

**A FINAL GOSPEL APPEAL**  
PART 5

TEXT: GALATIANS 6:11-18

**INTRODUCTION/REVIEW:**

May 27, 2012

In 6:11-18, Paul concludes with one final gospel appeal.

He reiterates five main themes that he wishes to impress on the minds of the Galatians so that the gospel remains central and sufficient in their lives and churches.

- I. PAUL REITERATES HIS AUTHENTICITY AND AUTHORITY AS AN APOSTLE. vv. 11, 17
- II. PAUL REITERATES THE SUFFICIENCY OF THE CROSS FOR SALVATION. vv. 12-14
- III. PAUL REITERATES THE NECESSITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK IN APPLYING SALVATION. v. 15
- IV. PAUL REITERATES THE BLESSINGS OF THE GOSPEL FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD. v. 16

**LESSON:**

- V. PAUL REITERATES THE PRIORITY OF GRACE FOR THE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND LIFE. v. 18

In his final gospel appeal, Paul actually gives two benedictions. First, in v. 16, he prays for the Galatians to be showered with peace and mercy. Now, in v. 18, He prays for the grace of God to abound among the Galatians. It is a prayer that the Galatians may have the indwelling gracious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ in such a way that they may have a proper feeling of it in their hearts (cf. Burton, *Galatians*, p. 362, Calvin, *Galatians*, p. 188). It is not enough for us to regard the promise of grace that God offers as true, while it remains wholly outside of us but not at all in us. Thus, Paul prays, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen."

Grace has been a central theme in this letter. Paul closes Galatians just like he began (cf. 1:3; i.e., by emphasizing the governing principle of salvation and the Christian life, namely the grace of God). The whole Christian faith and life can be summarized under the word grace.

What is grace? "Grace," Michael Horton explains, "is God's free favor toward sinners on account of Christ," (*The Christian Faith*, p. 268). "Grace...is Jesus Christ in redeeming action," toward undeserving sinners (Ibid, p. 268). So, when Paul prays

for grace, he is praying for the redeeming action of Jesus to continually abound toward the Galatians.

We would do well to remind ourselves that such gracious redeeming action by God in Christ is undeserved. Paul has repeatedly emphasized the fact that at no point is our salvation a cooperative venture; it's always grace alone. There is nothing we can do to merit God's favor/salvation (cf. 2:16; 3:18, 21; 5:3-5). We will never have a proper feeling of grace in our hearts until we first understand that God owes nothing to His creatures who have rebelled against Him and broken His law. Michael Horton writes, "...God's gracious and merciful character does not require that He show mercy to anyone. Rebellion of such a high creature against such a holy God deserves everlasting punishment" (*The Christian Faith*, p. 267).

God is not obligated to us because of anything we do (e.g., prayed a prayer, exercised our will and made a "decision," walked an isle, baptism, confirmation class, etc...). Those who think like this fail to grasp the righteous demands of God's law and the necessity of the saving work of Christ. God is not gracious to us not because of what we do but because of who He is and what He has promised to do. Augustine, writes, "God became our debtor, not by receiving any thing, but by promising what He pleased" (quoted in Herman Witsius, *Economy of the Covenants*, p. 77).

As we learned from v. 16, our hope is based on the fact that we have received mercy—God's covenant faithfulness/steadfast love. God made a promise to Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3) and He has been faithful to fulfill it in Christ (Gal. 3:16) and through faith in Christ to bestow the blessing of Abraham (Gal. 3:14). This is grace!

When we studied Galatians 3:6-14, we learned that there is no hint in the Biblical narrative of Genesis that God was responding to Abraham's goodness. All of God's actions toward Abraham were clearly gracious and undeserved. The narrative is brutally honest about the sinfulness of Abraham. Twice, Abraham lies about his wife in order to save his own life (Gen. 12:11-20; 20:1-18). By putting his marriage at risk, Abraham demonstrates a lack of faith in God to be faithful in His original promise to him (Gen. 12:1-3). Is this not how we also live—in a constant struggle of belief and unbelief? John Calvin writes,

...unbelief is deeply rooted in our hearts, and we are so inclined to it, that not without hard struggle is each one able to persuade himself of what all confess with the mouth: namely that God is faithful... (*Institutes*, 3.2.15.).

...we say that believers are in perpetual conflict with their own unbelief (*Institutes*, 3.2.17.).

So, it is clear from the biblical narrative that God's faithfulness in keeping His promise to Abraham wasn't because Abraham deserved it but because God's promise was solely based on grace! God is a promise keeping and performing God. He abounds in steadfast love. This is grace!

Just like Abraham, there is nothing in us that moved God to save us and to continue saving us—abounding grace toward us! Rather, grace is the first and last moving cause of salvation. Spurgeon writes,

Because God is gracious, therefore sinful men are forgiven, converted, purified, and saved. It is not because of anything in them or that ever can be in them that they are saved. It is because of the boundless love, goodness, pity, compassion, mercy, and grace of God...What an abyss is the grace of God! Who can measure its breadth? Who can fathom its depth? Like all the rest of the divine attributes, it is infinite" (*All of Grace*, p. 43).

Therefore, as Paul concludes his letter he makes one final appeal to the grace of God on behalf of the Galatians.

Even though Paul's letters customarily begin and end with grace (e.g., Rom. 1:7; 16:20; 1 Cor. 1:3; 16:23; Eph. 1:2; 6:24), his appeal to grace in Galatians is especially significant when understood in light of the occasion, which necessitated the writing of this letter (cf. 5:2-3; 6:12-13). We learned from 6:12 why Paul wrote Galatians. Paul's emphasis on the grace of God is set in contrast to the Judaizer's false gospel of grace plus works. The Judaizers were Jewish Christians who argued for the continuing significance of the Mosaic Law in the Christian life. By doing so, Paul says they were distorting the gospel of Christ and thus the grace of God (1:7). They claimed to believe in Jesus and His cross and resurrection. However, in addition to Christ's perfect work, they added the requirement of Circumcision (i.e., Jesus plus rather than Jesus alone).

Acts 15:1 summarizes their "gospel" message: "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." This is not the gospel but rather a "different" gospel (1:6). The gospel of grace is strange and foreign to the fallen heart as well as a great offense (1 Cor. 1:23). The default tendency of the fallen human heart is to distort grace and to keep it from being as free as it is! The fallen heart reasons, "Surely something must depend on what I do. It just can't be that free." Due to our fallen condition, our hearts want to turn the gospel into something other than free grace. However, for the gospel to be the gospel and for grace to be grace, nothing can be added or demanded. Spurgeon once remarked, "If you remove grace out of the gospel, the gospel is gone" (*Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1891, p. 49). In the words of Paul in Galatians 1:6-7, "If you add works to grace in the gospel, the gospel is distorted—it becomes "another gospel, which is no gospel."

Salvation from beginning, middle and end is by grace alone rather than a deadly combination of grace plus works of the law. Paul writes in Ephesians 2:8-9, "8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, 9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast." Grace permeates this letter from beginning, middle and end.

In 1:1-5, Paul opens his letter with a gospel greeting and in 6:11-18 he closes with a final gospel appeal. Both his opening and closing emphasize salvation as being a wholly gracious gift from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. In 1:6, Paul reminds the Galatians of how they were called to a saving relationship with God by the grace of Christ. In 1:15, like the Galatians, Paul recalls how he also was called by God's grace. How else would a man who persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it be called (1:13-14)? In 2:9, Paul reminds the Galatians how the Jerusalem apostles recognized the grace that had been given to him (i.e., the doctrine of grace he preached and the recognition of grace in his own life and ministry). In 2:21, Paul argues that those who require works of the law for salvation are the ones who reject the grace of God and deny the significance of Christ's death. In 3:18, Paul emphasizes the fact that God graciously/freely gave (κεχάρισται) Abraham the inheritance by promise rather than by law (which we just briefly saw). In 5:4, Paul maintains that all who seek to be justified by the law by being circumcised are severed from Christ and cut off from grace.

Of central importance is how Paul sets forth the priority of grace in regard to justification—how a sinful man is counted righteous before God (2:16-3:18). Here, Paul focuses on the grace of God in Christ and argues that righteousness cannot be derived by works of the law. In 2:16, as he confronts and corrects Peter's hypocrisy, Paul reminds Peter, "...we know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified" (cf. 3:21).

Three times, Paul tells Peter that a man is not justified by works of the law. This is simply the negative way of saying that justification is by grace alone. God's grace in Christ is the sole efficient cause of our salvation and faith is the sole means/instrumental cause of our salvation. Our faith doesn't merit anything. Even saving faith is God's gracious gift (cf. Eph. 2:8-9). Faith comes from the Holy Spirit, who works it in our hearts by the preaching of the gospel, and strengthens it by the use of the sacraments (Q. 65, *Heidelberg Catechism*). Faith unites us to Christ and is the means by which we receive the imputed righteousness of Christ. Spurgeon writes, "We are saved 'through faith,' but salvation is 'by grace.' ...Faith occupies the position of a channel or conduit pipe. Grace is the fountain and the stream. Faith is the aqueduct along which the flood of mercy flows down to refresh the thirsty sons of men..." (*All of Grace*, p. 44).

Thus, salvation is given without any mixture of merit or works on our part (i.e., circumcision, baptism, praying a prayer, trusting, decisions, etc...). The only thing we contribute is our sin. Martin Luther writes, "Merits exist, but no merits are in us. They exist because they are the gifts of God and works which He alone performs. But no merits are in us..." (*What Luther Says*, p. 922). In light of this Luther explains, "There is no such thing as merit; but all who are justified are justified for nothing (*gratis*), and this is credited to no one but to the grace of God" (*Ibid*, p. 922). Luther concludes,

Listen to this: For Christ alone it is proper to help and save others with His merits and works. The works of others are of benefit to no one, not to themselves either; for the statement stands: 'The just shall live by faith' (Rom. 1:17). For faith grounds us on the works of Christ, without our own works, and transfers us from the exile of our sins into the kingdom of His righteousness. This is faith; this the Gospel; this is Christ (*Ibid*, p. 922).

Not only does Paul emphasize the priority of grace in justification. He also emphasizes the priority of grace in sanctification—obeying rather than dismissing God's law (2:17-21; 5:13-6:10). Sanctification is as much a gift of grace as is justification. Harold Senkbeil writes, "We have no life to live as Christians that is not given by God the Father, earned by God the Son, and bestowed by God the Holy Spirit" (*Justified*, p. 95). Michael Horton writes, "Salvation is not restricted to justification but encompasses all of the blessings we enjoy in Christ: election, redemption, effectual calling, justification, adoption, sanctification, and glorification" (*Sanctification by Grace?*).

Regrettably, however, many believers wrongly think of sanctification as being something that they do. Harold Senkbeil notes this common error. He writes,

"God does all the work in justification, but we finish this work by our sanctification. We may be declared right by God's gracious judicial decree through faith in Christ alone, but then it is up to us to perform the works of love and obedience that true holiness requires. This error makes justification merely the first stage of sanctification. God gets us going on the path of holiness and we continue. God starts and we finish. God has his part and we have ours, so the thinking goes" (*Justified*, p. 96).

Walter Marshall writes that the key error of the Christian life is that people think that even though they have been justified by a righteousness produced totally by Christ, they must be sanctified by a holiness produced totally by themselves (*The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification*, p. 10).

To be sure, sanctification by grace alone through faith alone doesn't suggest passivity on our part. Michael Horton asks,

Will I mature in my faith if I stop going to church? Will my non-Christian friends hear the gospel if I and every other Christian they know thought that God would zap the elect without any means on our part? If I quench the Spirit, will there be no consequences? Should I read all the commands to love my wife, or fellow believers, or neighbors only as a reminder that I can't and Jesus did it for me? To all these, my answer is NO! (private correspondence with Michael Horton on the nature of sanctification).

Horton explains that sanctification is not “all you need is the gospel; sanctification will take care of itself. That is both naïve and an unsound view of the sinfulness of Christians” (Ibid).

On the other hand, sanctification is not synergism, where God and I are working together for my salvation. The law is not able to do anything in sanctification that it couldn't do in justification. The gospel gives; the law commands. We must never confuse the two! As we have seen, at no point is our salvation a cooperative venture. It is never “in by grace, on by works.” Salvation, in all of its aspects, is always by grace alone (Gal. 3:3). In contrast to the error of passivity and moralistic activism, Paul presents a much different picture of the Christian life. From 5:13-6:10, we have learned how Paul argues that the pursuit of sanctification (i.e., holiness, obedience) flows from the Spirit of grace, which Christ has merited for us (see Herman Witsius, *The Economy of the Covenants*, vol. 2, p. 26). In 2:20, Paul states how his pursuit of the Christian life is driven by the love of God in Christ—the gospel of grace. The Holy Spirit produces in us the righteous character of the law—the fruit of the Spirit (cf. Gal. 5:22-23). Now that our flesh has been crucified (5:24—an effect of the cross, see Calvin, *Galatians*, p. 169) and we are alive by the Spirit (5:25), we are to keep in step with the Spirit (5:25).

Response out of gratitude is far different from cooperating with God in order to sanctify oneself. As new creations (6:15), the Holy Spirit leads us to serve one another through love and thus fulfill what the Law requires but cannot give (Gal. 5:13-14; 6:2). We are justified through faith apart from works of the law (Galatians 2:16) so that we may possess a faith that works through love and thus fulfills the law (Galatians 5:6, 13-14). Thus, we can say, writes Horton that “we are justified by grace through a faith that rests in Christ and we are sanctified by grace through a faith that, resting in Christ, is working through love... Luther said, ‘Faith is a busy thing. It is always looking for something to do, not for justification, but for the glory of God and the good of our neighbors.’” (*Sanctification by Grace?*).

And so we see how God's grace is not a license to dismiss God's law but rather to fulfill it (5:13-14; 6:2). We are saved from the curse of the law (3:13) but not from the directives of the law (5:13-6:10). The Christian life is not lawless (cf. Gal. 6:2)! But, the point we must understand is that this pursuit of sanctification flows from the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. Herman Witsius writes that the Holy Spirit, “...excites in the elect, even the very same motions and inclinations of soul which are in Christ, and moulds and forms the whole life of Christ in them; so that they act, not by their own virtue or strength, nor by any innate principle of natural life, but by supernatural grace, and the virtue of Christ, 1 Cor. xv. 10, ‘not I, but the grace of God, which is with me...’” (*Economy of the Covenants*, p. 26; see also p. 253).

It is unmistakable that Paul, from 5:13-6:10, clearly shows that grace doesn't lead us to diminish (legalism) or dismiss (licenses) God's law but to fulfill it! Martin Luther writes,

For God is not gracious and merciful to sinners to the end that they might not keep His Law, nor that they should remain as they were before they received grace and mercy; but He condones and forgives both sin and death for the sake of Christ, who has fulfilled the whole Law in order thereby to make the heart sweet and through the Holy Spirit to kindle and move the heart to begin to love from day to day more and more," (*Complete Sermons of Martin Luther*, vol. 3, p. 188).

Thus, Paul shows in this letter how grace is the source of our justification as well as the power for pursuing obedience to the law (i.e., sanctification). Harold Senkbeil writes, "Christian salvation (or justification) and Christian living (or sanctification) are but two aspects of one divine reality: the life bestowed in Jesus Christ. Such life is received by faith. And Holy Scripture declares that faith is God's work from beginning to end" (*Justified*, p. 96).

Note where Paul locates grace, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ..." The "grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" is the authentic characteristic of the gospel (John Stott, *Galatians*, p. 183). Seeing that the centrality and sufficiency of Jesus and His saving work were at stake in the Galatian churches, it is fitting for Paul to close his letter by commending Jesus in all the fullness of His person and saving power. He ascribes to Jesus His full title, "our Lord Jesus Christ" (cf. 1:3; 6:14). As "Lord" Paul is calling Jesus God, a title that was given to God in the OT. As "Jesus" Paul says He is our Savior—salvation being only something that God can give (Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12). And, as "Christ" Jesus is the "Messiah,"—the anointed One of God who fulfills all the promises of the OT. William Hendriksen remarks, "As Lord He owns us, governs and protects us, and we belong to Him and should do His bidding. As Jesus He, He alone, is our Savior (Matt. 1:21; Acts 4:12). And as Christ He was appointed and (as to His human nature) gloriously qualified to be, in His capacity as our Mediator, 'our chief Prophet, only Highpriest, and eternal King'" (*Galatians*, p. 249).

It is from the fullness of who Jesus is that grace—His redeeming action—flows to us! In John 1:14, 16-17, John writes, "<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... <sup>16</sup> For from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

John is emphasizing the superabundance of God's grace in Christ (see D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 132). The grace and truth that came with Jesus can never be disconnected from Himself (Ibid, p. 133). There is no grace apart from the "Lord Jesus Christ." You can't receive any of Christ's gifts without receiving Christ Himself. But, if you are united to Christ,—the Spirit unites us through the gospel and faith—then you cannot fail to receive all of His gifts, including grace!

When we consider Jesus, we can be assured that He is gracious to sinners—His disposition/attitude toward sinners is gracious. Thus, Paul has shown conclusively in this letter how grace entered into history in the person and work of Christ (cf.

Michael Horton, *The Christian Faith*, p. 268). In 1:3, Paul says Christ manifested and poured out grace to us in the fact that He gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age. By grace, through faith in Christ's death on the cross we have been granted a right standing with God (2:21). By grace, we have received the promised Spirit through faith (3:14) who is also the Spirit of adoption (4:6). By grace, we have been redeemed from under the curse of the law (3:13), so that we might receive adoption as sons (4:5). By grace, we have received the Spirit of holiness who excites in our hearts the same desires which are in Christ (5:13-6:10).

Notice how Paul prays for Christ's grace to rest in the core of their being. Paul writes, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit..." The word "spirit" designates the whole person (Schreiner, *Galatians*, p. 385). Paul, as we have previously noted, is praying for the grace of God—Jesus Christ in redeeming action—to move the Galatians in the whole of their inner being. He wants them to be wholly informed by grace, to put all their trust in grace, and conduct themselves according to grace (cf. Ridderbos, *Galatians*, p. 230). Calvin writes, "His prayer is not only that God may bestow upon them His grace in large measure, but that they may have a proper feeling of it in their hearts. Then only is it truly enjoyed by us, when it comes to our spirit. We ought therefore to entreat that God would prepare in our souls a habitation for His grace" (*Calvin's Commentaries*, vol. 21, p. 188).

In contrast, the Judaizers emphasized only outward religious acts, which were utterly irrelevant in the matter of salvation (cf. 6:15). They took great pride in their external displays of righteousness but internally they were full of unrighteousness. In the words of Jesus to the Pharisees,

<sup>25</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. <sup>26</sup> You blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and the plate, that the outside also may be clean. <sup>27</sup> "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness. <sup>28</sup> So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

Like the Pharisees, the Judaizers boasted in external acts of piety/purity, but were completely unaware of the corrupt internal condition of their hearts before God. Paul, therefore, prays one final time for the transforming power of God's grace to work from the inside out in order to bring about true and lasting salvation. As Calvin notes, "we ought therefore to entreat that God would prepare in our souls a habitation for His grace."

Lastly, notice how Paul's final blessing seeks to assure the Galatians that they are in a state of grace. Paul prays, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers..." (emphasis mine). The pronoun "our" and the word "brothers" are significant in a letter in which Paul reserved his strongest and most severe language



(cf. 1:6, 8-9; 3:1; 5:4). This is the only occurrence of the word, “brothers” in all of Paul’s concluding benedictions (Betz, *Galatians*, p. 325). “Brothers” has been an important designation in this letter (cf. Gal. 1:11; 3:15; 4:12, 28, 31; 5:11, 13; 6:1). Thus, it is noteworthy that Paul’s final word in his concluding sentence is “brothers.” The pronoun “our” and the word “brothers” emphasize the sense of belongingness. By calling them “brothers” Paul once again sought to temper his severe rebuke lest the hearts of his readers fall into dejection and despair.

In v. 16, Paul reassured the Galatians of their status as belonging to the covenant people of God (i.e., the Israel of God). Now, as he concludes his letter he again assures the Galatians that they share together in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He confirms their status as the covenant people of God, the sons of Abraham, the Israel of God. He assures them that they are members of God’s covenant family through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—that they indeed possess the freedom of God’s sons.

Paul’s “amen” confirms and seals his prayer. It is fitting for Paul to conclude his letter on this note of grace. Essentially, Paul is saying,

Brothers, I have set forth for you the true gospel of grace and freedom. I have demonstrated from experience and Scripture the truth of salvation by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone over against the works of the law. Thus, now I commend you to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. May it ever be so—amen—that you have the indwelling gracious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. 1:5), which alone is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified (cf. Acts 20:32).

**REFLECTION:**

In the end, there are only two ways of salvation and two religions: works vs. grace; do vs. done. In this letter, Paul focuses on the perfect, finished work of God in Christ over against the imperfect, unfinished works of man. He exalts the grace of God in Christ over against the works of the law in the matter of salvation. He has repeatedly emphasized that righteousness—a right standing with God—cannot be obtained by works of the law (2:16; 3:18, 21).

Paul has confronted, warned, and pleaded with the Galatians. And, he has meticulously refuted the error that threatened the churches of Galatia (i.e., Jesus plus circumcision/works of law equals salvation). He has earnestly contended for the truth of the gospel, namely that men are justified by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. He has shown us that by grace through faith in Christ alone, the believer has been given freedom from the enslaving curse of the law. Through faith in Christ, the believer is freely granted favor with God, adopted as God’s beloved sons and granted an eternal inheritance.

Through faith in Christ, the believer no longer needs to struggle to keep the law in order to gain God's favor. No longer having to worry about God's condemnation, God's sons are now free to pursue good works not for justification but for the welfare of one's neighbor and God's glory (i.e., possess a faith that works through love and thereby fulfills the law; 5:6, 13-14; 6:2). Paul ends his letter commending the Galatians to grace, which alone is found in our Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's battle in Galatians is the enduring battle every generation of the church must take up and fight since the religious mind is ever prone to subject itself to regulations and to view the liberating gospel of sovereign grace as too "dangerous" to be given free, unrestrained course (cf. F.F. Bruce, *Galatians*, p. 277). F.F. Bruce writes,

As Paul became less a figure of controversy, as his memory was venerated and his writings canonized, his teaching was overlaid with a new legalism. When, from time to time, someone appeared who understood and proclaimed the genuine message of Galatians, he was liable to be denounced as a subversive character—as, indeed, Paul was in his own day. But the letter to the Galatians, with its trumpet-call to Christian freedom, has time and again released the true gospel from the bonds in which well-meaning but misguided people have confined it so that it can once more exert its emancipating power in the life of mankind, empowering those who receive it to stand fast in the freedom with which Christ has set them free" (*Galatians*, pp. 277-278).

Martin Luther's concluding words to his exposition of Galatians are fitting:

So far the exposition of the epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians. May the Lord Jesus Christ, our Justifier and Savior, who has granted me the grace and ability to expound this epistle and has granted you the grace and ability to hear it, preserve and confirm both you and me. From the heart I pray that we may grow more and more in the knowledge of grace and of faith in Him, so that we may be blameless and beyond reproach until the day of our redemption. To Him, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, be praise and glory forever and ever. Amen. Amen" (*Luther's Works*, vol. 27, p. 144).

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