

**“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” Ephesians 1:2;** thus Paul begins the book of Ephesians. The familiar words of Paul are used as the introduction for sermons reminding the hearer that the “peace of God” comes to us from the Father and the Son, who provide salvation. The book of Ephesians, written by Paul under inspiration of the Holy Spirit takes into view the entire life of the Christian as God chooses His people in Christ. In this world of pain and sorrow, suffering and temptation, we are given the comfort of God's love for us in Christ. This New Testament book delivers to us a beautiful description of faith given by God's grace and the good works God has created in advance for us to do (**Ephesians 2:9-10**). Paul continues throughout Ephesians to give understanding of the blessings of our Baptism into Christ and being made members of His Church on earth, to work to His glory in His Kingdom.

**“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace, which He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of His will, according to His purpose, which He set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Him, things in heaven and on earth” Ephesians 1:7-10.**

Our redemption is that we are bought back from sin, death and the devil forever in Christ by His work of Redemption on the cross. Our deliverance from sin, death and the devil is not a future event, but has taken place through the merits of Christ, which is now a very present possession by God's grace. Redemption, as Paul puts forth in Ephesians is this: the forgiveness of sins given to us through the work of Christ alone. Paul speaks of Christ's blood because it is the price paid, the cost to Christ, required by God for our sin. When Christ sheds His blood for us, we are given forgiveness of sins. God cannot stand sin in His presence, therefore, blood must be shed as **Hebrews 9:22** says: **“without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.”** The blood of God's Son, Jesus was shed and the oppression of our sin is removed by **“the precious blood of Christ, like that of a Lamb without blemish or spot” 1 Peter 1:19**. Thus, the entire book of Ephesians is a beautiful summary and overview of God's plan of salvation which was in place from before the creation of all things.

Martin Luther writes on Ephesians by saying, “Paul teaches, first what the Gospel is, how it was predestined by God alone in eternity and earned and sent forth through Christ, so that all who believe on it become righteous, godly living, saved men, and free from the law, sin and death...Then he (Paul) teaches that false teachings and the commandments of men are to be avoided, so that we may remain true to one Head and become sure and genuine and complete in Christ alone. For in Christ, we have everything so that we need nothing beside Him.” Luther concludes these remarks by saying that Paul finishes out Ephesians by showing what Christians do in serving the Lord with “good works, avoiding sin so that through the cross of Christ, we would be steadfast with hope in Christ our Savior” (Luther's Works Vol. 35:485).

We have this great treasure in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, that is, God's Holy Word. Holding firmly to the teachings of Christ, we proclaim the Gospel to all who need to hear and defend the faith by speaking to the errors of human nature that devise plans contrary to God's Word thinking there is a better “way of salvation” apart from Christ. God's Word is our great defense against false teaching, the temptations of the devil and the world that would lead us astray from the truth of God's Word. The heritage we have is God's Word which reveals our Savior Jesus Christ to us.

Paul wrote to the Ephesians to address the division between the congregations Jewish and Gentile members. Paul reminded them of the unity they shared in Holy Baptism, making them members of Christ's Church and heirs of the promises of God in Christ. After Paul wrote the letter to the Ephesians in A.D. 60, he sent Timothy to Ephesus as a leader because false doctrine afflicted the congregations. While the Gospel of Christ cannot be defeated nor the Word of God ever overthrown; the devil still is at work, trying to seed division among God's people, mislead through false and deceptive teaching all with the goal of undermining and destroying the faith of God's people. Therefore, we study God's Word; this is the regular staple of the Christian life; Bible class, hearing the preaching and teaching of God's Word in Divine Service as offered to us by which our faith is strengthened and uplifted in Christ.

As your Pastor nears the end of his service to you, in this time and place, serving you with the gifts of preaching the Word in all its truth and purity that your faith is strengthened in Christ, I pray your study of God's Word continues and your faith increases that you, with great encouragement, stand up for the truth of God's Word in this ever-changing world. Through Christ the Savior, God's Word is the only hope for sinful man that gives the unchanging truth of God's love for you in Christ your dear Savior.

**O Word of God Incarnate,  
O Truth unchanged, unchanging  
We praise You for the radiance  
A lantern to our footsteps,**

**O Wisdom from on high,  
O Light of our dark sky:  
That from the hallowed page,  
Shines on from age to age.**

**O make Your Church, dear Savior, A lamp of burnished gold  
To bear before the nations Your true light as of old!  
O teach Your wand'ring pilgrims By this their path to trace  
Till, clouds and darkness ended, They see You face to face!**

**LSB 523 “O Word of God Incarnate” stanzas 1&3  
(Psalm 119:105)**

In Christ,  
Pastor Ahrendt