



The Reporter

June 2017

The Reporter

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“A Real Gem”

During my personal Bible reading I recently came across a real gem. It is not that the rest of the Bible is not as precious, but this particular passage definitely caught my attention. Maybe it was because a specific situation was on my mind, or just life in general. The words did offer a much-needed reminder, as well as a simple course correction.

The words are from the fifth chapter of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians. Here Paul writes: ¹⁶Be joyful always; ¹⁷pray continually; ¹⁸give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. ¹⁹Do not put out the Spirit's fire; ²⁰do not treat prophecies with contempt. ²¹Test everything. Hold on to the good. ²²Avoid every kind of evil. ²³May God himself, the God of peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁴The one who calls

you is faithful and he will do it.

1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

As I previously said, this is a gem. This was Paul's parting exhortation and benediction to a struggling congregation. The Christians in Thessalonica had joyfully received the Gospel proclaimed by Paul. They committed themselves to faithfully live according it. Unfortunately, it was a daily struggle. The influence of their culture was strong. It beckoned to return and enjoy all that life could offer. The other challenge to their faith was a misunderstanding of the Lord's return on the Last Day. They believed it would be at any moment. The obvious result was confusion and a loss of direction. There was also anxiety and stress because they didn't want to be caught unprepared on the "great and dreadful day of the Lord."

It was into this context the Holy Spirit directed Paul to write these precious words. Just take the beginning of this section, "be joyful always." One

by Pastor Proeber

could argue this is impossible. Given the times in which we live and the circumstances which seek to overwhelm us, it is hard to be joyful always. Certainly there are times when we have experienced joy, these have come and gone quickly, and often fade because of disappointment, distress and disaster.

Paul is not harping on us—"you better be joyful or else." He is pointing us to the true and lasting joy which can never be diminished or taken away. That joy is found in Jesus and in the blessing he secured. There is joy in the forgiveness of sin. There is joy in his never-failing presence. There is the joy in his promise that we will be with him forever in heaven. There is no greater joy than this, because it is based on the completed work of our Savior.

A second reminder is to "pray continually." We have learned about the privilege and power of prayer. Still, we don't pray enough. Many prayers will flow from our

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lips when we endure incredible problems. What about daily prayers for a stronger faith, a clearer understanding of the Scriptures, a greater zeal to put the will of the Lord first in our life? Probably not so much. We can also add our prayers of thanksgiving and praise. There are times when we are like the nine lepers who were healed, but didn't return to give thanks to the Lord. Prayer as the hymnist writes, "is the Christian's vital breath." He accurately captures Paul's exhortation. Along with our prayers, Paul further encourages to give thanks in all circumstances. Stop and think about it for a moment. We do give thanks, but how often have we given thanks for a diagnosis of an untreatable illness, broken bones, a languishing confinement to bed, the failings of body and mind which increase with aging? Probably not very often. Yet, when we maintain a sincere gratefulness in our lives, we can thank the Lord for even these!

The next set of exhortations make us consider our attitude and activity in regard to the Word and the blessings which accompany our study of it. We would never think about intentionally putting out the Spirit's fire, but little by little we just might. When we neglect the study of the Word, when we become indifferent to the reception of the Lord's Supper, when we develop a passive attitude toward worship, we are slowly, but surely extinguishing the Spirit's fire. If we continue down this path, we see the flames of the Spirit replaced by glowing embers. Eventually, even these are soon smothered by indifference and neglect. You and I can never afford to lose the gift of the Spirit. With his departure we lose everything—our faith, our peace, our forgiveness, our confidence. Heaven itself is lost. What makes this sin even more heinous is that we don't even see it coming right away, and we believe we are just fine the way we are.

Our only help to keep the Spirit's fire burning is to treat the prophecies (God's Word) as the priceless possessions they are. Here the old proverb is quite appropriate—"if you don't use it, you lose it." The loss of God's Word can not be overstated. It is a tragedy beyond comprehension. This is why we hold it in trembling hands. We don't want to lose our grip on a single truth of God's pure Word.

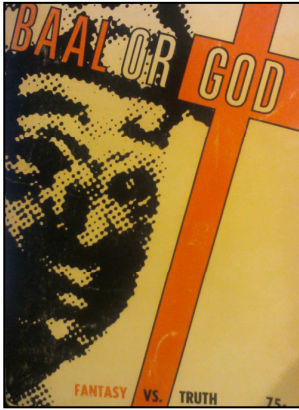
The final exhortations can all be considered as ways to increase our hold on the Truth. Every day we need to thoroughly examine it as the Bereans did. Every day we need to pursue the good and perfect gifts which come from God the Father. Every day we need to commit ourselves to avoid evil. When this is our prime focus in life, we will be able to identify numerous deadly temptations and resist them. If Paul didn't give us enough to convince us, he also attaches the blessing of God's rich and underserved love.

You and I know how hard it is to live a completely sanctified life. The devil decries this kind of life as one of sacrifice and hardship. The world critically condemns it because it robs a person of decadent pleasures and self-satisfying indulgence. Our flesh is just weak and confused. This is why we need the Lord, the God of peace, to sanctify us through and through. He protects us from every enemy which seeks to get a toe in the door. We need the Lord to keep us blameless until the coming of our Savior Jesus Christ.

By the way, did you notice what we want God to keep blameless? It is our whole spirit, soul and body. We want him to be the sole ruler, guardian, and guide. And, God will do all we hope he will do, and even more than we could ever imagine. This leaves us in speechless awe and complete confidence. God is faithful. He will never let us be tempted beyond what we can bear. He will also provide a way out. This is his promise and his guarantee—signed, sealed and delivered by our Savior's shed blood.

As I previously said, this particular passage is one of those true gems from the Bible. What makes this section of Scripture even more precious is that you and I can restudy it, pray for wisdom and understanding, then find additional insights and lessons to the ones already uncovered.

Because we live in unsettling and turbulent times, we desperately need to hear these verses often, and rely on them as a faithful friend and companion. We want their encouragement. We long for their advice. We yearn for the peace and joy they give—the real gem of God's faithful and undeserved love.



Book Review: Baal or God

By Carl Schueler

Baal or God: Fantasy vs. Truth

Herman J. Otten

1965, Leader Publishing Company, New Haven MO
307 pp. plus bibliography

I found this aging paperback among several out-of-print books in Our Redeemer's "fellowship hall library." Otten, the author, was the pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, New Haven, Missouri, from 1958 to 2013, when the current pastor, Rev. Jacob W. Ehrhard was installed. Since 1962, Otten has edited a semi-weekly newspaper called **Christian News**. He has also authored several books besides this one, and co-edited the *An American Translation of the Bible* with Dr. William Beck.

Baal or God provides convincing evidence of a disturbing liberal trend found within mainstream "Christian" churches. Most striking to me is how far removed from what the Bible teaches that many Lutheran denominations were by 1965. Before I read this book, I thought that only since the mid-80's have mainstream denominations (e.g., ELCA) denied the Trinity, Christ's divinity, resurrection, the virgin birth, the Genesis account of creation, and other Biblical doctrines. The book is well-written and organized: 307 pages in 16 chapters, each in several short sections. Many footnotes contain extensive backup material for further study. There is an extensive list of general references in a bibliography. Finally, a subject and author index is provided.

Theme: Crisis from Within the Church

The first sentence of the first chapter, entitled *Truth and Doctrine*, establishes the theme: "The Christian Church today faces the greatest crisis it has ever confronted." Otten notes that the Christian Church devolved from mid-19th century Biblical preaching to anti-Biblical (i.e., "Baal") idolatry by the mid-20th century. Otten suggests that regression from Biblical truth was furthered by atheistic Communism and anti-Biblical Darwinism starting in the mid-19th century when Karl Marx published the "Communist Manifesto" and Charles Darwin introduced the theory of evolution in *Origin of the Species*.

Otten says that until the early 20th century, the church defended doctrinal attacks from outside (i.e., from other religions). By 1965, he notes the church was being attacked from "within." Otten's warning may have been "shocking" to a mid-60's reader. Today one might not be "shocked" as much as "dismayed," because we know the situation is bad, but may not have known it was "underway" so long ago.

Chapters 2-11 review doctrines "rejected" by the "church." From the Holy Trinity to the Divinity of Christ, justification by grace, Christ's virgin birth and resurrection, to immortality of the soul and creation, Otten reviews major elements of historical Christianity that by 1965 were rejected by mainline "Christian" churches.

The last few chapters, concluding with "Communism," review events and political movements promoting an "earthly kingdom" based on an atheistic world-view.

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(Baal or God, from page 3)

Otten provides good background and evidence for arguments that these efforts found success partly based on cooperation from “within” the church.

Crisis from “Within:” A New Phenomenon?

Otten contends (starting with the first sentence of the book quoted above) that the “crisis from within” was a historical first in 1965. Is that true? Consider that Paul and Peter lamented false teachers “within” who led parishioners away from the truth (1 Timothy 1:3; 2 Peter 2:1). Jesus’ parable of weeds among the wheat (Matthew 13:24-30) suggests “hypocrites” in the Church will exist until the Last Day. Luther’s Reformation corrected many errors “within the Church.” So it seems that Otten’s “greatest crisis the Church has ever confronted” has perhaps actually plagued Christians since Eden. Quite possibly, the real problem is found in the sinful flesh and its itching ears!

Conclusions: the Crisis from Within!

So, while I lament idolatry in the “Christian” church in 1965, and perhaps even more today, Christ is still the head of the true Church. Those who are His (believers) comprise the Church, not Synods or congregations. Those who “pretend” to be Christian but are enemies of Christ do represent a “crisis,” but not a new crisis. Enemies of Christ who claim to be Christian are not “in” Christ’s Church, because the Lord knows those who are his. Nonetheless, believers need to be on their guard, because as St. Paul warns, “Satan could disguise himself as an angel of light in order to deceive the elect.” We also know our Savior’s own exhortation, “mark those who cause divisions among you, and avoid them.”

One might suggest that my argument against Otten’s claim of a historically significant “new” crisis in the Church is just a question of the definition of terms. I respond that Otten’s book seems to be an attempt to suggest a revolutionary discovery by the author. It is at most a new manifestation of an ancient problem to which St. Paul and Luther responded, and to which Jesus alluded in the parable of weeds among wheat. Had Otten presented the “crisis” as such, with recommendations to address it, I think his book could have better served the Church.

† A Word of Comfort

While the true Holy Christian Church will always endure turmoil, there is help provided in the Scriptures. Psalm 46, which also served as the inspiration for Luther’s hymn—“A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” is one good example. We also have a precious reminder in the hymn: “The Church’s One Foundation.”

The Church shall never perish, her dear Lord, to defend
To guide, sustain, and cherish, is with her to the end.
Though there be those that hate her and strive to see her fail,
Against both foe and traitor she ever shall prevail.

Though with a scornful wonder the world sees her oppressed,
By schisms rent asunder, by heresies distressed,
Yet saints their watch are keeping; their cry goes us, “How long?”
And soon the night of weeping shall be the morn of song.

Mid toil and tribulation and tumult of her war
She waits the consummation of peace forever
Till with the vision glorious her longing eyes are blest,
And the great Church victorious shall be the Church at rest.

Outreach Opportunities

The Outreach Committee will meet Tuesday, June 20th at 7:00 pm to continue planning for future opportunities. Events and activities include worship services, special gatherings, dinners, movies, and educational offerings. All are intended to give us an opportunity to invite friends, family members, and neighbors to come to know us, and finally to come to know our Savior, Jesus Christ.

A more complete list for the year is provided below. Specific details will be coming in subsequent newsletters, as well as in the Sunday worship folder. Added suggestions are always graciously accepted.

Prayerfully consider how you can promote these activities with the people you know, encourage those who organize them, and most important, participate in them.



2017 Events include:

- July 4th offers a patriotic movie, a tri-tip barbeque, fireworks and desserts. The fourth is not that far away, start planning today.
- July 28th we will have our annual Ice Cream Social and Game Night. How can you go wrong with ice cream and a wide variety of toppings!
- August 20th is the Beach, Bike & Barbeque at Goleta Beach. Area #3 is reserved, so start planning to be there for an enjoyable afternoon.
- September 24th is the tentative date for the Festival of Friendship and church barbeque. The elders are considering changing the date and time to generate added interest.
- October 22nd we will commemorate the Reformation with a pot-luck dinner and movie. We will complete part three of the series: Luther—The Man, The Moment, and the Ministry.
- Additional plans are in the works regarding the Luther movie released by our Synod, and how we can use it to communicate the truths of the Reformation.
- November 19th is the pre-Thanksgiving pot-luck and fellowship evening.
- November 23rd is the Thanksgiving Day worship service.
- December 17th is scheduled for church decorating, the chili dinner and caroling.
- December 24th is Christmas Eve worship and fellowship beginning at 7:00 pm.
- December 25th is Christmas Day worship and fellowship beginning at 9:30 am.



June Birthdays

We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

- 9th - Sue P.
- 12th - Lori K.
- 18th - Julie S.
- 20th - Roger J.
- 21st - Dave V.
- 24th - Christina F.
- 30th - Hilary S.

Notes & News



Music Update

After several months of dedicated service and weekly practice, both the Handbell and Vocal Choir will take a break until September. We thank the Lord for the service of God's people throughout the "festival portion" portion of the Church Year. The music they provided added a special beauty to our worship.

As always, there is an open invitation for people to ring and sing. Neither requires specific skills, just a willingness to serve the Lord and a commitment to make practices. The Handbell choir practices on Monday evenings, and the mixed voice choir practices on Thursday evenings.

If you are interested in either of the choirs for the Fall, please speak with Debbie A. regarding the bell choir, or Pastor Proeber for the mixed voice choir.

Bible Class

The Sunday morning Bible Class will continue to meet through the summer following the worship service. We just completed a series on the "Post-Resurrection Appearances of Jesus." It was an interesting and insightful study which provided the evidence needed to believe Jesus is truly risen from the grave. It also offered the encouragement we need as his disciples to serve with boldness and confidence. The next topic is still is the works, but will be ready by June 11th. Suggestions for future classes are always welcome. Bible Class is at 11:00 am on Sunday mornings, following worship and refreshments.

The Wednesday evening class will come to a close on June 7th. Tentatively there will be no classes held for the summer, however, that schedule could change. The mid-week class will resume in September with a new topic for discussion.

Sunday School



Christian Education for our children will come to a close in June. In July and August there will be no classes because of vacation schedules. Remember, Sunday School is scheduled on the first and third Sundays of the month. Classes meet during the hymn of the day and the sermon. Please speak to one of the teachers for more information: Barbara Favuzzi, Sonja Todd, or Sue Proeber.

Through the course of the summer, the Board of Education will review the past year and consider suggestions and potential changes to the program. If you have any questions regarding Sunday School, please speak with either John Favuzzi, Carl Schueler, or Justin Schroeder.

In our Prayers

Our Lord invites us to "pray continually." Because of the power and blessing our Lord attaches to this invitation, we want to keep the following people in our prayers.

- We pray for Bev Waters who is at Vista del Monte receiving physical therapy for her surgically repaired hip; we also want to keep Bill and his extended family (Schroeder's) in our prayers for strength and encouragement;
- We pray for John Favuzzi's family—his mother and especially his sister who is being treated for a severe form of leukemia;
- We pray for Marrison Schueler (Josh) and Emmalee Schroeder (Justin) as they prepare to give birth this month.



Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck-gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Email to Carl Schueler (cfs_home@hotmail.com)
or Pastor Proeber (pastor@orlcsb.net)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

We thank Carl Schueler for his Book Review in this month's Reporter. There is a standing invitation to provide material for the Reporter. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have made every issue more interesting. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber or Carl Schueler for advice. Thanks!

Meetings for June

Church Council	Tuesday June 6 th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday June 6 th at 8:00 pm
Outreach Committee	Tuesday June 20 th at 7:00 pm
Board of Education	Tuesday June 27 th at 7:00 pm

Voters Meeting

Sunday July 9th after the worship service

*If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board—Elders, Education or Trustees.
He will be happy to help.*



Progressive Dinner

RSVP
répondez, s'il vous plaît

Come and join us for an enjoyable evening to share fellowship over a three-course meal at three homes of our church family.

On Saturday, June 17th, beginning at 5:00 pm, we will meet for hors d'oeuvres at the home of Carolyn Hanna. Following this delicious appetizer, we will carpool to the home of Carl and Pam Schueler for the main course. Finally, we will complete the evening with desserts at the home of Sonja and Al Todd.

Please make sure you RSVP as our main course will be served "family style" and our hosts need to know how many place-settings to prepare!

We look forward to your company—as well as any guests you may invite—for a pleasant evening of conversation and good food!

If you have any questions regarding how and where you can help, please contact the appropriate host / hostess, or check the sign-up sheet on the tract table outside the front doors of the church.

Devotional Corner

Go!

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matthew 28:18-20

What is the best way to grow the church? There are many different thoughts, opinions, and methods. The people who promote their approach believe theirs is the best. Unfortunately, many may not produce the promised results.

As a member of Jesus' Church on earth, and as a soul who has been purchased by the Savior, I need to understand the command the Lord gives. It is clear. It is succinct. It also leaves the results in his hands. Jesus' command is "go!" He also teaches how and why I should go.

I go with his authority. I am not an independent contractor. I serve because he has commanded me. I also serve knowing he will use me to proclaim his powerful Word which changes peoples' hearts and lives.

I go to make disciples. My purpose is to point people to their Savior. I undertake a specific work with specific instructions. I teach what Jesus has commanded. I baptize in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

I go with Jesus' promise. Certainly I will face many challenges as I take the message of repentance and forgiveness into a rebellious world. Many will reject, even despise what I want to share. My Savior offers me reassurance with the promise of his never-failing presence. I know I am not on my own. I know he has me in his loving care.

Go! It sounds so simple, yet I can make it so complicated. This is why I look to Jesus for forgiveness, for strength, for confidence, and for direction. In my Savior, and with his blessing, I can go.

Prayer

O Jesus, Lord of the Church and Lord of my life, you have commanded me to go and share the message which changes lives. Remind me of the strength which is mine. Remind me of the good news I proclaim. Remind me of your never failing presence.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as "podcasts."