the above mentioned history of the CLC³ we find just a few short paragraphs under the caption "Not Easy." This could certainly be classified as an understatement, I'm sure, to those who lived through the events of those early years. In many cases pastors were left without a congregation to serve, a salary, and a home for their families. Individuals and families who were led to remain faithful to the Word no longer had the benefit of an organized congregation to call a church home. The stories of these trials and the temptations that came with them abound. I am sure that thoughts of hopelessness were prevalent in the hearts of many during those trying days. When we think of those early events of our synod, the human reason of sinful mankind will most certainly be led to think that these folks really had little reason for hope for their future. Thanks be to God that He is always faithful. And He has revealed His faithfulness in the past so that we might have hope for the future.

² Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 4 by David Lau

³ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 4 by David Lau



Remember Noah! The faithful builder of the Ark through which God preserved the human race and thus the promise of salvation through the seed of woman⁴. What hope did this man have in the midst of the ridicule and scoffing that he most surely received during the years of construction? As Noah left the Ark, one certainly could have asked the question, what hope for the future did Noah and his family possibly have? But in a world that must have looked foreign, frightening, and hopeless he built an altar to the Lord. With a heart full of thanks, praise, faith, and hope he made an offering to the Lord⁵. Noah's hope for the future was not based upon the well laid plans of himself and his sons. His hope for the future did not find its substance in his own abilities. And we do not gather on Sunday mornings to glorify Noah in this situation any more than we glorify those who worked so tirelessly to establish the CLC. Instead, we glorify the Lord as we can confidently say that Noah's hope for the future was based on the faithfulness of God. It was the LORD who made the seemingly impossible task of saving the human race possible. It was the Lord and His faithfulness to His gospel promises that brought Noah and his family safely through the rain and earthly torment. It was the faithfulness of the LORD that gave Noah hope for the future!

Consider the meetings held in Mankato, MN to discuss the need for the ongoing training of the young and for those preparing for the ministry. On page 66 of David Lau's book⁶ we find a list of five bold resolutions concerning the establishment of Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary. This may seem like nothing of great importance or faith until one reads the quote that follows these resolutions in the book: "Despite having no budget for such a project and no faculty committed, Immanuel's voters unanimously adopted all five resolutions." What hope did these men really have of starting an institute of higher learning with no budget and no faculty? Was there any hope for the future of the ILC or the CLC for that matter, if there was no way to train future pastors? Why would these men and their families be so willing to take such a bold step as this?

Remember Abraham! The faithful patriarch of Old Testament times who stood strong in the Lord as he raised his arm, knife in hand, over the body of his son Isaac, ready and willing to sacrifice his own son in obedience to the Lord⁷. To the outside observer, there was very little reason for hope for the future for this elderly father. But Scripture reveals that at this moment Abraham was indeed filled with hope. We're told that Abraham, by faith, was convinced that God could raise Isaac from the dead⁸. Abraham had hope for the future! And yet, we do not give glory to Abraham for this act of faithfulness. We give glory to God for the strong faith worked in the hearts of His servants. You see Abraham's faith was strengthened, not through his own resolve, but through the faithfulness of God who called him to be His very own, to leave his homeland and family, to leave all that he had and to wander through an unfamiliar land⁹. It was God who repeatedly made those Gospel promises, and in spite of Abraham's

⁴ Genesis 5:15

⁵ Genesis 8:20ff

⁶ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 6 by David Lau

⁷ Genesis 22

⁸ Hebrews 11:17ff

⁹ Genesis 12



faults and doubts¹⁰, God was faithful and kept His promises. Long after the years of child bearing for Abraham and Sarah, and in spite of her infertility, God made possible a future that seemed absolutely impossible when Sarah gave birth to Isaac. To the outsider looking in, as Abraham and Sarah reached those golden years of life, there must not have been much reason for hope for the future. And yet, the Lord was faithful to His promises. It was the faithfulness of the LORD that gave Abraham hope for the future!

Consider this date, Tuesday, August 9, 1960. This was the day when a pastor, serving as chairman, addressed the Interim Conference as they met in Watertown, SD. It was two days later that a motion was passed that gave a name to the newly formed church body. The next day, on Friday, a motion passed to have the newly written constitution duplicated and distributed to the congregations for adoption. Forty-five pastors and twenty-three delegates were in registered attendance at this conference. That's just sixty-eight individuals¹¹. If anyone in the secular world would have been looking in at this small band of men gathered in conference with the goal of beginning a new church body, based upon the conviction that every word of God is true and worthy of our respect and commitment, the only "reasonable" conclusion to come to would have been that there was no real hope of success. Just think of it, sixty-eight men, with no real budget or building for a headquarters. Sixty-eight men, in comparison with the manpower and infrastructure of the very large and influential church bodies around the world, stood very little chance of making it. From an earthly perspective, the newly formed Church of the Lutheran Confession had no real hope for the future.

Remember Hannah! This woman, who had spent many years longing for the gift of a child found herself once again in prayer before the Lord. We're told that she endured the ridicule of her husband's other wife. Was there any hope for this woman? She certainly thought so. Even in the midst of the bitterness of heart she poured out her soul to the Lord. And when the time came, she brought young Samuel to the priest to offer him into the service of the Lord¹². Even Hannah understood that, through the sufferings and temptations of this life, her hope for the future was not found in Samuel her son, nor in her husband, and certainly not with Eli and his accusations, but rather in the faithfulness of her Lord. And so, she was bold and confident in fulfilling her vow to the Lord. Because the LORD was faithful to her, Hannah had great hope for the future!

Consider a small island nation on the other side of the globe. It was there, in Japan, where the Lord would present an opportunity for those individuals who were led to remain faithful to every Word of God, to let their light shine as a testament to God's faithfulness. A missionary, who had been conscience bound to resign from the WELS, needed financial assistance to continue the work of spreading the Gospel in an area of the world dominated by the worship of idols. Still not organized into a formal church body, there was a resolve to offer support to

¹⁰ Abraham doubted the Lord's protection while sojourning in Egypt and deceptively offered his wife to the pharaoh as his sister, cf. Genesis 12:10ff. Abraham also doubted the faithfulness or ability of God to keep His promise to make him the father of a great nation and to bless the world through his descendants and fathered a child through Hagar the servant of his wife. Cf. Genesis 16:1ff

¹¹ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 9 by David Lau

¹² 1 Samuel 1ff



the mission work being done in Japan¹³. With very few resources or the organizational structure most would assume would be needed to do mission work overseas, it would have seemed, to most observers, that there was very little hope for the future of Confessional Lutheranism in Japan.

Remember Jeremiah! That prophet of the Old Testament who had the unenviable and yet blessed task of bringing the truth of God's unchanging Word to those who did not want to hear it. As he labored for the Lord, preaching and proclaiming God's truth, there were very few visible results, unless you count the ridicule and contempt he received. There was apparently no hope for the future of God's people at this point in history. They heard the Word of God but did not listen. Yet the prophet was nonetheless full of hope. His hope was, like that of those who had gone before, found in the faithfulness of God. Confronted on every side by the ridicule and rejection of his message of lament, Jeremiah states the reason for his hope.

*²² Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed,
Because His compassions fail not.*

*²³ They are new every morning;
Great is Your faithfulness.*

*²⁴ "The LORD is my portion," says my soul,
"Therefore I hope in Him!"*

Lamentations 3:22-24¹⁴

Consider those forty-three original congregations of the CLC and the struggles that many of them have endured over the years. David Lau observes that while a few of the original congregations have been blessed with membership growth, many have experienced heavy losses in membership over the years due, in part, to controversies of various kinds, and their stand for the truth of God's Word proved to be unpopular with some of their former members¹⁵. Consider the tremendous pressure faced by those early congregations to bend and break under the sway of being popular and the potential of numerical growth. And yet as members have walked away over the years and the hope for a future seemed to fade, the Lord has been faithful in all things. Recently a CLC pastor was interviewed for an article in a local newspaper concerning the CLC 50th anniversary. The journalist asked a question in a rather matter of fact manner. She said: "with such a small membership, what reasonable hope for survival does your congregation really have?" The pastor responded: "*We've been here for fifty-four years already, always with a small membership, but we look at it as our goal to serve the Lord faithfully and He'll bring growth to us according to His will.*"¹⁶ Our hope is not found in the numbers of the world, but rather in the faithfulness of our LORD!

Remember Daniel! The young captive carried away to Babylon certainly had little if any reason to have much hope for the future. But as the temptation to go along with the ways of his peers and deny his Lord must have been great, he refused to offer prayers and worship to

¹³ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 10 by David Lau

¹⁴ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Lamentations 3:22ff). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

¹⁵ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 11 by David Lau

¹⁶ http://suburbanjournals.stltoday.com/articles/2010/05/05/west/special_feature/0505wc-faith0.txt



mere man, and instead went to his room, opened his window, faced Jerusalem, and prayed to the one true God¹⁷. And the Lord was faithful! The casual observer of the day would have initially questioned the faithfulness of God as Daniel was accused and convicted by his enemies. But the faithfulness of God was on full display once again as He closed the mouths of the lions who were to tear Daniel limb from limb. Daniel continued to proclaim the truth of God because his hope for the future was found in the faithfulness of our God!

Consider an article defending evolution in an ALC publication and the ensuing relationship of a young pastor in South Dakota, a layman in California, a Nigerian pastor, and the beginning of a new opportunity to carry out our Savior's great commission in a foreign land. Consider also a letter received in April of 1974 from an unacquainted pastor and his simple request: "*I send this call to you in the name of the Triune God to come over to Nigeria and help us by preaching the true Word of God to the sin-sick souls in Nigeria.*"¹⁸ Consider a very sick young man from Ipswich, SD lying in a hospital bed in India with an opportunity to serve as his Lord's ambassador and the headmaster of an Indian school who just happened to be Lutheran in a nation that is more than predominately Hindu in religion and culture. Consider the disappointment and betrayal experienced by those involved when it was revealed in 2001 that the head pastor of BELC in India had established a relationship with a false teaching church body. And consider now, some eight years later, God's faithfulness in blessing this same church body with new leadership and growth beyond what any could have imagined. Consider a young child of Hindu Dalit (untouchable) parents in South India some forty years ago with little or no hope of a future here on earth or in heaven. This same young child was sent to a Christian orphanage where he was called, gathered, and enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Word of God and now serves our faithful God by faithfully training men for the Gospel ministry in the BELC. Consider letters received from individual pastors in Nepal and Myanmar, the months of correspondence that has taken place, the personal visits ¹⁹, and the blessed opportunity to declare our fellowship with them as we continue to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. Looking back it is now a simple matter to see God's faithfulness, but there were no doubt many times when, from a weak and earthly perspective, there seemed little reason for any kind of hope for the future of this or that particular mission field. And yet as we have been faithless, God has been faithful!

Remember Paul! Who can forget the Apostle Paul? The one who wrote, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, such bold and powerful words to the Christians in Rome and many other regions of the ancient world? It is Paul who encourages us in our faith by reminding us that we are saved by grace through faith, not of ourselves, but as a gift of God.²⁰ My mind's eye likes to envision Paul as standing up bold and confident in front of crowds of people proclaiming the truth of God's word. But in contrast to this image, we find Paul imprisoned as he writes his letter to the Christians in Philippi. And in this letter Paul is anything but proud and boastful of his own accomplishments, although he states that if anyone had reason to boast in righteous

¹⁷ Daniel 6 paraphrase

¹⁸ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 15 by David Lau

¹⁹ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 16 by David Lau

²⁰ Ephesians 2:8-9 paraphrase



accomplishments it was he.²¹ Remember that it was Paul who referred to himself as the chief of sinners²². And yet, here he sits imprisoned for the very Gospel message that he continues to preach and proclaim. What hope was there for Paul at this point in his life? What kind of future could he possibly hope for? His hope is clearly stated as he writes: *"that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection...if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead."* (Philippians 3:10-11)²³ Paul's hope for the future was found in the risen and reigning Lord Jesus Christ!

Consider the many hours spent in debate over such topics as "Church and Ministry", "Third Use of the Law", "Polygamy and Marriage", "Fraternal Insurance Companies", "The Doctrine of the Call", "Self Esteem", and "The American Legion."²⁴ As debates wore on and egos were under constant assault, Satan seemed to be gaining a foothold in the CLC. Accusations of wasting time in foolish disputes and thoughts of hopelessness for a body of believers were, no doubt, plentiful. As this feeble group of Christians were accused of being unable to do anything but argue about doctrine, God was faithful as He led pastors and lay-persons alike into the one source of true hope, His holy Word! What Satan meant for evil in each one of these controversies, our Faithful God brought about for good as the men and women of the CLC were drawn back into the Scriptures to see and study for themselves the truth of God's Word!

Remember Joseph! The young man who seemed to have so much promise, such a bright future as his father's favored son. But his future seemed anything but bright as the jealousy of his brothers led to his demise as they spared his life but sold him into slavery. Joseph's hope for the future could well have been dashed when his obedience to the Lord led to false accusations and imprisonment. What might have appeared to be hope, when a friend in prison promised to put in a good word for him with the Pharaoh, was probably soon forgotten just as he had apparently been forgotten. But years later the Lord revealed His plan for Joseph, a plan that would preserve the line of David and thus the line of our Savior, as Joseph's brothers came to buy food for their family²⁵. The end of the account reveals the reason for Joseph's hope during the many highs and lows of his pilgrimage on earth. It was the faithfulness of God that led to Joseph's hope for the future throughout his trials and disappointments. And it was God's faithfulness that led Joseph to forgive his brothers as he uttered these words of faith: *"But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid..."*²⁶

Consider that the wildest dreams of the pastors and delegates that gathered for a special convention in January of 1963 to consider the purchase of the property at 501 Grover Rd for

²¹ Philippians 3:4ff

²² 1 Timothy 1:15 paraphrase

²³ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Philippians 3:10). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

²⁴ *Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession*, Chapter 17 by David Lau

²⁵ Genesis 37ff

²⁶ *The New King James Version*. 1982 (Genesis 50:20). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



the cost of \$85,000²⁷, would have most likely never included a thought of one day completing over three million dollars of building and improvements. And yet, the Lord has been faithful, beyond anything that those delegates would have hoped for, in providing more than adequate facilities for the training of future laypersons, teachers, and pastors for the CLC! Consider also that in 1959 the decision was unanimously made to begin Immanuel Lutheran College and seminary despite the fact that no faculty had yet committed to the task²⁸. What hope was there that the necessary training of pastors and teachers would take place without a faculty? Looking back, we can see once again, the faithfulness of God as He provided faithful men and women to serve in the various capacities necessary in carrying out our Savior's great commission by preparing individuals for the Gospel ministry and faithfully teaching all things that God has commanded us.²⁹

Remember Peter! Was there any hope for this fellow who always seemed to have his foot in his mouth? Was there any hope for the man who said things that brought high praise from Jesus one moment and earned a severe rebuke the next³⁰? Peter, the vacillating, spineless disciple, who vehemently denied even knowing Jesus³¹, but on the day of Pentecost preached a bold and brilliant Law and Gospel sermon that kick started the Church and brought three thousand to faith³². Peter, the one who took that bold step out of the boat and onto the water, but then when he saw the waves and wind was filled with doubt and began to sink. As His Savior reached out His hand to save Him, he heard the humbling words referring to him as one of little faith³³. What hope did Peter have? As he carried on with the Gospel ministry in hostile situations, what sort of hope for the future did Peter have? It was that feeble, fickle, yellow bellied, excuse of a disciple that was later put into God's service as the Holy Spirit breathed the words of two inspired epistles into Peter.

Peter had hope. Hope that he was ready to defend with meekness and fear when anyone asked him for a reason. As we gather this week in celebration of the 50 years of God's grace and guidance and as we look forward to the opportunities that lie ahead for us as individual Christians and as a church body, we do well to spend some time encouraging one another in the only hope that we have for the future. For if we forget the hope that is ours in Christ as individuals, then we might as well forget any sort of future for the CLC. Today we remind and encourage one another of our hope for the future by considering Peter's words in his first epistle.

While most often applied to individuals, Peter's encouragement in 1 Peter 3:15 also has application for us as a church body as look to what the future holds: "*But sanctify the Lord*

²⁷ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 12 by David Lau

²⁸ Out of Necessity, A History of the Church of the Lutheran Confession, Chapter 6 by David Lau

²⁹ Matthew 28:20 paraphrased

³⁰ Matthew 16:13-23 paraphrased

³¹ Matthew 26:70ff

³² Acts 2:14ff

³³ Matthew 14:25ff



God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.”³⁴

This is actually the fourth and final time that Peter uses this word “hope” in his letter. Before we can proclaim and defend this hope, we do well to take a moment and bask in the glory and the grace of our Savior as God’s Word leads us to truly appreciate the hope that we have.

Consider the three references that Peter makes to “hope” that appear in his letter before the reference we just read:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 1 Peter 1:3-5

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; 1 Peter 1:13

through Him (you) believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. 1 Peter 1:21³⁵

Peter is writing to Christians that are being enduring persecution for being followers of Jesus Christ. Not only do these Christians need to know that they are held secure by God in their day to day lives but, even more so, they also need to know that there is hope for the future!

This is great news for us today as we look forward to God’s blessings on the next fifty years! This is the hope that encourages us as we struggle with the sin, temptations, the misery, the loneliness, the heartaches, and the disappointments of life in the sinful world. This is the only hope that can and will see us through the temptations of Satan to doubt our Savior’s love for us.

The hope that Peter speaks of is really at the core of any and every opportunity and privilege we might be given to carry out the work of the Church. This hope is what makes the news we share so good!

Hope is what keeps us going. Hope is what says, I know that things seem less than desirable right now, but God is faithful and that means that one day things will be better. Hope says, I know my life is racked with sin, and sickness, and problems, and insecurities, but God has proven Himself faithful in so many ways, and has revealed His faithfulness to me in the Scriptures, and one day I will be with Him forever!

Our hope for the future is found in the promises of God already kept in the life, death, and resurrection of our Savior Jesus. Paul brilliantly makes this point in the eighth chapter of his letter to the Romans:

*“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?
³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He*

³⁴*The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Peter 3:15). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

³⁵*The New King James Version*. 1982. Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶As it is written:

"For Your sake we are killed all day long;

We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

³⁷Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.

³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."
Romans 8:31-39³⁶

This hope of which the apostle Peter speaks is a living hope because it finds its substance in the resurrected body of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The hope that we have in Jesus Christ is a living hope. That is a significant statement because a living hope means that it is not a dead or lifeless hope. A living hope means that it is not a probable hope either. It is not the kind of hope that may or may not come to pass. It's not like saying: "I sure hope the CLC survives another 50 years." Or "I sure hope I get to heaven." This hope is based on sureness and certainty of our Savior's perfect life, sacrificial death, and His resurrection.

God teaches us, through His apostle Peter, that our hope is found only in the revelation of Jesus. And He continues to encourage us in the truth that our only hope is in Him who raised Jesus from the dead.

And so, as we consider our hope for the future we remember Jesus! Jesus, the source of our living hope! As we look to the future we have hope as we revel and rejoice in knowing, by faith, who our Lord Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us.

He is Jesus. The son of Mary and Joseph, the actual flesh and blood, true man and also true God, sent into the world to be the Savior of all people. Not just a another prophet, not just a good teacher, not just another godly example. He is the Christ, the long-awaited and promised Messiah. The faithfulness of God made complete in the flesh. A promise made and a promise kept by our faithful God to save sinners from the wrath we deserve because of our sin.

And so, we gladly, and joyfully, and with all boldness and confidence continue to come before the throne of God's grace each Sunday in our worship services and confess our sins as we rejoice in the forgiveness, salvation, and eternal life that is our hope in Christ Jesus our Lord.

This hope is ours only because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead has set Him apart from any other person to walk the face of this earth and proves that He is the promise of salvation kept!

Our living hope is all wrapped up in these truths. This is what has been confessed each week in

³⁶The New King James Version. 1982 (Ro 8:31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



congregations of the CLC for the past fifty years and, by the grace of God, will continue to be confessed for many years to come.

We'll bring this essay to a conclusion as we find comfort and assurance in the fact that our hope is an inheritance that is incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away! Our hope is assured because we are kept by the power of God through faith.

Listen again to Peter's words:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."³⁷

There is hope for our future because our inheritance can never perish! Our inheritance, made possible only in Christ, is incorruptible. It doesn't age, deteriorate, or die. It can never spoil or be ruined by the corruption of this sinful world. Our hope is found in the fact that our inheritance is undefiled! That means that every sin, every sadness, every struggle, every heartache, every burden, every worry, every problem we deal with in this sinful world, both as individuals and as a church body, will not exist in our eternal home! And this inheritance will never fade away, it will last forever and ever!

Here's more good news, our hope for the future does not depend upon the debates, the decisions, the failures, the successes, or the resolutions that take place at the conventions of the past, present, or future. We have hope for the future because we are kept by the power of God through faith.

This isn't my promise, nor is it simply the opinion of learned theologians. This is a promise from our faithful God! Listen once more to Peter's words:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, ⁵who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time."³⁸

How can we be so full of hope in a world full of sin and sorrow, pain and death? How can we know for sure that we will receive the living hope of eternal life? How do we know that we will not fail and come short on the great day of redemption? Peter encourages us with the truth and promise of God's Power and the fact that we are kept by the very faith that the Holy Spirit has worked in our hearts.

I don't presume to know the future of the CLC. But I do know the future of every blood bought soul of Christ who clings to Him by faith. God's children have a bright future of eternal life in Heaven. And if, by the grace of God alone, the simple message of Christ crucified and raised

³⁷*The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Peter 1:3-4). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

³⁸*The New King James Version*. 1982 (1 Peter 1:3-5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



for every sinner, continues to be the source of our hope and the foundation and emphasis of all that we preach, proclaim, and attempt to accomplish, then there is great hope for the future of the CLC as well.

Like Betty, like the founding fathers of the CLC, like that great cloud of witnesses that have gone before, our hope is not found in a doctor's diagnosis, in budget figures, or the ideas, plans, products, or opinions of sinners like us. For we know that the lives of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, the Apostles of the New, the founding father and families of the CLC, and us gathered here today, have been riddled with sins of thought, word, and deed. We have not loved God with all our heart, soul, and strength. And we certainly have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. If our hope for the future is based in what we have done and what we plan to do for God, then we are of all men, the most pitiable. But rather, we find our hope in the Author and Finisher of our faith...in the One who endured the shame of the cross for us...in the One who is risen and reigning at the right hand of God for us³⁹. We do not look to the leaders of the past for our hope. And we do not look to those who now lead. Nor do we look to future leaders yet chosen. We look to our Savior, His perfect life, His sacrificial death on the cross, His empty tomb, and the faithfulness of our God as we rejoice in promises made and promises kept by our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Our God has been faithful in the past and He promises faithfulness in the future! And so, we go forward full of hope for the future “**...being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ**”⁴⁰ **Philippians 1:6**

1. Before the throne of God above
I have a strong and perfect plea.
A great High Priest whose name is Love
Who ever lives and pleads for me.

2. My name is graven on His hands,
My name is written on His heart.
I know that while in Heaven He stands
No tongue can bid me thence depart.

3. When Satan tempts me to despair
And tells me of the guilt within,
Upward I look and see Him there
Who made an end of all my sin.

4. Because the sinless Saviour died
My sinful soul is counted free.
For God the just is satisfied
To look on Him and pardon me.

5. Behold Him there the risen Lamb,
My perfect spotless righteousness,
The great unchangeable I AM,
The King of glory and of grace,

6. One with Himself I cannot die.
My soul is purchased by His blood,
My life is hid with Christ on high,
With Christ my Savior and my God!

Text: Charitie L. de Chenez
Tune: Das Walt' Gott Vater (hymn 273)

S.D.G. Pastor Todd Ohlmann – June 23, 2010
Twenty-Ninth Convention and 50th Anniversary
of the Church of the Lutheran Confession

³⁹ Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ²looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Hebrews 12:1-2

⁴⁰The New King James Version. 1982 (Philippians 1:6). Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

