

Be Strong in the Lord!

Yes, it is important to be strong. The Bible urges you to be strong (Ephesians 6:10).

Yet what is there that could make you strong? Immediately, the Word of God gives you a reply, stating, "The power of his might" (Ephesians 6:10). In other words, not from your weak nature, but from the divine power which is given to you by the Lord from his limitless supply, will you be strong in the Lord.

For what purpose does the Lord want you to be strong in him? He wants you to be spiritually strong so that you will remain in your gospel faith which he has given you. The Lord knows that every day you commit countless sins. As gasps of air can be let out of a balloon bit by bit until the balloon would finally collapse, so each sin which you would commit will take away life from your faith until it will finally die.

The Lord also knows that every day countless temptations will assault you unannounced with great stealth, deceit, and appeal. To fight off these assaults, and to keep your faith alive in order to get to heaven, the Lord knows how much you need strength, his strength. So go to him for it! Be strong in the Lord!

Where does the Lord supply you with strength? The gracious and almighty power of God for your faith comes to you through the gospel promises. Only in connection with them will God bring his power to you. It is in these pledges that the Lord wills to work his might on you (1st Corinthians 2:4-5; Galatians 3:2, 6).

So be strong, then! Be strong in the Lord's might!

*Lord, open now my heart to hear,
And through your Word to me draw near.
Let me your Word e'er pure retain;
Let me your child and heir remain.*

Your Birth.

While waiting for your birth your parents and relatives wondered who you would be. Yet your loving Lord was not taken by surprise. He knew who you would be. Not only did he know about you, but also before creation, already in eternity, the Lord of life decided to create you. According to his gracious will he determined that he wanted you to exist. Therefore, he planned the time when you should be born, where you should be born, what you should look like, and what your personal talents and characteristics should be, even down to the detail of what your name should be.

More important, however, is this: that you should be assured by the Lord's teaching about your election, that he created you specifically for the purpose that you should live with him in his heavenly home. The holy Scriptures remind you, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Ephesians 1:3-6). "God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which he called you by our gospel" (2nd Thessalonians 2:13).

To accomplish this, the Lord, therefore, carefully arranged and especially saw to it that after your birth you would be baptized, and in this way be brought into his holy family of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. After this you would be raised up and taught more about the Lord's own precious promise of forgiveness, and of the life to come with him forever.

Later, throughout the rest of your life, your loving Lord will send you people and testings, crosses and encouragements, which would be

designed and tailored by him to keep you clinging to the only thing that will bring you into heaven, namely, the sure, powerful gospel pledge of God. You have his promise for this.

In order to assure you that this is his intent, your loving Lord has given you his precious pledge of predestination, “[God] has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began” (2nd Timothy 1:9). See how blessed you are!

Your Purpose.

Your purpose is to serve God and your neighbor with good works until you are brought home to heaven. You are to use the talents which God has given you to accomplish this.

God has seen to it that you have been born at this time and in this place - not at some other time or place. He will supply you with what would be necessary to complete your mission.

So use your God-given gifts so that he will be complimented, and so that your neighbor will have his needs met with mercy, justice, or Christian faith (Matthew 23:23)! In fact, keep busy those who are around you, giving them Christian work to do! Pass down to your descendants the complete truth of God’s gospel, and work to strengthen them in the one true faith!

*God, from all eternity
In your Son you did elect me;
Therefore, Father, graciously
In my course to heaven direct me;
Send to me your Holy Spirit,
That his gifts I may inherit.*

Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book 343:1, altered.

Your Baptism.

After the true and triune God created you, and shaped you in the womb, the next step in his plan was even more wonderful. He gave you another birth - a new birth, a better birth than the first. He brought you to know him as your kind, gracious Father who has loved you with an everlasting love. He did this through baptism.

Indeed, look at all of the marvelous things which your loving Lord has done for you in baptism! To begin with, the Scriptures state that God cannot have rebellious, unregenerate, hell-bound children in his family. So in order to adopt you, an unregenerate baby boy (Ephesians 2:1), so that you could receive God's name (Matthew 28:19), the Spirit first had to make you heaven-bound by commanding your parents in the Words of the Bible to baptize you (Matthew 28:19) in order to subject you to his power (John 3:5), promising to work his wonderful might through baptism to rescue your soul (Galatians 3:27). Next the Lord approached your soul by way of his saving pledge of forgiveness which is in baptism (Acts 22:16), handing it over to you (Acts 2:38), placing forgiveness into your personal possession by powering your soul (Ephesians 1:19) to clamp onto it tightly (Matthew 11:12) by an act of faith; which forgiveness, being brought to you, in a sense, washed your sins away (Acts 22:16) and, consequently, removed your guilt (1st Peter 3:21) causing God to consider you to be righteous (Romans 5:11).

Since the all-holy Almighty cannot have a sin-controlled, adopted child, he also had to affect a change in you, that is, in your intellect, will, and desires. Therefore, through his gospel pledge in baptism, the Lord made a severe attack on your "flesh with its passions and desires" (Galatians 5:24), broke the deadly spell which sin had over you (Romans 6:6), and regenerated you (Titus 3:5), that is, the Lord gave you spiritual life where there had been none before (2nd Corinthians 5:17), in which you were given a new nature of righteousness and holiness as God has (Ephesians 4:24), through which you became dead to sin but alive to God (Romans 6:11), your newly adopted Father. What is more, the Spirit will continue to keep your faith alive (1st Peter 1:5) until the time when you could understand language, and have your faith fed and preserved by the gospel report from the Word of God (Romans 10:17).

What a blessing your baptism has been to you! Think of it! Thank God for it!

The Gospel according to the Alphabet.

ALL men had deserved to die
BECAUSE all had sinned,
CAUSING God, the just judge, to demand their
DEATH for
ETERNITY.
FAVORABLY for all men, God gave his
GOSPEL plan to
HELP us by
INTERVENING. Though God is
JUST and must punish offenders, he is also
KIND,
LOVING, and
MERCIFUL.
NICELY, therefore, he sent his
ONLY BEGOTTEN Son, according to his gospel
PROMISE, to
QUIET his just anger against all,
REBELLIOUS
SINNERS.
TRUSTING this gospel pledge
UNCONDITIONALLY, you will gain the
VICTORY everyday over
WICKED unbelief, and not end up in hell, but will
eXCEL in strong, gospel faith
YET evermore until you enter the heavenly
ZION: God's paradise.

A Prayer for Forgiveness.

Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish (Luke 13:5).

[The Lord is] not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance (2nd Peter 3:9).

God has also granted... repentance to life (Acts 11:18).

If we would confess our sins, {God} will be faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1st John 1:9).

Dear Father, Son, and Holy Spirit:

By the stern warnings of your law passages, point out to me the unpleasant truth that I am hopelessly lost - bound for a most terrible, fiery punishment which will last for an eternity! Give me a humble, repentant mind by which I will freely confess my complete guilt as a sinner! Prompt me to plead for pardon for my sins! Then bring me your happy promise that simply by your grace, for the sake of Christ and his saving blood, you have already cleansed me from my sins, and have opened heaven to me! Fasten mine attention to this pledge! Strengthen me to believe it! Assure me that by relying on this great pardon purchased by Christ, I am saved eternally! What a gracious God you are! How merciful you have been to me! Lovingly assure me that I need only believe that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me, to possess your full, free forgiveness! What a kind gift this is! How merciful you are to present this salvation to me! Move me to thank you always! Purge my life of sin! Help me to lead a holy life! Amen!

The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:23).

Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift! (2nd Corinthians 9:15.)

*Since Christ has full atonement made
And brought to us salvation,
Each Christian, therefore, may be glad*

*And build on this foundation.
Your grace alone, dear Lord, I plead;
Your death is now my life indeed,
For you have paid my ransom.*

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal 390:5.
The Making of a Prayer.

State the facts!

State your desire as to what God should do with his power in regard to the facts!

Recall some law passages which state your unworthiness!

Think of the promises of God which cover the matter at hand!

Remember some gospel passages which state Heaven's help for the believer!

Use gospel exhortations at the end to encourage you!

Confess that you most certainly believe what the gospel passages have promised you, professing, for instance, "Yes, I believe that God will do this for me"! Mean it! Put an exclamation point after your "Amen"!

*The Lord my pasture shall prepare
And feed me with a shepherd's care;
His presence shall my wants supply
And guard me with a watchful eye;
My noonday walks He shall attend
And all my midnight hours defend.*

The Lutheran Hymnal 368:1.
A Prayer for Repentance and Faith.

[God] commands all men everywhere to repent (Acts 17:30).

Repent! (Mark 1:15.)

Who, then, can be saved? (Matthew 19:25.)

Joy will be in heaven over one sinner who repents (Luke 15:7).

Who is this that forgives sins? (Luke 7:4.)

Christ forgave you (Colossians 3:13).

Dear Lord Jesus Christ, my only ransom from eternal ruin: Give me your guidance to salvation! Through your gospel pledges, draw me to your power! Secondly, by your power, move me to desire your pledges, prompting me to accept your promise that you really are the rescuer of the whole human race, which includes me! As I read the facts from the Bible of your terrible suffering in hell on the cross, open my mind to realize not only my many repeated transgressions, but also your unending love for me! Then move me not only to be sorry for my sins, but also to look up to your gospel pledges for mercy and salvation! I have no help, but from you. Keep me as your own by powering me to believe the gospel throughout my life! After this is done, bring me home to heaven! Amen!

You, being dead in your trespasses, [God] has made alive... having forgiven you all trespasses (Colossians 2:13).

To you the Word of this salvation has been sent (Acts 13:26).

Hold firmly the Word of life! (Philippians 2:16.)

*Faith has a living pow'r from heav'n
That grasps the promise God has giv'n,
A trust that cannot be o'erthrown,
When fixed upon his pledge alone.*

*I thank you, then, O God of heav'n,
That you to me this faith have giv'n
Through mighty word and sacrament
To trust the pledge which you have sent.*

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal
404:1 & 4, altered.

Strengthen your Faith!

Does the Bible speak of strengthening your faith? Yes, it does.

How could your faith be made stronger? For the answer to this you will need to look at what faith is.

In order for faith to exist, there first needs to be a promise. In order for the saving faith of a Christian to exist, there needs to be a promise of salvation. God knows this. When God planned a way to hand over his salvation to you, he chose to put his salvation into the form of a promise. Whenever a promise would be presented to you, it will call for you to believe it.

Upon believing a promise, you will receive and enjoy what that promise has pledged to you. Upon believing the gospel promise of God, you will receive and enjoy what his promise has pledged to you: salvation. This is why your caring Lord invites and urges you, imploring, "Believe the gospel!" (Mark 1:15.) "He who believes... will be saved. He who does not believe will be damned" (Mark 16:16). Belief in the gospel pledge saves you. This is the way God planned his salvation. Unbelief in the gospel would not save anyone, because that person will not have salvation in his possession.

How could you be strong in your belief in the gospel pledge of God? First of all, look at what saving belief is, what it does, and what it involves! Saving belief, or saving faith, is an act of your will in your soul by which the saving acts of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, which are found in the gospel promises, are accepted as true and as completely capable of saving you. Saving faith is the trust by your soul in the gospel promises that God has done what he has pledged he would do in regard to your salvation. It is the clear and unmistakable knowledge about the gospel pledge, of what it means for you, and of its benefits for you. Saving faith is the assurance which your soul exhibits after it has received assurance from the gospel.

Saving belief is the personal reliance of the soul on what God has pledged. Described negatively: saving faith will surrender all prideful righteousness, and will not tell God on what terms salvation should be given.

What is it that weakens your saving faith? Two things weaken it: your sinful nature, and the sins which your sinful nature commits. Your sinful nature, variously called by the Bible “the old man” (Ephesians 4:22), the “outward man” (2nd Corinthians 4:16), “the body of sin” (Romans 6:6), and the “flesh” (Romans 7:18), which is under the rule of sin, “wars against” (Galatians 5:17) your saving faith. Among other things, your sinful flesh rejects the things of the Holy Spirit (1st Corinthians 2:14), which would include the gospel. Therefore, in regard to the gospel, your sinful flesh will do the very opposite of what saving faith will do: your flesh will doubt, distrust, disbelieve, reject, disagree with, and not rely on the gospel pledges.

What is more, the sins which your sinful flesh produces in your thoughts, speech, and actions, also will weaken your saving faith. Thus your saving faith will need to be strengthened against the terrific fight which your sinful nature will put up, and because of the drain of energy which your sinning will cause on your saving faith.

Where could you get strength for your saving faith? Scripture quickly responds that you will get strength from the gospel pledges themselves, and from God. The Bible teaches simultaneously that the power to believe comes from God (Ephesians 1:19), and that the power to believe comes from the gospel promises (Romans 10:17). Thus the Word of God will urge you in many passages to strengthen your saving faith by turning to the gospel pledges for their divine power, and to get power from God, who will supply your faith with strength through those same gospel pledges. Now do it!

A Prayer for Strengthening.

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak! (Psalm 6:2.)

Thus says the Lord: I will strengthen you (Isaiah 41:10). My strength is made complete in [your] weakness (2nd Corinthians 12:9).

Lest you be wearied and faint in your minds (Hebrews 12:3), be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might! (Ephesians 6:10.)

Dear Lord Jesus Christ:

Show me that without your salvation I am hopelessly lost; that I have sins in need of forgiveness, guilt in need of removal, and a sinful soul in need of change! Teach me to come before you humbly to ask pardon for all of the evil in my life! I need salvation. For that you have given me your gospel pledges. I need possession of that salvation. For that you have given me a faith in your gospel promises. Yet I need strength to keep my faith strong. For that you, again, have pointed me to your gospel. Enrich my faith with your power through these gospel pledges! May the pledges themselves enrich my faith with power! Surround me with your promised protection! Yet more than this: make me trust your gospel promises more strongly so that through all the changes in my life, my hold on your salvation will always be most firm! Reassure me that even when I am too weak to exercise my faith, you will move me to do it by releasing your power on me through the gospel pledges!

Help me firmly to believe the gospel facts that your death in hell has removed my sins' punishment; that your holy life has opened heaven for me! Use this joyful, gospel news to pour your strength into my soul to calm my fears, to remove my doubts, and to kindle new courage in me! I ask this, being reassured by your own mighty promises, that you will, indeed, do this. Amen!

Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus! (2nd Timothy 2:1.)

Be strengthened with might by his power (Ephesians 3:16), established in the faith! (Colossians 2:7.)

“Be strong and of good courage!” (Joshua 1:6.)

***Seven, Simple, Saving Statements
From your Savior.***

Your sins are forgiven (Matthew 9:2).

Be of good cheer! Be not afraid! (Matthew 14:27.)

He who hears my Word... shall not come into judgment (John 5:24).

The Words that I speak to you are... life (John 6:63).

Peace be with you! (John 20:19.)

Where I am, there you must be also (John 14:3).

Because I live you will live also (John 14:19).

*Jesus is the perfect Savior,
Only source of all that's good;
Ev'ry grace and ev'ry favor
Come to us through Jesus' blood.*

*Jesus gives us true repentance
By his Spirit sent from heav'n
Whispers this assuring sentence,
"All your sins are now forgiv'n."*

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal 354:2 & 3.

One Dozen Descriptions of Saving Strength.

God has salvation. God holds out his salvation to you. He wants you to have it. In order for you to have it, God will put it into your possession. To make this happen, God has already put his salvation into the form of a promise. Now God will bring his salvation promise to you in the additional form of a loving, warm, and urgent invitation. At the same

time the divine power that this promise has by nature will move you to believe this pledge. As soon as you would believe God's promise of salvation, you will possess his salvation. God considers it to be so, and he will assure you of it. This possession is what is called "saving faith."

As an act of your will, your saving faith will need to be fed in a spiritual manner. It will need to be kept healthy. It will need to be kept firm through toughening. It will need to be kept strong through exercise. This is because your perverse, sinful flesh will stubbornly fight to make your soul spiritually starved, sick, broken down, and weak. On account of this, your saving faith must be strengthened by a regular supply of power.

God has recognized this need, and, therefore, has urged you in many salvation pledges to be strong, which he has put into the form of exhortations. Next, through these same salvation pledges, God will use his power to make your saving faith strong (Ephesians 1:19; 3:16), just as the divine power of the pledges themselves will also work to make your faith strong (1st Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 4:12). How helpful! How wise! How concerned your Lord is for you!

The following is a list of one dozen descriptions of strength which the Lord wants you to acquire for your saving faith. For instance, his Scriptures give assurance that -

- 1) The Lord God is my might (Habakkuk 3:19), and
- 2) The strength of my salvation (Psalm 140:7).
- 3) Since God is the rock of my heart (Psalm 73:26),
- 4) He will make me bold with strength in my soul (Psalm 138:3).
- 5) Because God is my stronghold (2nd Samuel 22:33),
- 6) The Bible urges me, "Be strong!" (Isaiah 35:4) and again:
- 7) "Be powerful in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!" (2nd Timothy 2:1.)
- 8) As a result, God's power is made complete in my weakness (2nd Corinthians 12:9),
- 9) Since to be strengthened with power through the Holy Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16),
- 10) Means to be powered with all power according to God's glorious strength (Colossians 1:11).
- 11) Because the God of all grace has called me to his eternal glory, he

will fasten me firmly (1st Peter 5:10) in regard to my saving faith.
12) Since I have this robust comfort, namely, that God has laid an oath on top of his promise of salvation (Hebrews 6:17-18), I, in turn, will be made robust (1st John 2:14).

*O God, forsake me not
Take not your Spirit from me;
Do not permit the might
Of sin to overcome me.
Increase my feeble faith,
Which, for me, you have got,
Oh, be my strength and pow'r -
O God, forsake me not!*

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal 424:2,
altered.

The Gospel stated in Words of One Syllable.

The gospel, that is, "the good news of great joy" (Luke 2:10), is not hard to understand at all. In fact, it could be stated in words of one syllable. Here it is!

At the start of time, God had made man in a pure state. Yet man threw all of that out when he first sinned. God had warned man that should he sin, he would have to die a death that would have no end. Thus when man did sin, he brought on his soul, as well as on the souls of the whole race, a death in hell where God's wrath on them would have no end.

Yet out of his great grace, the Lord willed that he would save the whole race of damned souls so that it could still live with him on high, while at the same time he would keep his law just. So how would he do both?

The plan which God thought up was this: God the Son would come down to earth and be born a man. In this state Christ could now live a

pure life in our place so as to keep the great law of God which was laid down for man, but which man had not kept. This work had to be done if man would be pure once more in the sight of God.

Next Christ would have to pay the price for the guilt of all men, or, as the Word of God puts it, he would have to take on him all of the sins of the whole world. By this Christ would take on the full wrath of God which was meant to be poured out on the whole world. This took place in the great pains of Christ on the cross.

These are the two great acts which Christ your Lord of love has done for you. What a great God he is! What grace he has shown to you! Hear it, and be saved! For the Lord in his Word has made an oath to you. This oath swears that you will live with Christ for the rest of time since you have faith in the pledge that Christ in his two great works on earth has done all to save you from death and to bring you home to live with him on high. This is the "good news of great joy," as the Word of God puts it. This is the grand pledge of God that saves you.

So say in your soul: "I have faith in this pledge! God, keep my faith firm in your pledge!"

*In your promise firm we stand;
None can take us from your hand.
Speak - we hear - at your command,
We will follow you.*

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal 436:2.

Ten Treatments of Saving Confidence.

Christ your Lord has worked out and won salvation for you. Christ guarantees this fact in his gospel pledge. This gospel pledge is then trusted by your saving faith.

At the heart of your saving faith is confidence. Confidence is your "Amen!" or "This is most certainly true!" to the salvation which your Lord has promised to you. Confidence is the result of the gospel which comes

“in power... and in much assurance” (1st Thessalonians 1:5).

To be confident, then, you will need to hear the gospel so that your mind could be exposed to the gospel’s power, and, as a result, be assured by that gospel promise. To stay confident, then, you will need to be exposed and assured regularly by the gospel promise. Therefore, let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly! (Colossians 3:16.)

The Holy Bible describes this state of confidence as –

- 1) Having the knowledge of salvation of which the believer is persuaded and assured: “I know [Christ] whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have entrusted to him,” that is, my faith (2nd Timothy 1:12).
- 2) Christian confidence is variously described as confident persuasion (Ephesians 3:12);
- 3) As boldness to which the believer holds firmly (Hebrews 3:6) and does not “cast away” (Hebrews 10:35).
- 4) Confidence is the state of having good courage (2nd Corinthians 5:6).
- 5) It is a confidence of the heart living firmly and immovably (Hebrews 3:14).
- 6) Saving confidence is trust (2nd Corinthians 3:4);
- 7) Confident boasting (2nd Corinthians 9:4);
- 8) Being fully persuaded (Romans 4:20);
- 9) Full assurance (Colossians 2:2); and
- 10) Having full assurance of faith (Hebrews 10:22).

To be sure, you must be certain of the gospel before you could be confident. The holy Scriptures, therefore, describe the Christian as “knowing the certainty” of the gospel (Luke 1:4).

However, in order for you to be certain, the ground of your certainty must be found outside of your weak, sinful, unsound mind. In other words, you will need to have an outside witness in order to be certain. Only the divine gospel promises could do this, for only the gospel promises will be able to create in your mind full assurance that your sins are forgiven (1st Thessalonians 2:13). Thus whenever you would read the gospel pledges, your confidence will be mightily strengthened. In fact,

whenever you would apply the gospel pledges to yourself, and confess, "That forgiveness includes me," it will mean that you are confident.

This is why God chose the singular method of salvation by promise: so that you could be completely confident of your salvation. How wise of him! Be confident, then! Trust his gospel promises!

*By grace! This ground of our salvation,
As long as God is true, endures:
What saints have penned by inspiration,
What God by His own Word assures,
What all our faith must rest upon,
Is grace, free grace, through His dear Son.*

*By grace! May sin and Satan hearken!
I bear my flag of faith in hand
And pass - for doubts my joy can't darken -
The Red Sea to the Promised Land.
I cling to what my Savior taught,
And trust it, whether felt or not.*

Evangelical Lutheran Hymn-Book 311: 5 & 10, altered.

The ABC'S of Saving Faith.

APPEARED. [Christ] APPEARED to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (Hebrews 9:26).

BAPTISM. BAPTISM does also now save us (1st Peter 3:21).

CUP. This CUP is the new testament in my blood (Luke 22:20).

DEPTHS. You will cast all of our sins into the DEPTHS of the sea (Micah 7:19).

ETERNAL. God has given to us ETERNAL life (1st John 5:11).

FAITH. FAITH comes by the gospel report (Romans 10:17).

GOSPEL. Believe the GOSPEL! (Mark 1:15.)

HOPE. [Be] not moved away from the HOPE of the gospel! (Colossians 1:23.)

INIQUITY. [Christ] shall justify many, for he shall

- bear their INIQUITY (Isaiah 53:11).
- KNOW. KNOW that you were not redeemed with corruptible things...
but with the precious blood of Christ (1st Peter 1:18).
- LAY. LAY hold on eternal life, to which you were also called! (1st
Timothy 6:12.)
- MERCY. The MERCY of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting on
those who fear him (Psalm 103:17).
- NAME. Your sins are forgiven you for [Jesus'] NAME'S sake (1st John
2:12).
- ORDAINED. As many as were ORDAINED to eternal life believed (Acts
13:48).
- PROMISE. This is the PROMISE that he has promised us: eternal life (1st
John 2:25).
- QUIETNESS. When [God] gives QUIETNESS, who, then, can make
trouble? (Job 34:29.)
- REPENT. REPENT, and believe the gospel! (Mark 1:15.)
- SAVED. If you would confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and
believe in your heart that God has raised him from the
dead, you will be SAVED (Romans 10:9).
- TESTAMENT. I will make a new TESTAMENT.... I will forgive their
iniquity (Jeremiah 31:31, 34).
- UNDERSTAND. UNDERSTAND what the will of the Lord is! (Ephesians
5:17.)
- VIOLENT. The VIOLENT take [the kingdom of heaven] by force
(Matthew 11:12).
- WASHED. [Jesus Christ] loved us and WASHED us from our sins in his
own blood (Revelation 1:5).
- eXALTED. Let the God of my salvation be EXALTED! (Psalm 18:46.)
- YOUTH. O Lord God, you are my trust from my YOUTH (Psalm 71:5).
- ZEALOUS. [Christ] gave himself for us, that he might... purify for himself
his own special people, ZEALOUS for good works (Titus
2:14).

*God loved the world so that he gave
His only Son the lost to save
That all who would in him believe*

Should everlasting life receive.

*Christ is the solid rock of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death.
All who rely on him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.*

*God would not have the sinner die -
His Son with saving grace is nigh.
His Spirit in the Word does teach
How we the blessed goal may reach.*

*Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal 391:1-3,
altered.*

What does the Bible say about Strength?

When God would convert an unbeliever, he will give life to that unregenerate person in order for him to become a believer in the gospel promise. Thus the believer is said to have “life through” Jesus’ “name” (John 20:31). He is now “alive to God” (Romans 6:11).

To show how important belief in the gospel pledge is, the Holy Spirit will contrast this with what the person formerly was, and will describe him as having been “dead in sins” (Ephesians 2:5), and “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

Prior to believing, a person is then in the state of unbelief. Unbelief is when the soul is separated from God. Scripture refers to unbelievers as those whose “iniquities have separated” them “from God” (Isaiah 59:12). They are “strangers from the contracts of promise,” and are “in this world without God” (Ephesians 2:12). Their unbelief is a “departing from our God” (Isaiah 59:13), to which the Almighty must finally declare on Judgment Day, “Depart from me!” (Matthew 7:23.) Thus death is as far away from life as a person could get.

In order to keep a regenerated person regenerated, God will continue to give him the life which he first gave him at his conversion, but with this distinction: From now on God will call this life by a new name. He will call it "strength."

When the need would quickly arise for you to know to which supply you should go to draw out this strength, Holy Scripture happily points you to the place, or, to state it better, Holy Scripture happily points you to the *means* which God will use for this purpose. They are the same means which the Lord first used to give you spiritual life. These means are the gospel pledges. The gospel pledges are what God first used to convert you. "I have begotten you through the gospel" (1st Corinthians 4:15); "the gospel... by which also you are saved" (1st Corinthians 15:12). They are also what he now uses to keep you in the state of regeneration and belief. "Man will... live... by every Word which proceeds from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:4). "The Word of God... effectively works also in you who believe" (1st Thessalonians 2:13).

The Word of God will also speak of various kinds of strengthening which the gospel promises would accomplish for your spiritual life, which life the Bible commonly calls your "faith". These various kinds of strengthening are termed "assuring", "comforting", "promising", "making certain", "making sound in faith", "healing", "exercising", and "putting in mind." In fact, you could and should also think of these strengthenings in this way: When God first gave to you spiritual life, he assured you of salvation by his gospel pledge. After this, in order to keep spiritual life in you, he would continually *reassure* you. Indeed, it could be stated that the Lord will also now *re-comfort*, *re-promise*, *make more certain*, *make more sound in faith*, *re-exercise*, and *remind* you. For instance, the Holy Spirit urges that "we, then, who are strong ought to bear the weaknesses of the weak" (Romans 15:1) by "strengthening all the disciples" (Acts 18:23). This strengthening would include those efforts to teach people to "know assuredly" (Acts 2:36), to "comfort one another with these words" (1st Thessalonians 4:18), "to stir up your pure minds by way of reminder" (2nd Peter 3:1), "that you may know the certainty of those things" (Luke 1:4), and to urge others to "be sound in faith" (Titus 2:2).

Besides this, the holy Word of God urges you to “be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might” (Ephesians 6:10). That is, it is the Lord’s will that your own saving faith in his promise of forgiveness should be strong; for every time that you would sin, you will drain your faith of whatever strength it had. In addition to this, your sinful flesh “wars against” your faith (Galatians 5:17) constantly. Therefore, to strengthen your faith, you are to meditate (Psalm 1:2) on the gospel pledges, not merely to look them over, but to “let these words sink down into your ears” (Luke 9:44), to know what they pledge to you, to become certain of their truth, and to become confident of what they promise.

As you meditate, or ponder (Luke 2:19) on God’s gospel pledges, the three, divine powers which these pledges possess will have an opportunity to strengthen your saving faith. Each gospel pledge has the power 1) to teach you to understand what it is saying (John 15:13); 2) to hand over to you the spiritual gift which it is offering (2nd Thessalonians 2:10); and 3) to move you to take into your possession this spiritual gift of salvation by an act of faith in the gospel promise of your salvation (Romans 10:17).

Thus if a doubt should ever weaken you, use a gospel pledge for reassurance! Likewise, if you should ever be troubled, disbelieving, uncertain, weak, wavering, or forgetful, use these pledges to comfort, promise, make certain, make sound in your faith, heal, exercise, and remind yourself!

“Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!” (2nd Timothy 2:1.)

Law and Gospel Passages.

God is angry with the wicked every day (Psalm 7:11).

[We] were by nature the children of anger (Ephesians 2:3).

Though you were angry with me, your anger is turned away.... Behold, God is my salvation (Isaiah 12:1-2).

God did not appoint us to [his] anger, but to obtain salvation (1st Thessalonians 5:9).

If God perhaps would grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil (2nd Timothy 2:25-26).

God has also granted... repentance to life (Acts 11:18).

Repent! (Mark 1:15.)

Our Savior Jesus Christ... has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2nd Timothy 1:10).

Believe the gospel! (Mark 1:15.)

[The] gospel did not come to you in word only, but also in power (1st Thessalonians 1:5).

The Word of God... effectively works in you who believe (1st Thessalonians 2:13).

To you it has been granted... to believe in [Christ] (Philippians 1:29).

[Strive] for the faith of the gospel! (Philippians 1:27.)

*What God does in his law demand
And none to him can render
Brings wrath and woe on ev'ry hand
For man, the vile offender.
Our flesh has not those pure desires
The spirit of the law requires,
And lost is our condition.*

*Yet as the law must be fulfilled
Or we must die despairing,
Christ came and has God's anger stilled,
Our human nature sharing.
He has for us the law obeyed
And thus the Father's vengeance stayed*

Which over us impended.
Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal 390:2 & 4.

A Prayer for more Certainty.

You are able... to be... participants of his promise in Christ through the gospel (Ephesians 3:4).

Believe the gospel! (Mark 1:15.)

Believe to the saving of the soul! (Hebrews 10:39.)

Dear Holy Spirit, my Lord and God:

How I wish that I could be more certain of my salvation! How I wish that I could have peace of mind, and be free from doubt! Yet I am at fault. Too often I have been proud. I have been willingly distracted by worldly desires, and I have even desired to sin. As a result, I have weakened myself, and brought on doubt, distrust, and uncertainty. Remove this uncertainty from me! First of all, show me where I could find certainty! I cannot turn to mine own ideas. They are worthless as a foundation. Neither could I look to mine own power for confidence, for it is weakened by sin which pulls me to doubt.

Remind me, therefore, of your dependable gospel promises! Point to them as the only certain foundation on which I could build my trust, and bring my trust to its fullest certainty! Only the gospel pledges have saving certainty. Only on them do you want me to rely. Indeed, in them you have put divine power which will calm my troubled mind, cast out doubt, and give me full confidence through certainty. See to it! As your gospel pledges will put certainty into the minds of all those who rely on their promises, so now make me certain! Amen!

Lay hold on eternal life! (1st Timothy 6:12.)

Lord, your mercy will not leave me -

*Truth does evermore abide -
Then in you I will confide.
Since your Word cannot deceive me,
My salvation is to me
Well assured eternally.*

The Lutheran Hymnal 384:4, altered.

The Exercising of your Faith.

Does the Bible speak of the exercising of your faith? Yes, it does. The same Greek word which God's Word uses in its passage "bodily exercise profits little" (1st Timothy 4:8), from which term we derive our English word "gymnasium," Scripture uses to comfort you that the cross which God will lay on you for the purpose of exercising your faith will bring forth "the peaceable fruit of righteousness" (Hebrews 12:11).

In many other passages which do not employ this Greek word, however, synonyms of exercising are used which speak of accomplishing the same thing, such as "to strengthen," "to comfort," "to assure," "to make confident," "to make sure," and "to edify," among others.

How would you go about exercising a thing such as your saving faith? Think of how you would exercise your arm's muscles! To move your arm, you would use your muscles. To exercise your muscles, you simply would move them more often. So it is with saving faith.

To have saving faith is to have faith in God's saving gospel promises. To exercise your saving faith, you would put your faith in these saving gospel promises more often. That is to say, you would rely on God's pledges more often. Stated another way, you would trust them more. Then you would be more confident of them, more certain of them, and more assured of them. The basic way to exercise your saving faith is simply

to believe more; to meditate on the gospel passages more, so as to allow them to convince you more.

Yet there are other ways to exercise your saving faith; ways in which you would be doing something in connection with your faith; ways which will prompt you to grasp the gospel even more. You could also exercise your saving faith by -

Praying;
Professing your faith;
Serving your neighbor; and through
The cross which God would lay on you.

How would you exercise your faith by praying? When you would speak to God in any of your prayers, you will be keeping in mind the promises which he has pledged to you. You would pray to him on that basis. Thus by praying, you would put into practice the pledges which God has given you to believe; pledges which are intended for your trust to receive his assurance, comfort, and so forth, as you wait for him to fulfill these pledges as he has promised. For example, if you would pray to God for help, you will do so while believing the pledge that "our help is in the name of the Lord" (Psalm 124:8). If you would request forgiveness, you will do it all the while being assured that "there is forgiveness with you" (Psalm 130:4). As a result, prayer will exercise your faith, not by virtue of the fact that in prayer you would be speaking to God, but for the reason that you would be keeping both your eyes on his promises, and would be relying on them to do what they said they would.

This is what faith normally does. Yet if you would do this while you prayed, then you will be exercising your faith: increasing your faith.

Professing your faith is another way of increasing your faith by way of exercising it. An example of professing your faith is if you would confess the *Apostles' Creed*, in which you would recount the gospel acts of the Father and the Holy Spirit, and the redeeming acts of the Son, all of which has been done graciously for you, the sinner. You would exercise your faith by doing this, because you will be bringing the various gospel promises to mind, parading their gospel facts before your view one by one,

consciously recalling what each one means to you, the poor, miserable sinner, who is in need of saving. It is for these reasons that the apostle Paul declares, "If you would confess with your mouth.... You will be saved.... With the mouth confession is made to salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). All the while that you are confessing what you believe, your faith is nodding its head at each gospel pledge one by one. This is exercising.

Singing a Christian hymn also would be making a profession of your faith for the same reason just mentioned, except that you will be using your musical voice. Moreover, as with prayer, so the profession of faith could be done publicly or privately.

To be sure, there is a confession of faith that is done not just with your speaking voice or with your singing voice, but with your actions. That is to say, you could also exercise your faith in the gospel by doing humble service for your neighbor. Your Lord and Master calls such work "foot washing" (John 13:13-17) because it appears so lowly, humiliating, and degrading. However, you would become spiritually dead if you were not to exercise your faith by practicing what you believe of God's great love for you.

In addition to this, the cross (Matthew 16:24) which God lays upon you is designed to get you to exercise your faith. The "cross" is the Lord's own description of the public humbling which he will send you, which would include suffering, loss, hardship, and reverses. Only God will lay this cross on you. He will do it only in those areas where he sees that you need help through exercise. Just the same, be assured by his unbreakable guaranty ("all things work together for good to those who love God," Romans 8:28) that your cross is tailored-made for your faith's good.

Look at these four ways of exercising your faith! Use them for the purpose of strengthening your faith! "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might!" (Ephesians 6:10.)

*By grace to timid hearts that tremble,
In tribulation's furnace tried -*

*By grace, despite all fear and trouble,
The Father's heart is open wide,
Where could I help and strength secure
If grace were not my anchor sure?*

The Lutheran Hymnal 373:6.

Prayers for Times of Suffering.

1.

Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you" (Psalm 50:15).

Dear Father in heaven:

Listen to my prayer! I am very sick. The pain hurts me terribly. It will neither stop nor go away. How long must I suffer? Nothing seems to go well when I am sick. Where are you, my God and my Helper?

To be sure, because of my sins I deserve to be punished. Yet I am a believer. I believe the promises which you have given me: that you have gotten me salvation, and that you will bring me to heaven. Therefore, because you have pledged to listen to and to answer every true prayer spoken by your believers in the name of Christ, listen to and answer my prayer also! Do so! Do so now! Hear my prayer! Come to me! Pass your hand over me, and make me well again! You can do it. You have promised that you can do it. Amen!

I will call upon God, and the Lord shall save me (Psalm 55:16).

My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth (Psalm 121:2).

2.

All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called ones according to his purpose (Romans 8:28).

Dear heavenly Helper:

My pain is too great. My suffering is too much to bear. I have looked around for help. Yet no relief has come. However, you have assured me by your persistent pledges that it is you who actually has sent me this sickness. It is you who has planned my pain; that as my Father this suffering of mine is actually a disguised form of your love; that the only reason why you have put this love into the form of suffering is to get me to rely not on outward appearances, but solely on your promises. Help me to do so!

In my pain help me to understand your glorious guaranties that my suffering is not due to your anger, but to your love! Assure me that my sickness is for my faith's good; that I should not look to worldly comfort for help, but solely to every promise which proceeds out of your mouth! Make the suffering which you have sent accomplish the good which you intend, namely, to cleanse me from the love of this world, and to make me pure; to get me to have a truer repentance and a stronger saving faith; to get me to exercise my trust in your pledges more; to teach me patience; to awaken empathy in me for my neighbor in need; and to show me my mettle! Remind me that all things, including my suffering, work together for my good! Finally, encourage me not to give up hope, but to endure my suffering patiently by holding before mine eyes your wonderful pledge to place on my head the crown of eternal life after I have endured my suffering here below!

Thus I ask, not for health, but for a deeper trust in you. Use what you will to bring me closer to you! Amen!

Blessed is the man who endures testing; for when he has been proved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love him! (James 1:12.)

Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer.... Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life! (Revelation 2:10.)

Your Use of the Lord's Table.

Why has the Lord presented you with the sacrament of his table (1st Corinthians 10:21)? In this sacrament his purpose is to assure you of his forgiveness of all your sins.

See this from the words which he used the night on which he established this sacrament! On Maundy Thursday evening, after saying, "This is my blood," Christ, your Lord, instructed his disciples as to what his blood would do. He stated that it is the blood "which is poured out for you for the remission of sins." In other words, his blood that is poured out would get the disciples remission of sins. "To pour out one's blood," means, "to die." Simply stated, then, Christ wanted all communicants to remember that because of his death God has gotten them remission of sins, that is, forgiveness of sins.

This is his purpose in the sacrament.

His purpose is also revealed in the words, "This is my body which is given for you." Because his body was given over to that hellish, eternal death on the cross, Christ would remind again all communicants by these words that they now have assured pardon for their iniquities.

When Christ reminds all communicants of this gospel news, he does it for the purpose of assuring them. He wants to assure them that God has been gracious to them, and has removed their transgressions from them as high as heaven is above this earth (Psalm 103:11).

This is the purpose of his sacrament.

The purpose of the Lord's Table is also repeated in God's statement, "This cup is the new testament in my blood." According to the Bible's own definition, the "new testament" means that the Lord "will forgive their iniquity," and will remember their sin no more (Jeremiah 31:31, 34). The "new testament," then, means "the forgiveness of sins." Therefore, your loving Lord wants you to take this sacrament so that he could give to you your forgiveness of sins. Indeed, each time that you would receive this

forgiveness of sins from God, you will be reminded of it and reassured of it.

Why will your Lord need to remind and to reassure you of your forgiveness if you would already have it?

The Lord knows that now your greatest need is to fortify your faith. Since you would be weakened by sin, torn by temptation, and assaulted by a thousand other spiritual enemies everyday, you will need a stronger hold on his gospel pledge in order to keep your faith. To accomplish this you will need to be reminded of your forgiveness. When this would take place, the gospel pledge will strengthen you so that you would become more assured of it, and would lay hold of it more tightly. As a result, you will remain in the Christian faith and will not fall away; you will stay under God's salvation protection instead of leaving it, and you will keep on the road to heaven.

Who else would have noticed this high need of your faith, and addressed it with a solution? How wise, then, it is for God to remind and to reassure you of your forgiveness in this sacrament! What a delight it will be for you to be assured personally by his promise every time you would commune that your sins have been removed and erased!

Yet wait! There is more. Being the supremely generous God that he is, your Savior gives you even more assurance in his sacrament. Unique to the Lord's Table is this added feature that Christ guarantees to you the forgiveness of your sins by giving you his own body and blood, the very things that got you your forgiveness. Just think of that!

What an assurance, then, this is! See how certain Christ is of your salvation! Should you not be certain, also? Be certain! Receive God's own body and blood in the sacrament!

*Draw near and take the body of the Lord,
And drink the holy blood for you outpoured.
Offered was he for greatest and for least,*

Himself the victim and himself the priest.

*Come forward, then, with faithful hearts sincere,
And take the pledges of salvation here.
Before your altar, Lord, your servants bow;
In this your feast of love be with us now.*

Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal 309:1 & 3.

A Sermon For Confirmation Day

Sermon text: "Make your calling and election sure!" (2nd Peter 5:4.)

On the occasion of this confirmation we could ask: "Does the Bible use the word "to confirm"? The answer is: "Yes, it does." While the Bible does not refer to the ceremony which we will be conducting, the Scriptures do use the term in the sense that we use our English word "to confirm." In fact, one of the Greek words which the Bible uses for this is found in our text. Thus our text in 2nd Peter could read: "Confirm your calling and election!"

This Greek word "to confirm" is a legal term. It means an act by which something was legally guaranteed; by which it was reinforced, shored up, fortified, or established (Hebrews 6:16). Thus the Lord wants your calling and election to be reinforced, shored up, and made firm.

What is your calling and election? First of all, your election, as Holy Writ teaches it, is the decision made by God already before creation to see to it that you would be born, come to possess God's salvation, and, finally, end up in heaven with him. Your calling is your Christian calling into which the Lord called you at your baptism, namely, at which time he converted you, and brought you into possession of his salvation for your soul.

"To make one's calling and election sure," simply means this: "Keep believing in the gospel pledge!" "He who believes and is baptized will be saved. He who does not believe will be damned" (Mark 16:16). Belief in the gospel will get you to heaven. Unbelief would keep you out.

Why is it necessary for the Holy Spirit to urge you in the text to make more sure and more firm your current state of saving faith? It is for this reason. Since you still have a sinful nature in this life, you will find yourself falling into all sorts of sins. These sins, in turn, will weaken the hold which your faith has on God's salvation promise. If your faith were to become so weak that it would die, you would no longer hold onto God's salvation pledge. You would have lost possession of it. Then you would find yourself in a state of unbelief. Then you would not make it to heaven.

For the purpose of impressing upon you the urgency of this matter, and thus the need for your vigilance, Scripture testifies that believers not only could have weaknesses (Hebrews 11:34), but could also "become weary and discouraged" in their souls (Hebrews 12:3). Indeed, many are spiritually "weak and sickly" (1st Corinthians 11:30). Our Lord warns that "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41), and prays that Peter's faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). Paul notes that the faith of some have been overthrown (2nd Timothy 2:18), while he has "kept the faith" (2nd Timothy 4:7), and urges that other believers should, literally, "be healthy in the faith" (Titus 1:13).

By these warnings, urgings, and appeals, including the one in our text, the Spirit would have you make more firm your hold on God's salvation. To do this you should believe his promise more. By acquiring this greater and stronger belief, you will have a more firm hold on God's salvation.

This is what the text urges you to do, namely, to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus!” (2nd Timothy 2:1.)

How would you acquire a stronger belief in the gospel pledge? You will acquire it by getting the power or strength to believe his promise more.

Where would you get the power or strength to believe the gospel more? The Bible replies, “Seek the Lord and his strength!” (1st Chronicles 16:11.)

Where is the Lord to be looked for with his strength? Again, Scripture answers, “In the gospel.” “The gospel of Christ... is the power of God for salvation” (Romans 1:16). “The message of the cross... is the power of God to us who are being saved” (1st Corinthians 1:18). The gospel passages, then, are the places where the Lord will work his power on your faith to give it a stronger hold on your salvation. So go to them! Become stronger! It is the will of your Lord. Meditate on the gospel pledges daily! Draw up a list of them, if necessary, for your viewing! In doing so, you will “confirm your calling and election,” that is, you will reinforce, shore up, and make firm your faith so that you may remain on your way to heaven.

The Lord knows that it is important for you to do this. This is why he fills his Holy Scriptures with earnest warnings, urgent appeals, and insistent exhortations. He wants to impress upon you the urgency of becoming firm in your faith. In fact, God, who is the inventor of thought, and of our language which is marshaled by thought, thoroughly exhausts our vocabulary in his efforts to urge you to be firm. Look at the Hebrew of the Old Testament, and the Greek of the New Testament! See how God enlists nouns, verbs, and adjectives in order to cover this whole matter of firmness most thoroughly, for the purpose of removing all doubt, and for assuring you completely! For instance, the Lord speaks of might (Ephesians 6:10), of strength (Psalm 140:7), of power (2nd Corinthians 12:9), and of force (Habakkuk 3:19); of being a rock (Psalm 73:26), firm (2nd Peter 1:10), established (1st Peter 5:9), steady (1st Corinthians 7:37), steadfast (1st Peter 5:9), unmovable (1st Corinthians 15:58), faithful (Psalm 78:8), sound (Titus 2:2), healthy (Hebrews 12:13), courageous (Psalm 138:3), and robust (1st John 2:14), prompting you to stand (Colossians 4:12).

How urgently God must want you to become firm in your faith! Do so!

Pray to him to enrich you with all might so that your faith may become as firm as a rock, so that no one could shake you from his gospel pledge!

*A Prayer to prepare Yourself
For the Lord's Table.*

The cup of blessing which we bless: Is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break: Is it not the communion of the body of Christ? (1st Corinthians 10:16.)

Take! Eat! This is my body (Matthew 26:26).

Drink from it all of you! This is my blood of the new covenant (Matthew 26:27-28).

The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel... I will forgive their iniquity (Jeremiah 31:31, 34).

This is my covenant with them: when I take away their sins (Romans 11:27).

Dear Lord Jesus: As I prepare to come to your sacrament, help me to be humble, repentant, filled with awe, and eager to receive your sacrament! Then lead me to recall what I will be doing there, and what I will be receiving! In addition, through your communion passages in the Bible, remind me also of the holy purpose of this sacrament, of the wonderful

pledges which it contains for me, and of the great forgiveness-bearing benefits which it will hand over to me so that I may look forward to them eagerly with joy!

First of all, you have urged me to eat the bread and to drink the wine in the sacrament so that I may receive your body and blood. You have pointed out to me that your body and blood are what you used on the cross to suffer in hell in order that I could be released from that punishment, and, thereby, be forgiven. Thus when you give me your holy body and blood, these are a pledge from you to me of that accomplishment. By handing over to me these highest and holiest things you would assure me of that forgiveness which your body and blood gained for me on the cross. How helpful and kind of you to do this!

Then help me to recall that the holy purpose of the Lord's Table is to do this very thing, namely, it is to assure me personally that my sins have been taken away! To accomplish this, point me to your gospel promises in those biblical passages which speak of communion! Show me that when you personally pledge, saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20), the purpose of my receiving this cup of wine together with your blood is to receive that forgiveness which your blood has gained when it was poured out in suffering on your cross! Teach me that since a promise of my forgiveness is the same thing as an assurance of my forgiveness, the Lord's Table will thus benefit me by assuring me personally that your blood was poured out even for me! Impress upon my mind this assurance in order to strengthen my faith!

Just think of it! How blessed am I by this sacrament! How good you are! Encourage me to look forward to this sacrament with joy! Amen!

Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup! (1st Corinthians 11:28.)

Hunger and thirst after righteousness! (Matthew 5:6.)

