

“Come, Holy Ghost, God And Lord!”

[Submitted for an ELS Convention, 1978]

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Our convention theme is taken from the beloved hymn for Pentecost by Dr. Luther with this same title. It is a most appropriate theme for the church to consider at any time. Since the beginning of the church it has been the Holy Spirit who “calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith.” Faithfully and effectively the Holy Ghost has been performing His beneficial and necessary work.

But with perverted zeal, the wicked one has been challenging the church on every hand. Satan, with his malicious devices would rob the church of peace and supplant each of the genuine workings of the Holy Ghost. From the time of the Reformation, the truth of God was challenged by revolutionary spirits which come not from the true Spirit, but were imitators and deceivers, their every objective was to craftily snatch the believers from the arms of Jesus and cast them loose to be consumed by their lusts. Hence the prayer of his hymn, “*Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord*” was much needed.

Times have not really changed in this respect for the Church of Jesus Christ as it continues to exist by the grace of God in this world. The Holy Spirit is just as sincerely at work today as He has been in the past. Yet the wicked one is still very much on the job, just like he has been in earlier times. He still challenges the work of the true Spirit. Today he is the great master-imitator, arch-deceiver, who cloaks a deadly delusion in the disguise of enlightenment. So we still need to pray Dr. Luther’s hymn, “*Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord.*” May the petitions of that hymn be continually fulfilled among us as we consider this topic on the basis of Holy Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and in the light of current matters facing the church today.

I.

Come, Holy Ghost, Gather and Keep Us in the True Faith

“No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Ghost” (I Cor. 12:3). Haven’t we all learned this Bible verse? It is the basis for our calling upon the “Name of the Lord, daring to confess that Christ has sought and found us, purchased and won us from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil. Because the Holy Ghost has granted us faith, we confidently anticipate the fulfillment of the benefits of Christ in everlasting life.

We are totally dependent upon the Holy Ghost to gather and keep us in the true faith. By nature we are the fallen, dead and hostile children of Adam. Our status as creatures of God with a body and soul in total fellowship with God has, in our fallen state, ceased to exist. We are not by nature what we were first created to be. We have fallen from God and are not capable of cultivating that fellowship with God which our first parents had at the time of their creation. “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (I Cor. 2:14).

When Scripture describes the unconverted as “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), our sorry state by nature is further pictured. It is a view of helplessness, total inability, powerlessness, the complete lack of strength to give or grant any spiritual life or faith to ourselves.

But by nature, man is not neutral, or even deadly neutral, rather he is hostile toward God. All suggestions, teachings, concepts, anything that God sets forth is challenged by the natural enmity of sinful man. “The carnal mind is enmity against God (Rom. 3:7), remains the Scripture verdict upon any and all efforts or thoughts which natural man might muster. He will only counter God in all matters. If this fallen, dead, and hostile creature, which Scripture describes as sinful man, is to come to trust God, love God, serve God and confidently hope in God; he must be changed from without.

There is no human reason on the part of natural man to believe that Christianity is a beneficial faith or principle worth considering. Being completely devoid of truth from his fallen state, man has no basis to consider that the Christian religion is any different or better than any other of the numerous religious viewpoints found among the children of men. In fact, if fallen man begins to explore religions, he will easily find reasons for casting aside the true religion in favor of the false religions.

Truly, we are all dependent upon the Holy Ghost to bring us to the true faith. He is the One who does this. Scripture is His infallible tool. The Holy Ghost has chosen to bring people to faith through the Word of God, Holy Scripture. This is a self-chosen limitation on the part of God. Our fathers clearly acknowledged this when they said, "God the Holy Ghost, however, does not effect conversion without means, but uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God's Word, as it is written in Rom. 1:16: The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Also Rom. 10:17: Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God" (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Article II). If the Word is removed, the Holy Spirit is powerless to convert, not because of inability, but because of His will to use the Word. Consider that our Savior describes the plight of the invited guests who scorned the invitation to the great supper: "None of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper," because they turned their back upon the words which were their sufficient invitation to come and dine (Luke 14:16-24). Those words had the ability to communicate the will of the host and to grant a satisfying banquet to everyone in attendance. The words were chosen to convey the invitation. In this way also God uses Words, of Scripture to bring us the good news which saves our souls.

The Holy Ghost is most capable of gathering us in to the true and saving faith. Having chosen to use the Means of Grace, He faithfully uses them to gather souls in faith unto Christ. Christ's Words convey the power of the Spirit and through those words the Holy Spirit Works. "The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life" (John 6:63). When the Sacrament of Holy Baptism is administered according to Christ's institution, The Spirit of God is working in His chosen way, through the words, bringing all that is promised., forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. Remember the words of Jesus, "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God that which is born of the flesh" (John 3:5,6). Whenever the Sacrament of the Altar is given in the manner in which it was instituted, the Spirit is faithfully working in the hearts and lives of the recipients. The body and the blood "given and shed for you," is received in faith because the Holy Spirit has used again the words of Christ for the spiritual benefit of the communicants.

Our fathers perceived this and confessed it without hesitancy "For the Father draws indeed by the power of His Holy Ghost; however, according to His usual order, by the hearing of His holy, divine Word, as with a net, by which the elect are plucked from the jaws of the devil. Every poor sinner should therefore repair thereto (to holy preaching), hear it attentively, and not doubt the drawing of the Father. For the Holy Ghost will be with His Word in His power, and work by it, and that is the drawing of the Father" (Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article XI). In the Large Catechism, we read concerning the benefits of the Sacrament of the Altar: "For although the work is accomplished and the forgiveness of sins acquired on the cross, yet it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. For what would we otherwise know about it, that such a thing was accomplished or was to be given us if it were not presented by preaching or the oral Word? (LC, Of the Sacrament of the Altar). In summary: "For through these, namely, through Word and Sacrament, the Holy Ghost works" (Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXIV).

In performing His work of gathering souls through faith unto Christ, the Holy Ghost convinces individuals of the seriousness and consequences of sin. This is shown very clearly in the Gospel for Cantate, the Fourth Sunday after Easter, John 16:5-15. We are especially able to see this from these words, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they believe not on me; of righteousness, because I go to my Father, and ye see Me no more; of judgment, because the prince of this world is judged" (vv. 8-11). Unbelief cannot justify itself, once the Holy Ghost has shown the sin of man in its seriousness. The sufficiency of Christ and His

righteousness is clear and evident from His glorious resurrection and triumphant ascension. Satan and his cohorts have their doom spelled out clearly on account of the triumph of Christ.

Christ always enjoys the spotlight through the work of the Holy Ghost. He is constantly at work to this end that the sufficiency of Jesus Christ is seen and known, recognized and believed, by mankind. Never does the Holy Spirit illuminate himself. We hear the Gospel with its revelation of Christ. The Spirit takes that message and focuses our attention upon the mystery of the Word made flesh. He traces the steps of Jesus through the pages of Scripture. Each miracle performed is seen in the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit as a work of the Mighty God. Every message spoken, every conversation recorded in Scripture by Jesus Christ, is amplified for our hearing so that we know that we are hearing the voice of the Messiah. As the great day of the atonement drew near for the human race, the Holy Spirit sanctifies our understandings as we hear Christ carrying His cross to the place of a skull, there to willingly lay down His life for us, so that we perceive what we are supposed to perceive, namely, that for our sins He did lay down His life. Then on the third day after His death and burial, the Holy Spirit is again shining the spotlight of heavenly illumination upon the empty tomb and the living Christ, as we learn from Scripture that, "He is risen, as He said" (Matthew 28:6). Lest our hopes diminish and our faith fail, the Holy Spirit holds before us the message of the angel on Ascension Day, "This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven (Acts 1:11). The Holy Spirit is the Heavenly revealer, showing from Scripture the great mystery and miracle of Christ taking the place of all sinners, suffering, dying, and rising again in their behalf. To publish this through Scripture is the work of the Spirit. Christ summarized up this glorious task of the Holy Ghost when he said: "He shall glorify Me: for he shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you, All things that the Father hath are Mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you" (John 16:14,15).

This message is not amplified; this truth is not reflected, this glory is not manifested in vain. The message of the Holy Spirit from Scripture does produce the desired results: believers are gathered unto Christ. On the day of Pentecost, Peter preached Christ unto the people. The Holy Spirit took that message of God's Word and convinced three thousand souls that what they had heard was the message of their own salvation and they could trust it confidently, rejoicing to be numbered among the ransomed of Christ. Scripture's directive, "Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls," (James 1:21) places the matter very clearly before us: God, the Holy Ghost, calls us to faith through the Word of God. Our ancestors in the faith knew this and clearly confessed it when they said, "For through the Word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel" (Augsburg Confession, Article V). Dr. Luther was very clear on this as he shows in the Large Catechism, "For neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost through the preaching of the Gospel" (The Creed, Article III). In the Smalcald Articles, Dr. Luther drew up statements which the church must hold always as a pure statement of Christian truth and confession. On this subject there he wrote, "In those things which concern the spoken, outward Word, we must firmly hold that God grants His Spirit of grace to no one, except through or with the preceding outward Word" (SC, Part III, Article VIII).

Therefore we truly treasure the Word of God. It spotlights, illuminates, and amplifies Christ unto us. The Spirit has chosen to use that tool. He therefore must reverence the tool. Words seem cheap, powerless, and so very passive. We can ignore them; change them, forget them, corrupt them, and they never fight back. Yet they are the medium through which the very treasures of God's grace are conveyed. For this reason we must hold them in highest esteem and hearken diligently unto them.

We also pray, "Come, Holy Ghost, and keep us in the faith." Here our thoughts turn to the preserving works of the Spirit in the lives of Christ's people. The route from conversion to eternal bliss is often quite long, humanly speaking. Many years are lived between the baptismal font and the tombstone. During those years, countless opportunities for losing the faith, temptations to deny the

faith, urges to forget the faith, counsel to supplant the faith are never far from any one of the Savior's sheep and lambs. The Holy Spirit is not through with us once He has brought us into the fold of Christ. He is constantly at work, through the Word and Sacraments, seeing to it that we are preserved in the grace of God.

Remember this verse: "(You) are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation" (I Peter 1:5). It surely says that God alone is capable of preserving us unto that heavenly inheritance reserved for us. We recall that the Holy Spirit is equally God with the Father and the Son. We recall that Scripture gives Him divine names just as the Father and the Son have divine names. He is accorded divine honor and glory just as the Father and the Son have that same glory. He performs works which are clearly the works of God. In thinking of these basic truths of faith, we are comforted that our preservation in the faith is not resting upon some human abilities or help, but upon the faithful care of the blessed Holy Ghost, who is God indeed with the Father and the Son for all eternity.

The trials which Christians endure during their earthly life are as numerous and as varied as the persons individually. Yet the Spirit of Truth is capable of attending to their need at all times through the Means of Grace. By reassuring us of the salvation of our souls through Christ, the Holy Spirit is strengthening and preserving Christ's own. The eighth chapter of Romans treats this subject in blessed detail, yet with words which surpass man's natural comprehension. Those words take us from the miseries of this life through to the glories of eternal bliss. Amidst them we read, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, *Abba*, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs: heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified together" (vv. 14-17). When life seems to have caught us by the throat and we are unable to see that we shall survive spiritually and think that we have lost the connection with God, knowing not even what to say or how to say it, then the Holy Spirit comes again to our rescue and presents before us the simple truths of Scripture upon the basis of which we are and remain God's redeemed children. Dr. Luther commented on this point of the Holy Spirit crying "*Abba*, Father," as follows: "In the time of temptation our heart does not perceive the presence and help of Christ, rather at such time Christ appears to scorn us and forsake us. Thus one feels the power of sin in the time of temptation, the weakness of the flesh, doubts. He perceives only the fiery arrows of the devil, the horrors of death, so that he feels only the wrath and judgment of God. All this rises up against us and presents such an intimidating outcry that it thoroughly appears that there is nothing for us except despair and eternal death. But in the midst of these intimidations of the Law, the thunderings of sin, the stirrings of death and the roaring of the devil, the Holy Spirit begins to speak, (as Paul says) crying in our hearts: *Abba*, Father! And His crying is so much more powerful and drowns out the powerful and horrifying cry of the Law, sin, and death, the devil, etc., piercing through the clouds of heaven and reaching even unto the very ears of God" (St. L., IX, 500 ff.).

Because we have learned to pray, "Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord, Gather and Keep Us in the True Faith," we now must identify some conflicting viewpoints which this prayer and this truth cause us to reject. Before we go into some of these concepts which are out of harmony with God's Word and which propose some other way of working for the Holy Ghost, it is necessary to define a few terms which we shall use. To describe the teachers, preachers, and others who promoted views foreign to Scripture in this consideration, our ancestors in the faith used the word "enthusiast" for the person and "enthusiasm" for the teaching. In the Formula of Concord they identified enthusiasts in this way, "We reject and condemn the error of the enthusiasts, who imagine that God without means, without the hearing of God's Word, also without the use of the Holy Sacraments, draws men to Himself, and enlightens, justifies, and saves them. (Enthusiasts we call those who expect the heavenly illumination of the Spirit without the preaching of God's Word.)" (FC Ep II). Enthusiasts were numerous at the time of the Reformation and vainly attempted to influence Dr. Luther. He held them at bay with the plain words of Scripture and clearly warned of their danger.

Today, we may ask, “Who are the enthusiasts? Have they disappeared? Need we concern ourselves about them and their position?” It could be something if we could say that today the enthusiasts have become extinct. But they are very much with us, but not under that name. Today they would be generally called charismatics or neo-pentecostals. The connection between the earlier “enthusiasts” and the present-day charismatics is easy to see when we listen to a definition of enthusiasm written in 1900 by Rev. J. H. Theisz, “It is enthusiasm when one maintains that the Holy Ghost has been given to him in another way than through the Word and this tempts God. It is enthusiasm when people internally cork up their devotional thoughts and think that then the Holy Ghost comes, considering that their thoughts which arise in their hearts are thoughts from the Holy Ghost. The spirit which comes to us apart from the Word of God, is not the Holy Spirit, for we have no promise that the Holy Spirit would be given to us apart from the Word” (*Das Amt und Werk Des Geistes*, p. 31). Robert D. Brinsmead wrote in 1972 “The central thesis of the charismatic movement is this: When a believer accepts the Lord Jesus Christ; he is converted and is baptized by water into Christ. But that is not enough. There is something more. The believer must go beyond baptism into Christ. He must enter into a higher, subsequent experience called the baptism of the Holy Spirit.... When this premise is accepted, the human mind cannot help but conclude that the Holy Spirit’s baptism is superior to the baptism of Jesus Christ, or that the Holy Spirit is beyond Christ and has something better to offer than the Lord Jesus Christ” (*Present Truth*, Special Issue, 1972).

We are thankful to our Lord that we are led to reject any suggestion that man can persuade himself to believe. We further reject the concept that Scripture is unnecessary in the conversion process. The Holy Spirit does not by-pass Scripture in His glorious work, but uses it faithfully. Dr. Luther remarked on this subject in a sermon for Pentecost, based upon John 14:23-31. “Take careful note of this text, how Christ restricts the speech and establishes the scope and goal of the Holy Ghost, that he (The Holy Ghost) cannot go beyond Christ’s Word: “He shall bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you’ ... Furthermore this text also points out that the Word must precede or be spoken first, and then the Holy Ghost will work through it; so that man does not pervert this matter and dream up a Holy Ghost who works apart from the Word or prior to the Word, but rather with and through the Word” (St. L., XI, 1073).

We dare not go beyond the limits of the Means of Grace and consequently must reject any and all thoughts and suggestions that we exceed those bounds. The mind of man and the will of man is constantly questioning and probing in areas where he has not been given assignments to question and probe. When suggestions like that come, they must be cast aside. Luther also faced this problem, “The enthusiasts speak extensively of God, forgiveness of sins, God’s Grace, even of Christ’s death. But when I inquire of them how I receive Christ and how grace comes to me, in order that I get it, that we may come to terms, they say: The Spirit must do it alone. With this answer they are teaching me monkey-business. They say that the external, vocal Word, Baptism and Communion, even the preaching of Grace is of no value. This means that they have eloquently told me of the treasure but they have taken away the keys and the bride by which I come to possess the treasure” (St. L., III, 1693).

Neither dare we turn for security to experiences, feelings, signs or the like coming from within us. We reject the concept that spiritual security is dependent upon such phenomena. We can be absolutely sure of everlasting life upon the basis of the promises of God recorded and preserved for us in Scripture. Listen to Dr. Luther place this whole matter in perspective for us. “The enthusiasts object when they hear that which is so clearly spoken: If the Father does not draw you, you cannot come unto Me. They despise the external word, desire to remove it, and attempt to teach that man will not give heed to the Word which has been spoken from the mouth of Christ. Instead they would creep into their chamber, hold their head in their hands, speculate, and search for God, in order that they, apart from the Word and without the Word, might be drawn and receive salvation before they have heard the Father.... Guard against internal searching. Do not wait for God to give you such a word from Heavens by which you, comprehending it with your mental powers, clamor into heaven seeking the will of God and the

right understanding, mastering this with your comprehension. Mark well: Unless you sit and wait in the Word of God until you have recognized the will of God, you will break your neck, for God has spoken exclusively through The Son” (From a sermon on John 6: 45,46, St. L., VII: 2293 ff.). Our security in Christ then is certain, not upon our own feelings or the like, but on the basis of the Sacred Scriptures.

II.

Come, Holy Ghost, Preserve and Protect Us From Error

“From ev’ry error keep us free. Thus we pray the Holy Ghost in our theme hymn. Such a petition is necessary. We know from Scripture that error is one of the devil’s most common strategies to corrupt that which God has made. He is the father of lies. Falsehood is his specialty. With it, he would circumvent the truth of God and bring God’s people into bondage again. So we must pray the Holy Ghost to keep us free from error. His work is to this end. Christ called him the Spirit of truth in John 16:13, “When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.” Lest we mistake the Savior and think that He here is promising us omniscience in this life by the Holy Ghost, let us remember that leading us into all truth does not mean that we will possess and master all knowledge, but it simply means that the Spirit of God will correctly enable us to know Him who is the *truth*, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

Now we must consider some of the errors from which we pray that the Holy Ghost would ever preserve us. Think of one aspect of this error as spiritual subjectivism. This means that members of the church place the most significance upon that which they feel, perceive, think in their hearts and experience in their lives. This may be thought of as “experience religion,” “experience theology,” or the like. It is the religion of the enthusiasts and it has not ceased to trouble church members in this world. In fact, many of the churches of external Christendom are threatened by it. In 1972 an anonymous Protestant clergyman assessing the situation said, “American Protestantism is drowning in a sea of religious subjectivism!” (Quoted by Brinsmead in *Present Truth*, 1972). This evaluation of the situation admits that vast numbers of American Protestants are depending upon their feelings, thoughts, and experiences for the basis of their religious convictions and hopes.

This old problem of making religious experiences the basis of Christian faith; hope and certainty has been around, troubling the church for generations. As Luther was confronted by the enthusiasts, the faithful have been regularly challenged by those who emphasized their, “spiritual” gifts and experiences over the clear and abiding statements of the Word. In America, this really began to show its seriousness by the closing decades of the 1800’s, in what church history calls the holiness movement. In the 1890’s the Methodist Church finally took an administrative stand against the holiness movement. Consequently, between the years 1890 and 1900, twenty-three holiness denominations were founded. Robert Brinsmead describes a most striking example of extreme religious subjectivism in the case of sore “spirit-filled” people in Iowa. “One branch of the holiness movement was called the “Fire Baptized Holiness Church” (originating in Iowa in 1895 and led by Benjamin Irwin) ... The Radical “fire” advocates continued to make an impact within the movement with fiery preaching and publications like *Live Coals of Fire* (first published in October, 1899). This paper spoke of ‘the blood that cleans up, the Holy Ghost that fills up, the fire that burns up, and the dynamite that blows up.’ It is not hard to imagine the eccentric and mind-bending manifestations that accompanied the blowing-up stage of this religious high. The logical outcome of this religious trend was the appearance of the twentieth-century Pentecostal movement, which generally traces its beginning to the ministry of Charles Parham at Topeka., Kansas in 1900” (*Present Truth*, Special Issue, 1972, p. 26).

Spiritual subjectivism makes human experiences the important thing in spiritual matters. This is a most serious error. It turns man inward, to himself, to his senses for certainty and a basis for hope. It is so serious because it is so deceptive. The human being can be taught from at least two approaches.

Learning is possible by revelation, that is by information imparted from an external source. But learning is also possible by experience. The experiences of man are so close to his heart, so dear to his thoughts, so prominent in his existence. This would be all very simple if the experiences were all true, pure, and without corruption. But sadly this is not the case. Experiences are given, motivated, prompted and cultured by both good and evil forces and powers. Hence, the experiences which the human being has, may come from either God or the devil. Both are truly capable of giving an experience to man. For this reason, human experiences dare not be the basis for faith, hope, confidence and assurance in spiritual matters. Human experiences are not reliable as a basis for faith and hope.

This evil of spiritual subjectivism is the natural thing for sinful man. We children of Adam are the easiest victims of its deceit. It is just natural for us to think and say "I feel," "It seems to me," "My inner feeling is," "My conscience tells me...," and such statements. The step from these thoughts to spiritual thoughts is very small and quite easy. "The tendency of human nature is to make the subjective aspect of Christianity the focal point of concern" (*Present Truth*, Special Issue, 1972, pp. 17,18). There is indeed a subjective aspect of Christian faith and life. The children of Christ are taught to consider the peace, strength, power and presence of Christ in them by virtue of the means of Grace. This is true on the basis of Holy Scripture. Yet the contemplations of these benefits and fruits of justification are not in themselves the important thing but are the blessed results of the saving grace of God granted to us through His chosen means, Scripture and the Sacraments. We then for certainty never look to experience. "As the believer looks away from self to Christ and rejoices in what He has done for him and what He is to him, the Spirit of God will live in his heart and continue to transform his life. But if the believer begins to make his experience the center of his concern, the true balance of Christian faith is lost" (*ibid.*).

God's Means of Grace are violated by emphasizing the experience of the heart as the basis for spiritual certainty and salvation. This experience sets aside the declarations of grace and in their place substitutes feeling and subjective thoughts. Such procedure reveals an arrogant attitude. It presents human experience as being superior to Divine Declarations and Testaments. Actually, this procedure insults the Holy Spirit. It implies that He was acting deficiently in the inspiration of Holy Scripture. Dr. Luther was sharp in his rebuff of this error. In a sermon based upon Matthew 9:1-8, delivered in 1533, he said, "The rebellious spirits and enthusiasts have lost Christ, Baptism, Holy Communion, preaching, the Christian Church and everything" (St. L., XIII, 2441). The following years he mentioned this again, saying in a sermon based upon the Passion History, "The devil is always in the world, but especially in the enthusiasts, so much that they would take God to school and teach Him what He should do" (St. L., XIII, 1761). Robert Brinsmead reminds us that those same enthusiasts are at work in the church today, ever trying to get people to look within themselves for spiritual certainty. "It is considered as blasphemy to speak against the supernatural workings within the new Pentecostal movement. A spirit of boastful certainty and arrogant intolerance has often been manifested by those who 'have the Spirit.' The preoccupation with inward experience is leading multitudes back to the religious philosophy of the medieval church" (*Present Truth*, op. cit., p. 29).

Such a consideration of the ways and means of those who follow spiritual subjectivism might lead us to think that they are easy to spot and identify because they neglect Scripture and look within themselves. While this is true., we find them sometimes quite deceptive, because they outwardly use Scripture extensively. They will read, quote and cite Scripture with zealous endeavor. We must not let that characteristic make us think that therefore they are harmless members of some other denomination. Their goal is still the same: to induce the simple Christian to trust in his experiences rather than in the plain declarations of Scripture and God's unconditional grace in the Sacraments. Dr. Luther saw the deceit in the Scripture quoting enthusiasts of his day. "Christians must learn that the devil can mouth the truth and boast of God's Word with the eloquence of a pious Christian. Therefore the Christian must say: 'I will gladly hear the Word and Truth of God, but I will not put ultimate trust in it until I first look into the matter carefully to see if it agrees with my catechism and with the message which I have heard

previously.' He who is thus alert and doesn't just believe everything, but keeps his eye upon the Word, he is growing well and is not deceived. But whoever does not do this, is certain to be misled" (St. L., XIII, 796).

Holy Scripture does not teach spiritual subjectivism. The Holy Spirit does not teach spiritual subjectivism. Rather we find within Scripture's sacred pages clear teachings to the contrary. Just as today, so in Bible times, there were people who were naturally led to look within themselves for the glories of Christianity. These folks were admonished by our Savior for such attitudes. He pointed their hearts to the truth of God for them rather than the experience of God in them. Remember when the seventy came back to Christ boasting, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through Thy name" (Luke 10:17). He did not congratulate them for their successful experiences, but rebuked them and told them that they should be rejoicing because of what God had done for them out of pure grace: "*In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven*" (Luke 10:20).

No doubt, Mary, the mother of our Lord's human nature, had many enviable experiences as she ministered to her special Son. Wouldn't any mother have happily exchanged places with her? Some hoped that they could have done so, saying, "Blessed is the womb that bare Thee, and paps which Thou has sucked" (Luke 11-27). Jesus did not concur with such pious thought, but rather rejected it as subjective spiritualism stating, "Yea, rather, blessed are they that hear the Word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11:28). Personal experiences are inferior to the clear Words of God.

St. Peter was a Christian with much experience, some of which was truly spectacular. God allowed him to walk on water. On the basis of the Word of Christ, Peter traversed the wave. But as soon as he began to consider his experience, "when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid: and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me" (Matthew 14:30).

Personal experiences are no substitute for the simple Word of Scripture. The apostles did not go about bubbling over with the news of what Jesus was doing in their lives. St. Paul said, "We preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord" (II Cor. 4:5). St. Luke wrote, "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). St. Paul declared of his proclamations: "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (I Cor. 2:2). He also wrote: "Love ... seeketh not her own" (I Cor. 13:5). Contrast this with the experience religion, spiritual subjectivism. The religious subjectivist loves himself and his experience. He finds his joy and bliss in re-living his religious experiences or highs. Robert Brinsmead clearly identifies the perversion of this spiritual attitude as he contrasts it with the manner of the apostles. "Pentecostal literature determines to know nothing but self and him crucified.... It is not love to be preoccupied with your own experience. Religious experientialism is spiritual perversion" (*op. cit.*, 1972).

Therefore, we pray the Holy Spirit to come and protect us from the error of spiritual subjectivism, from making our personal feelings or experiences the grounds for spiritual certainty, peace and hope. The prayer is timely. The old evil foe is still the deceiver who has the vilest deceptions, even using the guise of truth and purity to trick us. The enthusiasts do not think that they are doing evil, but propose only to benefit us. That is a trick as old as the devil himself. We should not be afraid to admit this. Luther was unafraid to identify the threat. "He (the devil) comes to us in the company of his pack, enthusiasts and heretics; not in wolf's clothing which is recognizable and despicable, but rather in sheep's clothing. First they come with God's Word and Scripture, prominently boasting about Christ, about the Spirit of God, seem to know everything better than anyone else, and present such a brilliant appearance: that many people are drawn to them and commit great misdeeds.... Wherever hearts are not alert and have become drowsy, not accurately keeping their eye on the Word, the devil sneaks up through such erring spirits, like a snake slipping up on a man sleeping in the grass" (St. L., XIII 793, 794) .

We then simply reject the suggested position that experience is a valid teacher in spiritual matters. It is not reliable. The moods, feelings, opinions and attitudes of the sinful man shift and change

with the situation. The experiences of man can be influenced by both good and evil. Man is not always able to determine on the basis of experience things true from things false. One can learn by experience and for that reason, our experience can be conditioned by teachers both good and evil.

God warns us against being influenced by signs and wonders which would make us come to some spiritual conclusion on the basis of experience. "If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them: Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. 13:1-3). In Matthew 24:24, our Savior said, "There shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, inasmuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect." St. Paul describes him, "Whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved" (II Thess. 2:9, 10).

Come, Holy Ghost, preserve and protect us from error, especially the error of false ecumenism. There is no doubt that Scripture teaches the unity of the Church of Jesus Christ. As there is but one Christ, so there is but one church. Men may and have come with their deviant doctrines and shattered the external church of Christ. Yet there remains the one true Christian Church against which the very gates of hell shall not prevail. The splitting, of the church due to the sin of man and the influence of evil has been and continues to be the sorrow of the church struggling here below. Within the struggling church, various programs and procedures arise for binding the wounds of the church, re-uniting the ties which have been severed, strengthening the testimony of the fragmented; drawing together the diverse. Scripture presents the pattern for this whole need: unqualified submission to the Word of God! But the powers of evil are not content with that approach. They suggest other avenues for uniting the church. Prominent in the recent decade has been the reported influence of the Holy Spirit. It is argued that the Holy Spirit can overcome all differences. And because of that, if people separated by doctrinal deviations would simply submit to the promptings of the Spirit, the church would again be united and the influence of the Christian religion be wonderfully expanded in this world. This position we classify as false ecumenism. It proposes to unite a divided church by a method not endorsed nor taught by The Lord of the church.

It is at this point we would pray that the Holy Spirit preserve us from false modes of uniting the church on earth. There is ample acknowledgment that the charismatics of our day boast of their successes in uniting people of all different denominations, once the people are really led and filled by the Holy Ghost as they claim. They remind us that Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians Episcopalians Lutherans, Roman Catholics, etc., have found a common unity and oneness through the leading of the Holy Ghost. Doesn't this sound inviting? If only it were so simple.

As has been cited earlier: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Truth Which indeed leads to all Truth. The Holy Spirit has chosen to use the Word of God and the Sacraments of God to do this and thus to unite the fallen soul with its Creator and Savior in the bond of saving faith. The Holy Spirit is capable of keeping those souls united with their gracious Savior. But these blessings are based upon the use and submission to the Word of God.

The ecumenical spirits would by-pass this all and unite without the agreement in the Word. Dr. Luther marked and avoided the errors of the enthusiasts and identified the Roman Church as the chief exponent of enthusiasm in his day when he said, "For the Papacy also is nothing but sheer enthusiasms by which the Pope boasts that all rights exist in the shrine of his heart, and whatever he decides and commends with his church is spirit and right, even though it is above and contrary to Scripture and the spoken word" (SC, VIII). We discover how accurate Luther was when we listen to a Roman Catholic author, Louis Bouyer describe the charismatic movement. "The Protestant Revival ... recalls the best and most authentic elements of the Catholic tradition.... We see in every Protestant country, Christians

who owed their religion to the movement we have called, in general, Revivalism, attain more or less complete rediscovery of Catholicism.... The contemporary revivals most valuable and lasting in their results all present a striking analogy with this process of rediscovery of Catholicism.... The instinctive orientation of the revivals toward the Catholic ... would bring in that way a reconciliation between the Protestant Movement and the Church" (*The Spirit and Forms of Protestantism*, p. 184-196). Another Roman Catholic publication, *The Catholic Leader*, said on January 23, 1972: "One of the most startling aspects of the Pentecostal movement is it is truly ecumenical.... While we speak of Catholic Pentecostal groups, it has to be remembered that as any predominantly Catholic meeting one is likely to find Baptist, Methodist, Anglican or Presbyterian Pentecostals.... Belief in the Pentecostal Baptism of the Spirit appears to break down most, if not all denominational barriers." There you have it, unification of the church, breaking down of denominational barriers without submission to the Word of God.

But the Holy Spirit does not teach error. In simple honesty, we must ask, how can those who pray to the saints find Scriptural fellowship with those who on the basis of Scripture refuse to do so? How can those who believe in the real presence of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper, practice fellowship in the Spirit with those who deny the doctrine of the real presence? Scripture teaches that paradise awaits the believers instantly upon the moment of death. How can there be unity in the Spirit between those who believe this and those who deny this by teaching the idea of purgatory or a millennium? To assert that the holy Ghost unites while at the same time overlooking conflicting teachings, is to make the Holy Ghost inconsistent with Holy Scripture. Does the true Spirit of God teach one doctrine in one denomination and another in the next?

The Holy Spirit does not unite in error. We certainly acknowledge that the charismatics of our day are unionists, that is that they practice fellowship between people of divergent beliefs and professions. But this unionism isn't taught by God. Therefore we must reject it. Such a procedure is a deception foisted upon the struggling church by the devil. If the wicked one can convince people that their unscriptural union is God-pleasing, has he not won a significant battle in the struggle for domination of men's souls?

We therefore reject the idea that the Holy Spirit, working independently of the Word, can overcome all denominational barriers. We would be less than honest and unfaithful to the Scriptures if we did not lament the sinful fragmentation of the church in this world. But let us not go diving after the bait of the enthusiasts or charismatics. They offer us an unscriptural solution to a problem which cannot be solved unless unconditional submission to Scripture is followed.

Come, Holy Ghost, preserve and protect us from thinking that if we only have the Holy Ghost, all trials, troubles, conflicts and deficiencies will vanish for all time. The thought is suggested by many enthusiast or charismatic teachers, writers, and leaders in positions of influence that the Holy Spirit and His indwelling in great measure will produce towering triumph over every adversity. Those who pursue this consider that if enough of the Holy Spirit is conveyed and in evidence, all obstacles will indeed be overcome; spiritual success is attainable in a degree hitherto unknown to most church members and should be given top priority in the teaching and ministry of the church. We call this delusion the spiritual success syndrome. It proposes a program which, like a spiraling tornado, rises ever to higher and higher degrees of success, leaving all obstacles in shattered disarray.

Scripture indeed teaches us to "walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:16, 25). Confidently, we believe the words of Psalm 92:4, "I will triumph in the works of Thy hands." We rejoice in the words of II Corinthians 2:14, "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." How precious that we have the assurance of I John 5:4, "For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith." The question becomes: How are we to take these and similar passages? Do they guarantee victory and triumph in each individual undertaking and issue of life, or do they assure us that at life's end, even after some battles have been surely and sorely lost, the Christian is assured of eternal victory as he is delivered finally from this vale of tears to the heavenly home?

There is a demonic deception about today with the tantalizing suggestion that the Holy Spirit will solve every issue simply and effectively if only given the chance and if applied in sufficient measure. Take a look through a catalogue of charismatic books on the market today. Browse through one of the “Evangelical” or “Gospel” book stores. Probably at the corner drug store or neighborhood food market you will be able to find a book display where you can get all manner of alleged spiritual help from the Holy Ghost on such subjects as conquering obesity, becoming a fulfilled father, appreciating motherhood, relating to your parents in a more meaningful way, dealing with unemployment, the retirement years, facing the slavery of tobacco and other harmful substances, sane evaluation of daily news, social maladjustments, and the like. Winning, conquering, overcoming, triumphing, etc., are popular words with those of this persuasion. The list of problems which are all solvable with the help of the Holy Ghost is endless.

With the immediately preceding statement, we do not wish to minimize certain of the conflicts of life and the need for improvement and discipline. Stewardship of life is a significant calling for each Christian and has its appropriate place in the mind and thought and acts of Christians. But to present some sort of instant solution to all the trials, difficulties, and adversities of the Christian, is not in accord with Scripture, nor the Holy Ghost as He has chosen to help and serve Christians through Scripture. The apostles were certainly filled with the Holy Spirit. Yet if we examine the biographical information contained in Scripture and Church History, we soon find that personally they were often sick, abused, mocked; rejected, socially ostracized, scorned, tortured, martyred and the like. At times, they seem to be the greatest failures in terms of personal triumphs. Yet in the highest meaning of the term, they were successful. With the help of God and the Scriptural influence of the Holy Spirit, they did carry the Gospel of Christ to the uttermost part of the earth. Look at the way the Thessalonians described their success. “These that have turned the world upside down are come hither also” (Acts 17:6). In the midst of a seemingly endless succession of failures and setbacks, personal inconveniences and infirmities, they would confess as did St. Paul, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (II Timothy 4:8).

This appealing temptation for total spiritual success threatens many entrusted with responsibility in the church. Is church attendance lagging? Pre catechumens flagging? Are contributions dragging? Are mission totals sagging? Then the wicked one is ready to step forth and suggest instant recovery through the Holy Spirit. And in a weak moment, we are tempted to take the bait. Then the Words of God check. us and the Heavenly Spirit once again leads us through the Scriptures for the faith-strengthening nourishment, the solid encouragement of God’s Word, the stimulating influence of the heavenly Truth, and we have been led by the Holy Spirit correctly to a truly God-honoring solution to spiritual doldrums: The steady balance diet of God’s Word.

The charismatics demonstrate this spiritual success syndrome especially in their outlook toward the success of the Gospel in the world. They entertain the dream of total world success of the Gospel. Listen to their remarks and note the militant success syndrome in this announcement of a charismatic conference: “The theme of the conference is ‘Lead On O King Eternal.’ It is a militant theme. It is the heart-cry for the church to be the full statured body of Christ being led by its King, Jesus Christ, on a pilgrimage. The troops are being recruited and marshaled for battle. The reign and rule of our Lord shall be established over all things upon the earth” (from a tract announcement by Rev. Morris Vaginas, Spring, 1970).

This spiritual success syndrome has great appeal to those who are sincerely facing the trials of living the faith which has been brought to them. Indeed, we dare not diminish the seriousness of the struggle we daily face as Christians. The temptation to crave some immediate delivery, some super-weapon which would ever elevate us above the sweat and heat of battle is attractive. Alert consciences and sincere longings for a more sanctified life are desirable, Scripture-taught longings. The arch-deceiver knows this and comes with a short-cut suggestion to victory and success over the lusts of

the flesh and world, suggesting instant triumph as the only satisfactory solution. Romans 7:14-25 describe the conflict between the flesh and the Spirit. We take these words to describe on-going battle which the regenerate, the believing child of Christ, faces in the life-long struggle of life in this world. Here St. Paul teaches the believer to say, "I know that in me (that is in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not but the evil which I would not, that I do" (vv. 18, 19). After confessing the conflict and detailing its realities, he teaches us to declare our confident dependence upon Christ, even though we are not totally successful in the daily sanctified life: "I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord" (v. 25). These words are describing the conflict raging within the Christian and not the plight of the unconverted as many enthusiasts and charismatics assert.

Then there is the problem of joy. Galatians 5:22 lists "joy" as one of the fruits of the Spirit. This precious fruit has been impregnated with artificial flavoring and coloring at the hands of the charismatics. The deceptive argument is presented as though the "Joy of Thy Salvation" is to be equated with some form of abiding ecstasy rather than the peace of God which passes all understanding. Of course God teaches us to rejoice, be glad, cheer up, cease pining because of His forgiving grace. But we are not permitted to stand in this type of joy if the wicked one has his way. He wants us to re-interpret joy, make it more experimental, have some sort of spiritual high in addition to the peace of forgiveness. This is really a form of hedonism, masked as part of the Christian experience. Hedonism is a life-attitude which makes man's happiness the primary concern of human existence. Robert Brinsmead touches this problem accurately when he says, "Man's original sin was to make his own happiness his primary concern. The ultimate sin is to enlist Christ as a means to this end... We have to stop trying to deal with God as if He were Santa Claus. ('We believe in you, Santa Claus. Now let's get down to the real thing. Where are the toys?')" (*op. cit.*, 8/73, p. 15). Most assuredly, we must pray that the Holy Ghost would come and preserve us from spiritual hedonism with its violation of grace.

Therefore we reject the suggestion that totally triumphant life is available to every Christian in all respects in this life. We reject the idea of the spiritual success syndrome. It is wickedly tantalizing. But to accept it would violate the Scripture's clear teaching. We do not anticipate always winning, triumphing, succeeding, overcoming in all undertakings. While we do not purposely pursue our Christian life and calling in a defeatist attitude, we know that we are not and never shall be totally successful in this life. We have learned to make the confession of St. Paul our own: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect, but I follow after that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12). We do not minimize the importance of positive thought and design for we have the exhortation of St. Paul also: "Finally brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (Philippians 4:8).

III.

Come, Holy Ghost, Equip and Motivate Us for Thy Service

"Thou holy Fire, Comfort true, Grant us the will Thy work to do And in Thy service to abide; Let trials turn us not aside." Thus Dr. Luther teaches us to pray in our theme hymn. With such a prayer we beseech God, the Holy Ghost, to live in us constantly, enabling us to fulfill the work our Redeemer has assigned us. With this prayer, we now consider the blessed influence which the Holy Ghost has in the life of each of His people individually and the life of His church collectively.

We are taught by Scripture: "Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. 3:16). We confess that without the workings of the Holy Ghost, we cannot believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, or come to Him. Certainly, our dependency upon the Holy Ghost is clearly identified and set forth in our beliefs and doctrines. We constantly admit that the Spirit

of God dwells in us and makes His home in our lives. The Holy Spirit lives in us, not as a passing guest, not as an idol in a heathen temple, but truly lives, that is dwells in us, so that the Christian person, as Dr. Luther says “becomes such a person through whom God both speaks, lives and works, as the individual speaks, lives and works: his speech is God’s speech, his hand is God’s hand, and his word is no longer the word of man, but the Word of God” (St. L., XI, 1061).

The significance of this constant indwelling of the Holy Ghost must not be slighted. We certainly believe and amply confess that he comes to us through the Word of God. But with equal attention, we must confess that He chooses to dwell within so that we are continually motivated to serve Christ. How precious this is to us as we go about our daily tasks in this life. As we serve our families, we are motivated to serve them as Christ would have them served. As we fulfill our duties to our neighbor, we fulfill them as Christ would have the neighbor served. As our church office is carried out with responsibility, it is done so as Christ would have it done. This is the constant influence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of those in whom He lives as an abiding guest.

Certainly, we see from the Holy Scriptures that the Holy Ghost was abiding in the lives of the disciples and apostles. The words in I Corinthians 12:1-11 describe the various gifts which God the Holy Ghost gave and cultivated among the Christians as they pursued the assignment given them by their resurrected and ascended Savior. Those were from the Holy Ghost. That they were in use among the apostles and New Testament evangelists is evident. Yet we do not question the gifts which God preserves and grants among us today also, even though the gifts of the Holy Ghost today are not identical with those of the first century of the New Testament era. The enabling and motivating influence of the Holy Ghost is still needed and available for Christ’s people today, just as much as it was in the early days of the apostolic church. The form that these gifts takes is not the same, but the motivation and direction is the same. Dr. C. F. W. Walther correctly explained this in a sermon on I Corinthians 12:1-11, “During apostolic times there was scarcely any congregation in which not several members possessed exceptional gifts of the holy Spirit.... These exceptional gifts were an appropriate external testimony from God Himself that the Gospel of the Crucified, preached by the apostles, was truly a message from God, a revelation from heaven; and that the church founded by the apostles was truly the church of God, the church of the elect and the redeemed. That such exceptional gifts are no longer present in the church need not amaze us. By this time the New Testament is sealed and the Christian religion has been introduced into the world as an evident supernatural revelation. There is no need for further signs” (*Epistelpostille*, p. 332 ff.).

While the need for signs to authenticate the Gospel and to certify the Christian Church as the true church of the True God on earth is past, the need for motivation and direction is still present with the believers. From the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit constantly inspires and motivates fathers to bring up their children “in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). The whole Christian family relationships are inspired of the Holy Ghost through the Word of God to each generation in clear unmistakable words: Ephesians 5:21-6:4. Scripture identifies and directs the life of the church. Such directives are properly considered the directives of the Holy Ghost. Therefore what the true church says and does is truly that which the Holy Ghost would have said and done for the saving benefit of mankind.

Consequently we reject the error which asserts that the indwelling of the Holy Ghost is a dead-letter issue. Our opponents amid the enthusiasts and charismatics charge us occasionally of neglecting and diminishing or restricting the influence of the Holy Ghost because we do not require nor teach that the outward manifestations of the Holy Spirit as they were evidenced in apostolic times be likewise in evidence among us also. For that reason, we are frequently classified as being devoid of the influence and in-dwelling of the Holy Spirit. We reject such an assertion. We will take our stand with Dr. Luther on this subject. He said, “Believers know the Holy Spirit well, but they usually neither feel nor receive nothings from this Pentecostal glory; but on the contrary they are poor, depressed, desolate hearts and consciences who feel nothing in themselves but sin and death” (St. L., XI, 1059).

We insist that the simple trusting faith, expressed in confidence toward God and love for our neighbor is truly the work of the Holy Ghost. We credit all the hope and virtues which may be cultivated in us and through us as the work of the Holy Ghost. We will not accept the proposition that the degree of spiritual euphoria we either have or do not have is in direct proportion to the amount of the Holy Ghost we either do or do not possess. The enthusiasts restrict the Holy Ghost to pleasant feelings. This we reject. "Through faith we are the children of God and certainly the Holy Spirit dwells in our heart whether we feel it or not for the apostle writes: 'Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts' (Galatians 4:6)," (*Lehre und Wehre*, Vol. 51, p. 264).

The Holy Spirit equips us for Christian service. We do well to consider the implications of I Corinthians 6:11, "But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." This verse captivates our lives. We rejoice to know that we have been cleansed from the filth of sin and unbelief. We thank God for the new heart He has given us with its new desires and values. We bow in adoration before the grace of God which has justified us so that we fear not the righteous wrath of God. St. Paul spoke these words to instruct and remind the believers that they had been so graciously dealt with for a marvelous purpose. They were now to use the new cleansing, the new motivation., the new status of the justified in the service of God. This is the influence and equipping of the Holy Ghost.

Into the hearts and lives of each one of the washed, sanctified and justified, God has sent the Word of reconciliation. That Word has done its great work in the conversion of that soul. Now that Word continues to dwell there and become through that person an agent for good unto others. The desire to use the Word of God is a desire implanted and maintained by the Holy Ghost. The spirit of God blesses the Word as it is spoken. The message of God to men is not the power and message of men, but rather the power and message of God. "The Word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Hebrews 4:12). This powerful tool, is placed into our hands by the Holy Spirit. The desire to use this tool correctly to the benefit of others is implanted in our minds by the Holy Ghost. The simplest Bible story told in the nursery classes of our Sunday School is the tool of the Holy Ghost being used by an equipped Christian in the service of Christ. A faithful father, explaining the perplexities of life with his maturing children in the light of God's Word, is using a tool from the Holy Ghost to bless his children. A simple devotion presented to the infirm on the basis of Holy Scripture is a faithful tool from Heaven on the lips of those who are washed, sanctified and justified. Thanks be to God the Holy Spirit, we have the needed tool for the necessary work of the Christian Church.

Likewise, the Sacraments of God continue to be blessed by the Holy Ghost as they are entrusted to the redeemed of the Lord for their mutual up-building and for the spreading of the gracious deliverance of God. Holy Baptism and Holy Communion have been under siege by the gainsayers since their institution. Man has brought all manner of excuses for neglecting the Sacraments, negating their influence, changing their meaning or the like. Yet these tools are in faithful use and are flawlessly distributing that which they have been designed to convey, namely, the saving, sustaining grace of God. This is due to the blessing of the Holy Ghost. He keeps us faithful in the use of the Holy Sacraments. From the Word He is reminding us ever again of the need and benefit of the Sacraments. When our human wisdom and powers would question their benefits, the Holy Ghost points us to the Word of Scripture and our zeal for using and sharing the Sacraments is reviewed. Wherever the Sacrament of Baptism or Holy Communion is administered according to Christ's institution, the Holy Ghost's tool is at work. We are not on our own in the world, to benefit mankind by our devices. Instead of feeble human powers and gifts, the Holy Ghost has placed into our charge priceless Sacraments of Heaven. Let us then not seek other avenues of grace, but use these tools of the Holy Ghost.

"But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of

the earth” (Acts 1:3). These words from our Living Savior indicate that the work of the ministry would be blessed by the Holy Ghost. The wherewithal of the ministry would come from the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul confessed, “And such trust have we through Christ to Godward: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves but our sufficiency is of God Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament, not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth but the spirit giveth life” (II Corinthians 3:4-6), so we to this very day likewise confess that the sufficiency for the work of the ministry comes from the Holy Ghost. To motivate, sustain and equip for the work of the ministry, He uses the ever blessed Word of God. That Word is the infallible tool which in the hand of mortal men is able to comfort and save those to whom it is brought.

The pastor who faithfully uses the Word of God is correctly equipped for the ministry and will be the intended blessing to those whom he serves with that Word. In Vol. 2, p. 7, of *Der Lutheraner*, Dr. C. F. W. Walther drew this to the attention of his church when, following an article, “Who is Converted?” (*Wer ist bekehrt?*), stated, “May God bless these words to this end, that inexperienced pastors who personally know the meaning of conversion and consequently lead and treat other souls gripped in holy fear, that they present no other course of action than that of Scripture, which points out such a simple way so that the souls entrusted to their care may neither be falsely comforted nor deprived of the revelation of grace which God has already given them. God grant also that by means of the previous statements, those souls who have been bound by leaders using, human influence, might take courage, cleave to the plain Word, let nothing keep them from Christ and cause them to worry about their comfort in Him when they feel the burden of the Law and sin, hungering and thirsting for the righteousness which avails before God. Sadly, we’ve seen it! Some must learn from their own experience how grievous it is that those who have come to feel their own spiritual impotency, to be first presented with an additional process through which they must go, before they can call Christ their Savior and are able to say: I also have found grace - Take comfort, all you who thirst, do not wait for an experiential assurance, but, ‘Come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price’ Is. 55:1. ‘The meek shall eat and be satisfied’ Ps. 27:36. For Christ says, ‘Him that cometh to lie I will in no wise cast out,’ John 6:37.”

Such counsel is most appropriate for the church today. The pastor and the parishioner both must learn from it. When ministering to individual souls, they dare not demand more of trembling souls than that which God demands: “The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise” (Psalm 51:17). Neither can the pastor withhold that which God grants upon the basis of His perfect grace “The Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die” (II Samuel 12:13). People must require that pastors deal with them upon the basis of the Word. Pastors are obligated to deal with people exclusively upon the basis of the Word. Then the Holy Ghost is consistently dealing with people through the work of the ministry. His designs are being followed, His objectives are being achieved.

In view of this, we must reject all opinions of men which suggest that the Holy Ghost uses not the means of Grace, to equip God’s people for their service. The enthusiasts of old certainly considered that God could do His work through His people without means. They were flatly rejected by Dr. Luther. He said, “Those who boast of the Spirit, and seek special visions and dreams, are without faith and are scoffers of God; for they will not be content nor satisfied with God’s Word. In spiritual matters I neither seek nor anticipate visions and revelations. When I have one little Word, I hold exclusively to it. St. Paul admonishes and teaches us that we should hold fast to that Word, even if an angel from heaven should teach otherwise, Galatians 1:8” (St. L., XXII, 1017). The charismatics of our day are no different in their approach to the work of the church. Lutheran scholars of the Missouri Synod recently evaluated the situation correctly when they said “Perhaps the most serious doctrinal problem of this (charismatic) movement is its tendency to claim direct spiritual illumination apart from the Word, a malady that may have its origin in a loss of confidence in the divine efficacy of the bare Word. To counteract such a flight from the Word itself, confessional Lutheranism emphasizes that *solo verbo* (by the Word alone) is as

basic to Biblical and Lutheran theology as the great Reformation emphases on grace alone, faith alone, and Scripture alone. Anything that leads people away from the Word for the assurance of the Spirit's presence and power in their lives is a soul-destroying, satanic delusion" (*The Lutheran Church and the Charismatic Movement*, p. 3). It is deceptive and insufficient to say that all the believer needs to minister to others in the Name of Christ is the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God enables the redeemed of God to minister to others through the Word of God. Then the true and needed spiritual work is done.

When our Savior spoke the words of the great commission, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mark 16:15,16), He was addressing disciples who had been sternly upbraided because of their unbelief and hardness of heart, v. 14. To preach the Gospel to every creature requires motivation. That motivation would be given them by the Holy Ghost. His heavenly influence would make them zealous and faithful. From the Scriptures the disciples and apostles received a motivation from God as they repeatedly considered the needs of man for the saving grace of God. As they applied Scripture to their listeners and presented Christ and His gracious fulfillment of God's promises, their witnesses became ever more fervent and their service more effective. Think of Peter and John replying to the official request that they cease and desist from preaching the truth of Christ: "we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard," (Acts 4:20) . That was the work of the holy Ghost, sharpening the awareness of Peter and John for the needs of their fellow men and enabling them to rise to meet those needs. To this day such motivation on the part of the Holy Ghost is at work in the church. Why do we long to bring the Gospel to others? The Savior's remarks about the fields being white unto the harvest, John 4:35, are still used by the Holy Spirit to motivate us to see the needs of our unbelieving contemporaries and to respond to those needs with the Gospel of Christ.

Christians need continuous motivation for the service of Christ their Savior. Throughout life, His calling continues, "Follow Me" (Matthew 4:19) , "Feed My lambs ... Feed My sheep" (John 21:15, 16), "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matthew 28:19). To keep us faithful to the task, the Holy Spirit constantly assures us of God's sufficient grace. Consider some of these precious assurances and the significant motivation they give us to be faithful in the service of Christ. When Jesus spoke with the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, He said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life" (John 4:14) . Teaching in the temple, Jesus said, "He that believeth on Me, as the Scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (But this spake He of the Spirit, which they that believeth on Him should receive for the Holy Ghost was not yet given)" (John 7:38, 39). Using this picture of living water, our Savior pictured the continuing motivation we receive from the Holy Spirit to faithfully do the Master's work. The Holy Spirit keeps us up to the task because of the sufficiency of Christ.

St. Paul brings us another precious assurance with the word "sealed" in Ephesians 1:13: "In Whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise." A seal indicates authority, security, authentication. Israelites used it to attest contractual agreements (Jeremiah 32:9, 10) as well as to proclaim authority and to insure inviolability (Matthew 27:66). The servants of God are sealed with the seal of God in Revelation 7:3 ff. The Holy Spirit is a seal unto us in all of life, that we belong to Christ. His possession we are. By His grace we enjoy His approval. An agreement has been established by the very blood of the Savior between Him and us. Therefore we are motivated to "be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Corinthians 15:58).

Another picture of the blessedness of the Christian which is designed to provide the needed encouragement and motivation for service to Christ is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory." In business transactions, earnest money is the down payment, and is regarded as a pledge that the balance due will be paid. In the spiritual realm, the Holy Ghost is designated as the Guarantee of our eternal inheritance until we actually gain the eternal

full possession of it. St. Paul elaborates upon this further in II Corinthians 1:22: Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.”

We stand in awe at the dedication of the apostle Paul, faithful to the end. His declarations: “Necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel!” (I Corinthians 9:17), and his admonition to young Timothy “Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of seasons reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine” (II Timothy 4:2), and his willingness to continue serving here on earth when it would be to his personal gain to be in heaven with Christ (Philippians 1:21-26), all make us stand in contemplation at such dedication to the Gospel of Christ. That dedication came from the Holy Ghost. The same Spirit that motivated Paul to be so unselfish and willing to continue the telling of Christ’s redemption, moves us to faithfully continue likewise.

Therefore we reject the suggestion that God doesn’t need the church to reach mankind with His gracious deliverance. If the contentions of the charismatics are carried to their logical conclusion, then St. Paul preached unnecessarily. If mankind can be brought to faith and kept in the faith through some experience of their own, then proclaiming the Word of truth is unnecessary. This has been suggested in some not-so-subtle ways by enthusiasts and charismatics. They often diminish the place that the formally organized congregation has in the program of God for men. They violently cast aside the Office of the Keys as being given to all the church to authorize them to publicly preach and teach the liberating truth of God. With their de-emphasis of the Sacraments and the Word of God as the channels through which the Holy Ghost creates and maintains faith, they would question the necessity or place or organized congregations and their public function of ministering the Word and Sacraments. In a sermon on the subject of false prophets from Matthew 7:15-23, Dr. Luther put his finger on this error: “The Christian Church has the true, pure Word of God. The devil is unable to endure such conditions and therefore he leads in all sorts of enthusiasts which always bring in something new and spectacular in place of Baptism, the Lord’s Supper, even Christ Himself and in this way mislead people and cause them to err” (St. L., XIII, 792). And with Him we also confess, “For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Ghost who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord” (LC, The Creed, Art. III). God the Holy Ghost uses the church to do His work. Having given it His Word, He motivates it to be faithful in the sharing of that Word with mankind.

The Work of the Holy Ghost is the work of God. When we pray, “Come, Holy Ghost, God and Lord,” we are submitting to the Word of God through which that Good Spirit is pleased to descend and work. May our hearts always bow before the Word of God. Then our parishes will all be little schoolhouses of the Holy Ghost where He teaches us the miracle of Grace and sustains us in the fruits of that miracle. The parish will be the little garden of God in which and from which the good seed of God’s Word is faithfully sown and sincerely cultivated. Then the Holy Ghost will be doing His work in our neighborhood and community.

May our Synod always bow before the Word of God. Then it will be as it has been called a true “City Set on a Hill” from which beams forth the saving light of the Gospel of God so that many can see the glories of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Let no one question if the holy Ghost lives in our hearts or in our midst. When the Word of God is faithfully taught and the Sacraments are administered according to the Savior’s institution, The Holy Spirit dwells among us with His blessings: we are Fathered and kept in the true faith, we are preserved and protected from error, and we are equipped and motivated to serve the Lord with gladness” (Psalm 100:2). May, the Holy Ghost, together with the Father and the Son ever be worshipped and glorified by us.