

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

OLD TESTAMENT – Proverbs 9:1-10

Wisdom has built her house; she has hewn her seven pillars. 2 She has slaughtered her beasts; she has mixed her wine; she has also set her table. 3 She has sent out her young women to call from the highest places in the town, 4 “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” To him who lacks sense she says, 5 “Come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Leave your simple ways, and live, and walk in the way of insight.” 7 Whoever corrects a scoffer gets himself abuse, and he who reproves a wicked man incurs injury. 8 Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you; reprove a wise man, and he will love you. 9 Give instruction to a wise man, and he will be still wiser; teach a righteous man, and he will increase in learning. 10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.

9:1–6 Wisdom, again personified as a woman, prepares a house and a feast for all who answer her invitation. (TLSB)

9:1 *wisdom – khok-moth'* *wisdom:*—wisdom, every wise [woman]. (QV)

Plural in Hbr, perhaps to amplify wisdom’s honor. (TLSB)

Here wisdom is personified as a woman. She is preparing her house for company. But that is not to say wisdom is a woman. At times we use feminine pronouns to personify what is not necessarily female. We might, for instance, point to a ship and say, “There she is!” (PBC)

has built her house. Both wisdom and folly have a house to which mankind is invited (see v. 14; 7:8; 8:34), but wisdom has built her house—for her there is no “sitting” (v. 14). Cf. the virtues of the wife of noble character (31:10–27). (CSB)

seven pillars. Indicating a large house. Perhaps “seven” refers to seven major aspects of wisdom. (CSB)

Israelite houses were built with pillars on the ground floor to support the upper room, where the family dwelt. As seven is often a sacred number, the house with seven pillars or foundations may refer to the whole earth. (Pillars or foundations are said to support the earth in Jb 38:6; Ps 104:5.) In Pr 8, Wisdom’s call is universal. Here, her house may be worldwide. Cf 14:1. (TLSB)

Seven is the biblical number symbolizing completeness. Perhaps the use of this number is a way of saying that her house is ready. (PBC)

9:2 *set her table.* Wisdom prepares for her feast as if by checklist. (TLSB)

The banquet prepared by wisdom contrasts with the “perfumed bed” made ready by the adulteress in 7:17. (CSB)

mixed her wine. With spices, to make it tastier (see SS 8:2). (CSB)

9:3 *her young women.* Wisdom’s servant girls remind one of the servants announcing the wedding feast in Jesus’ parable (Mt 22:2–4). (TLSB)

call from the highest places in the town. See the description of Folly in v. 14; see also 8:1–3. (CSB)

As in 8:2, the invitation goes out for all to hear. (TLSB)

She does not try to hide her invitation. (PBC)

Fools in Proverbs

God often teaches the way of wisdom by using contrast. As a skilled artist sets his or her subject matter against a contrasting background, so the Lord, through His inspired writers, sets the bright gem of wisdom against the dismal backdrop of foolishness.

When the Bible in general—and Proverbs in particular—speaks of foolishness, the first and most important point to remember is that it describes a moral and *spiritual* condition. We should not confuse foolishness with lack of academic prowess or a low IQ. Some people who are brilliant may, in God’s eyes, be fools. For example, Ps 14:1 and 53:1 state, “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’ ” In Proverbs, the fool is one who does not have a proper fear of the Lord. Consequently, such a person is likely to deny God’s Word.

The Hebrew language in which Proverbs was originally written makes a distinction among different kinds of foolishness or fools. Awareness of these differences will help you more fully appreciate the message of Proverbs.

The simpleHbr *pethi*, the person who is easily lured or deceived; gullible. Of the various types of fools, this one is the least hardened in his or her foolishness. These naive and inexperienced people drift along aimlessly, until they fall easy prey to temptation (14:15). Such gullibility, of course, is not an excuse for sinning. Gullible people are responsible for their actions and may even end up killing themselves (1:32). In Pr 7, Solomon observes the gullible people and notes one who is drifting along aimlessly, ripe for a prostitute’s picking. If they are to escape their ways “and live,” the gullible need wisdom (9:4–6). Indeed, wisdom invites them by calling out, “Whoever is gullible, turn in here!”

The foolHbr *kesil*; if the gullible person doesn’t learn, he or she may well move to the next level of foolishness and become a regular fool. This Hbr word is used 50 times in Proverbs and is the Book’s most common term for fool. In the end, “fools die for lack of sense” (10:21).

Stubborn foolHbr *’ewil*, occurs 20 times in Proverbs. What can be said about the “generic fool” can also be said about this fool. As the term “stubborn” implies, however, the individual at this level of foolishness is more hardened and persistent.

“Fools mock at the guilt offering, but the upright enjoy acceptance” (14:9). This category of fool is connected to the word for foolishness and stupidity, or folly. Sadly, it’s a trait often found in children: “Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline drives it far from him” (22:15). As the child becomes a grown-up, the trait is even more difficult to correct: “Crush a fool in a mortar with a pestle along with crushed grain, yet his folly will not depart from him” (27:22).

The godless fool Hbr *nabal*, appears only three times in Proverbs. This is the word used in the psalms quoted earlier in this article. Those people who say to themselves, “There is no God.” Their mind is closed; they have rejected the Lord. This word is used in Pr 30:21–23, which states that one of four things under which the earth trembles is “a fool when he is filled with food.” Once such a person’s physical needs are satisfied, who knows what havoc he or she will bring to others? We find the epitome of this boorish and domineering fool in the man named Nabal (1Sm 25). He was “harsh and badly behaved” (v 3), and one of his own servants said of him, “He is such a worthless man that one cannot speak to him” (v 17).

Scripture and the Fool

As we look closely at the fool in Proverbs and the rest of Scripture, we come face-to-face with sinful human beings and with the “natural man.” In other words, we see ourselves. The believer realizes, “There but for the grace of God go I.” Even the author and compiler of Proverbs, wise King Solomon, became such a fool that he fell into idolatry (1Ki 11:4–11). As long as we are in this world, we will struggle against giving in to our sinful, foolish tendencies.

The remedy for foolishness is for God’s Word to remain our daily companion (Pr 2:1). The foolishness of the world is overcome by the foolishness of Christ. As the apostle Paul says, “If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise” (1Co 3:18). It comes down to this: to know Christ and Him crucified is to know God’s wisdom (1Co 1:23–25). His forgiveness destroys our sinful foolishness. Through the Savior, we become truly wise and able to offer that wisdom to others as well. (TLSB)

9:4 The same invitation is given by Folly in v. 16. (CSB)

simple. The audience for Wisdom’s invitation is all who lack wisdom but have not yet rejected her. They may not be seeking Wisdom, but she seeks their attention. (TLSB)

lacks sense. To accept wisdom’s invitation, we must first admit that we need it, that we are among the “simple” and “those who lack judgment.” (PBC)

9:5 *wine I have mixed.* Wine was often mixed with spices. (TLSB)

As in v. 2, wisdom's gifts to mankind are described symbolically as a great banquet. (CSB)

One of life's more enjoyable experiences is getting together with friends and relatives for a dinner. The Bible reminds us that there is a more important feast than earthly, physical food: "[M]an does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3). Wisdom invites us to feast on God's Word – by going to church, attending Bible classes, reading and sharing the Word at home and with friends. In the Bible to "listen" often means to "do" what we have heard. James 1:22 says, "Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves, but do what it says." All this begins to take place in our lives when the Holy Spirit brings us to faith in Jesus. (PBC)

9:6 *Leave your simple ways.* See 1:22. (CSB)

and live. Wisdom promises life to all who share her feast, which gives life (8:35). The way of Wisdom leads to abundant life. (TLSB)

9:7–12 These verses bridge between Wisdom's banquet (vv 1–6) and Folly's banquet (vv 13–18). (TLSB)

9:7 *Whoever corrects a mocker gets himself abuse.* Foolish people are not open to correction and may respond to admonition with defensiveness and counterattack. (TLSB)

The mocker rejects God's wisdom. He belittles it and insults it. He calls it a crutch for the weak, or foolishness, or a waste of time. Jesus used a striking picture to illustrate this: "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces" (Matthew 7:6). In ancient Israel, the unclean street dogs were nothing but scavengers. Pigs were unclean animals. Some wicked people simply will not listen to God's Word. They despise it. Mock it, trample all over it. (PBC)

9:8 *he will hate you.* Don't even bother trying, says Solomon. Of course, we can't prejudge anyone to be a mocker. Let's not excuse ourselves from witnessing to others simply because some will reject it. Sad to say, most people do reject wisdom's invitation. Returning to Jesus' parable of the wedding feast, the Lord ended the parable on this note, "For many are invited, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:14) (PBC)

reprove a wise man and he will love you. Those who are wise are open to correction and reproof. They know the value of wisdom, even when it hurts. (TLSB)

He gladly receives the invitation. And he is open to the correction of God's Word. May we, by God's grace, never become proud and "above" rebuke! Rather, may we always be open to correction and instruction, especially in spiritual truths. (PBC)

9:9 *he will still be wiser.* Wisdom is not simply attained all at once. Eager for growth, wise people are teachable. The more they learn, the wiser they are. (TLSB)

Solomon places the "wise man" and the "righteous man" in parallel lines. The two are synonymous. Biblical wisdom is not mere head knowledge. It has to do with being righteous. And our righteousness comes through Jesus Christ. (PBC)

9:10–12 Wisdom's final words summarize the heart of the message in chs. 1–9. (CSB)

9:10 *The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.* Irenaeus of Lyons: “The sense of sin leads to repentance, and God bestows His compassion upon those who are penitent” (ANF 1:457). (TLSB)

Again we have the key refrain of Proverbs. The book keeps coming back to this because it is central. (PBC)

wisdom – *hokmah* – The most frequently used word for wisdom and refers to practical wisdom. Practical wisdom is the chief concept in Proverbs. (PBC)

knowledge of the Holy One. “Holy One” occurs elsewhere in Proverbs only in 30:3. (CSB)

Used for God in Pr only here and in 30:3. (TLSB)

insight – Is the word WISDOM – *binah* – The emphasis in this word is on understanding and the ability to distinguish. – This word is related to the concept of “between” and refers to the ability to make distinctions. Young King Solomon prayed for this type of wisdom early in his reign. (1 Kings 3:9) – Life constantly calls on us to distinguish between what is good and bad, or between what is a wise choice and what is an even better choice. How we make such choices does much to determine in the course of our life. When we face important decisions in life, how do we distinguish between the options? Do we merely act on impulse? Do we follow the advice of friends? Do we read books to gain insight? All these are important factors in life’s choices. But it is even more important that we consult God’s Word (including the scriptural advice of wise Christian friends, counselors and pastors) and that we ask God’s guidance in prayer. (PBC)

EPISTLE – Ephesians 5:6-21

6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. 12 For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. 13 But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, 14 for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says, “Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.” 15 Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, 16 making the best use of the time, because the days are evil. 17 Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. 18 And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, 19 addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with your heart, 20 giving thanks always and for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, 21 submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ.

5:6 empty words – Their Gentile contemporaries sought to convince the Christians – and such talk one still hears coming from the mouth of the children of this world – that they things mentioned in v.3 and 5 were adiaphora, innocent, harmless pleasures and enjoyments, permissible interests. Or even though they are faulty, one would not immediately go to hell just because he once gave to natural weakness. These are empty words, void of all truth. (Stoeckhardt)

Claims that such deeds will not be punished. (TLSB)

wrath of God...disobedience – While there are many sorts of deceiving, empty, or false words against which we need to stand and confess, “these things” of which Paul speaks are the sexual vices, filthiness, foolish talk, and crude joking (5:3–4) that are so common in the world around us. The “wrath of God” predicted is not only that of the Last Day of judgment but also God’s withdrawing his presence in the way of Rom 1:24, 26, and 28 (“God gave them up”). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

These things, adultery, un-chastity, covetousness, are a part of the Gentile’s daily life, are their daily bread, cause God’s wrath to come upon them. Paul calls the Gentiles the children of disobedience because they by their coarse infamies opposed the law in their hearts. They deceive themselves by excusing these things. Their own conscience bears witness against them. So it is a deserving, righteous wrath that will come upon them. And Christian, just because they are called Christians, will not escape future wrath if they take part in this abomination. (Stoeckhardt)

5:7 partners. Although Christians live in normal social relationships with others, as did the Lord Jesus (Lk 5:30–32; 15:1–2), they are not to participate in the sinful life-style of unbelievers. (CSB)

I.e., do not share in their sinful deed (v.11; 1 Cor. 10:20-21; 2 Cor. 6:14-18), which would contradict our fellowship in Christ. (TLSB)

Christians should not become companions of the unbelievers (Ps. 1:1), so that they sin with them, lest they be damned with them. In this world Christians live and do business with unchristians. They should, however, take heed lest they become implicated in their disorderly ways and shady business methods. (Stoeckhardt)

The best way not to be deceived or led astray is by not associating with those who would deceive. This is reminiscent of Rom 16:17. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Especially the young or weak in faith must be cautious of those who offer slick words and promises. Paul’s readers moved in a world that would scoff at such cautions concerning immorality and greed. They would hear of God’s abounding grace and wonder why they could not just sin and count on God’s forgiveness. Such mixed messages would confuse and eventually deceive them. Paul knew the power of words and the appeal of smooth philosophy, especially that which spoke of license. (LL)

5:8-14 In this passage from Ephesians Paul draws on the motif of light and darkness to urge his listeners to be a God has already made them in Christ: “children of light” (5:8). We are reminded of Christ’s own words in John 9, of John’s words in his first Epistle regarding be “in the light” as Christ is in the light (1 John 1:5-7), and Peter’s words in his first Epistle about being called “out of darkness into (God’s) wonderful light (1 Peter 2:9). Although light is not a predominant theme in Ephesians, Christ’s election of people into his church by his grace through faith certainly is. Starting with Ephesians 1:4 Paul speaks eloquently of the mysterious working of God through Christ in setting him over “all rule and authority” (1:21), calling people out of sin and slavery into a relationship with himself. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

5:8-9 “Darkness” and “Light” are treated as real powers at work. “Darkness” is, of course, the sinful, fallen nature, the world, and the devil. “Light” is the new life of faith begun in our Baptism in Christ and continued and strengthened by his abiding in us (Jn 6:56 from the Gospel). The “walk as children of

light” is the Christian life of sanctification, the walking by faith, the carrying of the cross, to be salt and light in the world (Mt 5:13–14). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

5:8 *darkness ... light.* This section emphasizes the contrast between light and darkness, showing that those who belong to him who is “light” (1Jn 1:5), i.e., pure and true, not only have their lives illumined by him but also are the means of introducing that light into the dark areas of human conduct (cf. Mt 5:14). (CSB)

Verses 3-7 warn Christians concerning six specific vices which were prevalent in the ancient world and still are much with us today. The Apostle warns his hearers that no Christian can make a habit of any of these vices and yet inherit eternal life. The unbelieving world believes that life owes them sinful pleasures. They often feel that sin and vice is their privilege. The Christian lives in a world in which the deceitfulness of sin is made to look so innocent. (Buls)

But Paul warns in verse 7: "Therefore do not be partakers with them." By "them" he means "the sons of disobedience" in verse 6.(Buls)

In Ephesians 2:1-3 Paul began by reminding his hearers what they were before they came to faith in Christ and then he proceeded, in verses 4-10, to tell them what God had done for them.(Buls)

Similarly in our text Paul reminds his hearers of what they once were and what they have become. Then he warns them not to fall back into their old ways. In fact, they have a responsibility to wake impenitent sinners up lest they lose their souls. They should walk as Children of Light. (Buls)

This verse explains why he said what he did in verses 6-7.(Buls)

Formula of Concord (Tappert 522.10): [After listing 1 Corinthians 2:2-4; 1 :21; Ephesians 4:17-18; Matthew 13:11-13; and Romans 3:11-12, states:] In this way Scripture calls the natural man simply 'darkness' in spiritual and divine things, Ephesians 5:8 and Acts 26:18. (Buls)

Note the contrast. Christians are no longer darkness. They are now light. And that is qualified by the phrase "in the Lord." Because of what Jesus did I am now light in the Lord. Look at the Third Article. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: Darkness and light in this connection do not mean misery and happiness, but here designate the contrast between sin, ungodliness, and holiness, purity. Through their conversion or regeneration Christians have been rescued from the ruination of sin, of the world, and have been transplanted into a new, holy, godly life and status. Look at 1 Thessalonians 5:5; Luke 16:8; John 12:36. (Buls)

Lenski: 'Darkness' and 'light' are really powers. They exist independently of us, and we are either darkness or light only as we are identified with the one or the other. (Buls)

The contrast in this verse is double: then-now and darkness-light. (Buls)

Paul seems to be speaking in this verse not of a situation in which Christians were before their call through the Gospel, but of their own interior condition. Christians were not in the darkness, but were darkness themselves. Now in Christ, the Christian has been made “light.” The Solid Declaration of the Formula

of Concord uses this verse along with others to show the depravity of humanity and its inability to transform itself from darkness into light on its own. “In this way Scripture calls the natural man simply

‘darkness’ in spiritual and divine things” (FC SG II 10). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

John 5:24 “I tell you the truth, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life.”

walk as children of light – “Walk” is a Pauline word for “live.” The “light” is the motivation. That is Gospel. But the Law gives direction. That is obligation. (Buls)

When Paul says, “(They) were once darkness,” he is taking it a step farther. Not only were they misled and under the influence of wicked paganism, they themselves were a bad influence. They were the darkness that misled others to practice and even enjoy gross immorality and wickedness. (PBC)

Understanding Paul’s metaphor about darkness makes the parallel metaphor regarding light all the more striking. The Ephesians were not only enlightened by knowing Christ; they themselves have become light. Not only were they influenced by his gospel, but they themselves are now the influence that builds up their brothers in the church and wins new converts. (PBC)

Remember Christ’s declaration to His disciples: “You are the salt of the earth... You are the light of the world.” (Matthew 5:13,14). He didn’t say, “You really should be the salt of the earth” or “strive to become the light of the world.” He said, “You are the light of the world.” Because God’s people are light, Paul can urge, live as children of light. (PBC)

5:9 *fruit of the light*. A mixed metaphor, but the meaning is clear. Light is productive (consider the effect of light on plant growth), and those who live in God’s light produce the fruit of moral and ethical character (cf. Gal 5:22–23), while those who live in darkness do not (see v. 11). (CSB)

A common NT image for good works and deeds that flow naturally from one planted in Christ (John 15:1-8; Col. 1:10). (TLSB)

RSV has: "The fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true." TEV: "For it is the light that brings a rich harvest of every kind of goodness, righteousness, and truth." AAT: "Light produces everything good and righteous and true." (Buls)

By the way, when a person walks in constant repentance (confessing his sins and trusting in Jesus' blood) his sins are constantly forgiven and God sees nothing but his good works. Look at 1 John 1:7 and Ephesians 2:10. The Christian is at one and the same time saint and sinner. But read Galatians 2:20.(Buls)

Here Paul describes the nature of true “light.” It consists of goodness, righteousness, and truth. Melancton in his Apology of the Augsburg Confession felt that these three characterized the very image of God, since God Himself “light” (1 John 1:5; Ap. II 20). Truth is specifically that which is “not concealed,” but which represents a real “state of affairs” (TDNT, 37). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

Philippians 4:8 “Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.”

Many commentators make this verse a parenthesis. Verse 9 explains what Paul meant when he said: "Walk as children of light." Perhaps our text has been influenced by Galatians 5:22. What does the Light or the Spirit produce? Fruit. It is the very opposite of the sin mentioned in verse 3-4. (Buls)

Whereas in Galatians 5:22 we have nine, here we have only three items. And, as in Galatians 5:22, these nouns overlap in meaning. All of them denote sanctification. (Buls)

good– Stoeckhardt: 'Goodness' all that is morally good and proper. 'Righteousness' is moral uprightness. 'Truth' is moral truth and purity. (Buls)

right – Lenski: 'Goodness' means all genuine moral excellence . . . The righteous walk in all righteousness. The approval of this Judge rests upon them. Paul's circle is closed by 'truth' which is verity, reality, namely spiritual and moral reality, as opposed to all lying perversion, sham, deception, pretense. (Buls)

true – Kretzmann: Goodness in all its forms, moral soundness and propriety, combined with active beneficence; righteousness-moral rectitude, which takes care that nothing and nobody receives any injury; truth-moral purity, sincerity and integrity as opposed to hypocrisy and falsehood. (Buls)

5:10 *discern what is pleasing to the Lord* – dokimazo means to approve after examination. In every case Christians are to examine carefully, exactly, what is pleasing to the Lord to whom they belong. It does not always appear at once what before God is good and right. A constant examination or investigation before the eyes of the Lord is necessary. Everything Christians come in contact with in life is to have the Christian standard of God's holy will be applied. The practical rule of the Christian life must be to please Christ. (PC)

It literally means to "test," by the standard of God's Word (Rom. 2:18; 12:2; Php. 1:9-10). (TL SB)

Stoeckhardt: In every case Christians are to examine carefully, exactly, what is pleasing to the Lord to whom they belong . . . It does not always appear at once what before God is good and right . . . A constant examination or investigation before the eyes of the Lord is necessary.(Buls)

Lenski 'Test' or 'find out' is used of testing metals, whether they are genuine, of coins, whether they are of the real metal and of full weight . . . Endless deception offers what is morally rotten as though it were perfectly sound. Test every thought, word, and act.(Buls)

Well said. Satan, the father of lies, has filled the world with that which is rotten, untrue, unreal. The Christian needs constantly to be on his guard. (Buls)

Kretzmann: To everything that they come in contact with in life, the Christians apply the standard of God's holy will. For often the difference between right and wrong is not immediately obvious. (Buls)

Christians should never rush in where angels fear to tread. "Try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord." The point is that it often takes effort and careful deliberation to make mature decisions as to proper courses of action. (Buls)

The opposite of deception (v 6) is the "discerning" or testing out what is pleasing to the Lord. The apostle John encouraged this when he wrote, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1 Jn 4:1). Such testing, of course, is in the light of God's revealed Word. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

To find out what is well-pleasing to the Lord is to examine what is acceptable and divinely approved. *Euarestos*, well-pleasing, is not the same word used in the baptismal and transfiguration accounts of the Gospels. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

This could give the impression that there is considerable unclarity as to what pleases the Lord, and it is our task to discover it. Actually, the Greek verb in this phrase might better be translated “approve” or “put your stamp of approval on.” The sense of the sentence would be: Live as children of the light and put your stamp of approval on what please God. What pleases God is the fruit that light produces, namely goodness, righteousness and truth. (PBC)

Matthew 3:17, “And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”

Romans 12:1-2 “Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. ²Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.”

Hebrews 13:16, “And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.”

1 John 4:1 “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.”

5:11 *take no part*. See v. 7. (CSB)

This verse contains a prohibition and a command. The negative forbids a continual and habitual act. Here it does not denote ceasing what they are already doing. It forbids constant association with fruitless works of darkness as a way of life. And note that the object of both prohibition and the command is "deeds" not "people." (Buls)

The verb "have nothing to do with" is used here and in Philippians 4:14 and Revelation 18:4. In no instance does it denote fellowship or association with people. Paul does not say that we should have no association at all with the unconverted. That is impossible. The world being what it is we must associate with all kinds of people. But, we should have nothing at all to do with the kinds of works here described. (Buls)

The *summetochoi* (“partnership” or “association”) of v 7 is interpreted as *sungkoinōneite* (“fellowship”) in v 11. This is similar to 2 Cor 6:14, where Paul memorably says, “Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship (*koinōnia*) has light with darkness?” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Psalm 1:1, “Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers.”

works of darkness – Sexual immorality. (TLSB)

The power of darkness causes and produces the fruitless works. We think here of John 3:19-21. We think also of Matthew 7:22-23, a remarkable passage. If works are not done by faith in Jesus, He will

pronounce their wickedness on judgement day. They are like the chaff which the wind drives away. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The darkness, the unconverted state, the condition of unbelief, can bring forth real fruit as little as weeds are able to; the works of darkness are unfruitful, they are destructive, wicked, dead, Hebrews 6:1; 9:14; Colossians 1:2. (Buls)

expose. Light, by nature, exposes what is in darkness, and the contrast shows sin for what it really is. (CSB)

Discern and condemn them with God's Law (v. 13; Ps. 119:105; John 3:20; 16:8). (TLSB)

μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ ἐλέγγετε—The verb ἐλέγχω, “to bring to light, expose,” draws on the metaphor of light. Because Christians “are light” (5:8; “enlightened,” 1:18), they have the ability to shine into the darkness to disclose the evil that lurks there. Central to the light/darkness metaphor is the fact that light always triumphs over darkness; darkness has no ability to extinguish light (cf. Jn 1:5). Nothing can remain hidden in the dark (Is 29:15; Dan 2:22). The connection of light with the Word of God (Ps 119:105; cf. Is 9:7 [ET 9:8]) implies an objective standard for this process, the “real life” application of the image. The process of δοκιμάζοντες, “testing,” to see what is pleasing to the Lord (Eph 5:10) takes place by comparing the words and deeds of the world around us with the teachings of Holy Scripture. ἐλέγχω (5:11) not only means to show these deeds for what they are (Jn 3:20; Eph 5:13) but also implies “reproving” or “convicting” the perpetrators on the basis of God's Law. Thus, the Christian is enabled to flee evil and at the same time to serve as God's instrument in unveiling his eschatological judgment and calling the world to repentance. (CC)

"Expose" is to bring to light, to reveal hidden things, to convict or convince, to reprove, to correct, to punish, to discipline. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: Not only should any participation in this sin be avoided, one is not only to beware of taking part in these sins, but the Christian is to oppose them aggressively and, in fact, so energetically is he to oppose them that he actually conquers this sin. It is the duty of Christians, the children of light, to reprove the works of darkness, refute the talk of the children of darkness, and prove to them that their works are evil. According to 1 Timothy 5:20; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:9-13, and 2:15 this is the duty of the Christian and bishop. However, it is also a part of the duty and calling of all Christians. (Buls)

Lenski: As far as others are concerned, two things are mentioned, no fellowship with their evil works, reproof exposing their shamefulness. . . Look at 2 Corinthians 6:14: 'What fellowship is there for light with darkness?' Here 'the darkness' is the direct opposite of 'the light.' Both are definite, both are powers. The one has fruit, the other is unfruitful . . . Who wants to spend a life working a field which produces no fruit at all? (Buls)

It is not enough to abstain. The Christian does more than merely to abstain. RSV: "Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them." NEB: "Take no part in the barren deeds of darkness, but show them up for what they are." NASB: "Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them." (Buls)

Paul states that the works of darkness are akarpos, unfruitful. They ultimately lead not to the edification and strengthening of people in themselves and in their relationships, but in a loss of goodness, righteousness, and truth. These unfruitful deeds must be exposed, a difficult task in the live-and-let-live culture of North America. How difficult is it for us to take in the words of Prov. 27:5-6: “Better is open

rebuke than hidden love. Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

Matthew 10:26 “So do not be afraid of them. There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known.”

1 Corinthians 4:5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.”

5:12-13 The light exposes shameful deeds that are done in secret. Wrapped up in this verse are the three characteristics of light: goodness, righteousness, and truth. Nothing good can be shameful, nothing done in secret can be righteous, and lies cannot stand to be made visible. Perhaps the chief sin is the lie; light and truth are so intimately related in the Gospels, especially John, and Paul reinforces this connection. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

It is one thing to avoid falsehood, deception, and evil. It is another thing to expose it (*elenchō*). As in Luther’s theology of the cross, this is to call things what they are with the resulting shame (*aischron*) of those who do the evil. This is the result of our living as “the light of the world” (Mt 5:14). It is, of course, our hope and prayer that the light of God’s Word will bring about repentance and faith in others. But that is God’s activity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Actually, verses 12 and 13 go together as a unit. Verse 12 tells us why we have the prohibition and the command stated in verse 11. Verse 13 tells us how Christians deal with such a situation. Two things must be mentioned which Paul is *not* saying: (Buls)

He is not saying that to mention these sins or even to describe them is wrong in itself, for Paul did that very thing, for example, in Romans 1:18-32; (Buls)

He is not saying that everything which is done in private is sinful. For example, the God-pleasing intimacies of husband and wife in private are certainly not sinful. (Buls)

5:12 *shameful even to speak*. Christians should not dwell on the evils that their lives are exposing in others. (CSB)

The stress in verse 12 lies on the word "shameful." The deeds done in private are shameful because they are the opposite of the God-pleasing deeds mentioned in verse 9. We translate literally: "For it is a shameful thing even to dwell upon what goes on among them in secret." People hide such things because they are a disgrace to themselves. Paul is speaking of a constant way of life. And "to dwell upon our speaking thereof." "In secret" is "avoiding the light." (Buls)

do in secret –The stress in verse 12 lies on the word "shameful." The deeds done in private are shameful because they are the opposite of the God-pleasing deeds mentioned in verse 9. We translate literally: "For it is a shameful thing even to dwell upon what goes on among them in secret." People hide such things because they are a disgrace to themselves. Paul is speaking of a constant way of life. And "to dwell upon our speaking thereof." "In secret" is "avoiding the light." (Buls)

5:13–14 *exposed by the light* – *phaneroutai* can refer to fact that, in consequence of the reproof of sin, both their public and their secret sins are made manifest and revealed to the servants of sin themselves, which amount to bringing about in them a consciousness of sin. Paul does not mean that the Christian

publishes the secret sins of people. He is talking about making the perpetrators see the true nature of their sins, whether they admit it or not. – The idea seems to be that when light (Christian truth) exposes the evil, there is a possibility that the person caught in darkness might repent and come to the light.

God's Word not only exposes evil but can transform evil persons into good. (TLSB)

In this verse we are told how Christians carry out what is commanded in the last part of verse 11. NASB translates: "But all things become visible when they are exposed to light." TEV: "And when all things are brought out to the light, then their true nature is clearly revealed." (Buls)

Paul does not mean that the Christian publishes the secret sins of people. He is taking about making the perpetrators see the true nature of their sins, whether they admit it or not. (Buls)

What is meant by "the light" here? The testimony of the Christian, the Word of God, the second use of the Law. (Buls)

5:13 *becomes visible*. By the repetition of these words, Paul seems to be stressing the all-pervasive nature of the light of God and its inevitable effect. (CSB)

Stoekhardt: This reproof forces, as it were, the sinners to face their own iniquity and shame. For 'exposed' can refer only to the fact that, in consequence of the reproof of sin, both their public and their secret sins are made manifest and revealed to the servants of sin themselves, which amounts to bringing about in them a consciousness of sin.(Buls)

Lenski: Paul is not speaking of the saving effect of 'the light' and of our reproof of secret sins. So far he insists only on our steady reproof. We as children of light MUST reprove sins and vice, our very nature requires no less.(Buls)

Bengel: That their vileness may be known whether those who have done them scorn reproof, or repent. (Buls)

5:14 *light, it becomes visible* – And now Paul buttresses verse 13 with an axiom, a principle in nature which is readily understood by everyone: "For what is brought into the open is light." The secrecy can no longer benefit or hide what has been done. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: If he becomes conscious of his sin and misery in sin, he may in this way be brought to enter upon the path which leads away from sin and leads to God, so that he now lives and walks to please God in all things, that he becomes light as Christians are light. We find the same combination of things in 1 Corinthians 14:24-25. Prophecy (teaching), within the Christian Church, has the effect of reproofing an unbeliever who is present and to reveal his secret sins to himself, and in this way, in this manner, he may come to give glory to the God of the Christians and be converted to Him. (Buls)

By the way, that's what 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 is all about. The people were not using Law and Gospel properly. They were not edifying people. They were using their God-given gifts for self-glorification. (Buls)

The effect of our witness is to call people to repentance and faith. Paul quotes a Christian hymn of the time. It is similar to quoting st 2 of *LSB* 684, "Come unto Me, ye wand'ers, And I will give you light," or other hymns of invitation that speak of rising from unbelief to faith. Speaking to one another by quoting hymns is precisely what Paul urges in the verses that follow! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Isaiah 26:19 "But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead."

it says. What follows may well be a hymn used by the early Christians (see note on Col 3:16). (CSB)

And now we come to the final three lines of this verse which are introduced by the words "it is said." In Ephesians 4:8 these words introduce a quotation from the Old Testament, but here the source is in question. Some suggest a possible reference to an Apocryphal book or to Isaiah 26:19 or Isaiah 60:1. However, the New Testament does not quote Apocryphal books and most scholars doubt a reference to either of the Isaiah passages. Stoeckhardt does not rule out a reference to a Christian hymn. (Buls)

Lenski: The hesitation about regarding this as a couplet taken from a Christian hymn used in Ephesus in Paul's time ought to disappear.(Buls)

Kretzmann: This quotation is not taken from Scriptures, but may have been a verse adapted from synagogue or Christian liturgy of Paul's day or Paul applied a common greeting of the Jewish New Year to the situation.(Buls)

It is considered poetry by the majority of the English translations. We leave it at that. (Buls)

It must be admitted that the three lines are poetic. Perhaps Paul is using an existing hymn. But the true Lutheran exegete ought to be careful when it comes to the whole matter of "early Christian hymns." The higher critics call Luke 1:67-79 (the Benedictus) an "early Christian hymn." But that can't be because we are plainly told in verse 67 that the Holy Spirit filled Zacharias with the result that he spoke forth. The Holy Spirit is the author of these words. (Buls)

For decades Philippians 2:6-11 has been called a hymn, either pagan or Christian. But the authorities cannot agree on the Greek metrics and, what is worst of all, they completely destroy the meaning of this passage which is so important for the doctrine of Christ's humiliation and exaltation. (Buls)

But, back to Ephesians 5:14. The first two lines are a command, the third a promise. For his own good, the Christian is trying to shake the unconverted sinner out of his dull sloth. (Buls)

Stoeckhardt: The Christian is to call to his unbelieving, ungodly neighbor: 'You are asleep in your sins, you are slumbering in the midst of death and destruction. But awake from this sleep, arise from the dead, repent, be converted!' . . . Recognition of sin is a prerequisite of this arising from the sleep of sin and death, and precedes conversion . . . Christ is here presented as a rising Light, a shining Constellation or Star, as the Sun of grace . . . It is exactly this promise of grace which awakens the sinner from his sleep of sin and of death, gives him spiritual power, and makes him willing to obey the call. (Buls)

Kretzmann: The sinner, having arisen from the sleep of sin and death, is surrounded and flooded with Christ, the Sun of Salvation, and thus becomes blessed and happy in this illumination. (Buls)

Lenski: This is the Gospel call of grace, of the *gratia sufficiens*, ever filled with quickening power (2:5) to raise up those whom it bids to arise . . . Beside the negative appears the positive: 'and there shall shine forth upon thee Christ' . . . Here is the same gracious and efficacious call as in Matthew 11:28-30. Subject and verb are transposed, both are thus made emphatic . . . We have had 'the light.' Here we see that this is Christ. As in John 1:4 life and light are combined in Christ. (Buls)

awake - The verb for arise, *anistmui*, is the verb for resurrection. Here it would seem that Paul is jumping from the present life to the life to come. This may be in part because we have failed to see how the new life in us now is the life that will come into full view in the next world. It is sin, the great deception, that continues to hide our true nature as saints not only from the world but sometimes even from us. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 15, Part 2)

Death, even sinners' spiritual, death is like sleep to God (cf. Mk. 5:39-42; John 11:11; 1 Thess. 4:14). Through Baptism, Christ resurrected us (Eph. 2:1-6; Romans 6:4).

arise from the dead. Two images that describe a sinner (cf. 2:1). (CSB)

Christ will shine on you. With his life-giving light. (CSB)

He will be enveloped by the rays of Christ, the Sun of salvation. In this splendor he will be joyful and blessed as in the day. And this promise of grace it is that awakens the sinner from sleep and death, that grants him power, that makes him willing to obey the call. (Stoeckhardt)

5:15-20 The word *oun*, "then," alerts us that our text logically follows the previous discussion. Verses 3–14 are loaded with more of God's guidelines on the Christian life-style: what the believer is to battle and avoid, and what he is to pursue. He is aggressively to seek this life-style because (vv 1–2) he is a dearly loved child of God, enfolded in the redeeming love of the Savior. Having thus again graphically depicted the Christian walk, the inspired apostle now challenges and enjoins the believer to live accordingly. As always, the motivation flows from God's love. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

5:15-16 Here the subject of wisdom, addressed in the *Introit and Old Testament Reading* for this day, is introduced. "Making the best use of the time" (*kairon*) means using the current situation and/or opportunity for our confession or witness. The increase of evil decreases the opportunities. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

5:15 *look carefully then how you walk* – NKJV: "See then that you walk circumspectly." RSV: "Look carefully then how you walk." (Buls)

In order that those without may be won, Christians should be very particular in their conduct, in all that they do. They should walk carefully and prudently. They should turn away from everything that could give offense to Christians and to unbelievers. (Stoeckhardt)

"Be very careful!" Brandt (*Meditations on a Loving God* [St. Louis: Concordia, 1983] p.237): "When we are blessed with a new friend . . . we are generally very careful about how we treat this individual . . . We 'walk' carefully, for they are of great value to us. It may be that we are not nearly so concerned about that 'pearl of great price,' that divine gift and eternal relationship which is of infinitely greater value than anything of which we can conceive. We tend to take God for granted, and therefore become careless and irresponsible in . . . our relationship to him. This has to do, as well, with our responsibility . . . to our relationships with our fellow beings . . . if we truly love our Lord, and our brothers and sisters in the family of God, we will 'look carefully . . . how [we] walk.'" (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Romans 6:4 "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life."

Galatians 5:16 “So I say, live by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature.”

Ephesians 4:1 “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.”

1 John 1:7 “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.”

unwise ... wise. Having emphasized the contrast between light and darkness, Paul now turns to the contrast between wisdom and foolishness. (CSB)

Lenski (p. 613) says, “The summary of this admonition is the exercise of Christian wisdom.” Lenski further points out (p. 614) that the Ephesian Christians are walking the Christian life, but Paul wants them to examine the degree of their carefulness. To walk with some care is not enough in days that are so wicked. Being wise means more than simply knowing; it includes the idea of getting the most out of one’s knowledge. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Lenski: To be wise is more than to know; it means to use, apply, and thus to get the most out of knowledge in our walking or in the management of our life. (Buls)

The word "wisdom" here implies that they know what Paul has said about Law and Gospel, about sin and grace, in the chapters and verses preceding our text. (Buls)

Stoekhardt: They are not to drift along without forethought and plan, but to give serious thought upon the way and means by which they may accomplish their purpose, they are to study how they may help to build the Kingdom of God and advance the cause of Christ. (Buls)

The Christian is like the wise man described in Matthew 7:24-25. The non-Christian is like the foolish man described in Matthew 7:26-27. Our text is speaking about spiritual wisdom, not mere intellectual knowledge. (Buls)

5:16 *but as wise.* The foolish person has no strategy for life and misses opportunities to live for God in an evil environment. (CSB)

"Opportunity" reminds us of the old Roman proverb: *Carpe diem*, which means "seize the day," or "seize the opportunity." True. Common sense tells us to grasp opportunities. Wise parents constantly tell their children: "Make the most of your opportunities." (Buls)

Our text is speaking about making use of opportunities in the interest of the Kingdom of God, whatever that opportunity may be. Unbelievers make use of opportunities to further their own material gain. It is not wrong for Christians to do that. They should do that. But, in addition to that, they must wisely seize opportunities which are in the interest of God's Kingdom. (Buls)

make the best use of the time – Stoekhardt: Take advantage of the right moment, grasp the opportunity to approach opportunely those who despise God and Christ, to get a hearing for the divine Word, to get in some good work and accomplish something for the Lord. (Buls)

Reinecker (*A Linguistic Key to the New Testament*) notes that *ezagoraō* has a dual meaning here —“seizing the opportunity” and “buying back” at the cost of self-denial, at least at times. Barnes (*Notes*

on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1949] p. 103) comments: “it means to rescue or recover our time from waste; to improve it for great and important purposes . . . They redeem their time who employ it (1) in gaining useful knowledge; (2) in doing good to others; (3) in employing it for the purpose of an honest livelihood . . . ; (4) in prayer and self-examination to make the heart better, (5) in seeking salvation and endeavoring to do the will of God.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Psalm 90:12 “Teach us to number our days aright, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.”

Colossians 4:5 “Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity.”

1 Peter 3:15 “But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,”

days are evil - Why should we do this? "Because the days are evil." The word here means "actively evil." The world and all that is in it opposes the Kingdom of God. There is so very much immorality, sin and wickedness all around us. But there are opportunities nonetheless. (Buls)

Lenski: These seasons of opportunity are brief, they soon slip away . . . Pay the necessary price in effort and exertion. . . Our lives are brief and present only so much opportunity . . . Opportunity itself is always a positive invitation and incentive. . . Wickedness reduces the opportunities.(Buls)

Kretzmann: The general opposition of the world against the Gospel of Christ is a hindering factor. Opportune moments are rare and should be grasped immediately. (Buls)

In these end times, evil forces battle against God’s children, who have been rescued from evil. (TLSB)

5:17-18 It is God’s will, first, that all people come to the knowledge of the truth and be saved (justification). Here, Paul adds that it is also God’s will that all people be filled with the Spirit (sanctification). This is contrasted with being filled with wine. The wine results in *asōtia*: debauchery, dissoluteness, sensuality, immorality (Gal 5:19–21). The Spirit results in his fruit (Gal 5:22–23): “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

5:17 *foolish . . . understand*. The contrast continues. The foolish person not only misses opportunities to make wise use of time; he has a more fundamental problem: He does not understand what are God’s purposes for mankind and for Christians. God’s purposes are a basic theme in Ephesians (see ch. 1). (CSB)

In these end times, it is foolish to act as if Christ is not returning soon (Mt. 25:1-13). (TLSB)

They should let nothing cause them to lose true understanding, consciousness and comprehension. But they should be prudent. (Stockhardt)

"For this reason" What reason? Because the days are wicked. Here we have a prohibition. The word "foolish" means either not to have good judgment or to fail to use it when the opportunity presents itself. (Buls)

How do we combat foolishness? By doing what follows the "but." This adversative conjunction, following a negative, is very strong. According to Rienecker, "understand" means "the ability to bring things together and see them in relation to one another." Remarkably enough in our time people speak about "getting it all together." That gets at the meaning here. It takes effort to do that. We have to sift, test and think about what the will of the Lord is, what pleases Him. (Buls)

the will of the Lord – The will of the Lord is the divine measure and blueprint of our use of time. Under his will we prioritize the activities we have to choose from. The danger is that the evil of the present days may confuse our priorities. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Bengel: The will of the Lord not only generally, but specifically. (Buls)

Correct. The text is speaking not only of general knowledge, for example that all men are sinners but that all are saved by grace in Christ. The text is speaking about what we should do in specific cases for the good of people as prospects for the Kingdom of God. That takes true Christian wisdom. The text forthrightly tells us to do it. Christians should be careful to think about each time, place and circumstance to apply the will of the Lord. What was Paul's first question when he was converted? "Lord, what would you have me do?" That is our question too at all times. (Buls)

They should give heed to and ever better learn to understand what just now, in this place, under given circumstances God's will is for them. We read a similar exhortation in verse 10. Christians should always in every individual case prove what is pleasing to the Lord. This applies generally and also particularly to the Christian's conduct towards the unbelievers of their environment, of whom our context speaks. (Stoekhardt)

Psalm 40:8 "I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart."

Psalm 143:10 "Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground."

Matthew 26:42 "He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

John 7:17 "If anyone chooses to do God's will, he will find out whether my teaching comes from God or whether I speak on my own. "

5:18 *Do not get drunk* ... This means an "excess" or extreme indulgence in sensual pleasures. (CSB)

One waits for Christ in soberness (1 Th. 5:1-8). Drunkenness a feature of pagan worship, should certainly not occur in Christian worship (1 Cor. 11:20-22). (TLSB)

The Apostle does not warn against the enjoyment of wine in general but against excessive enjoyment of wine and strong drinks, against drunkenness, intoxication. (Stoekhardt)

Verse 18 is explanatory of verse 17, and at the same time particularizes the verse. Both verse begin with a prohibition, followed by a "but" and an imperative. The verse is evidently an allusion to Proverbs 23:31. (Buls)

This verse is not warning against the use of intoxicating beverages, but against the abuse of the same. It is a warning against the loss of sanity and sobriety. To lose one's sense of good judgment is great foolishness. One cannot grasp opportunities, one cannot determine what the will of the Lord is, when intoxicated. (Buls)

Very likely the sense is "Do not allow yourself to become drunk on wine." Drunkenness is a tool of the Old Adam in every generation. It was prevalent in Paul's day. It is prevalent today. It is a sin, not a disease. The word "wine" here includes all other alcoholic beverages, drugs, etc. (Buls)

that is debauchery – KJV translates *asōtia* as “excess”; NKJV has “dissipation.” Compare the much stronger and more descriptive “debauchery” of NIV and RSV. Phillips translates: “Don’t get your stimulus from wine (for there is always the danger of excessive drinking), but let the Spirit stimulate your souls.” NEB: “Do not give way to drunkenness and the dissipation that goes with it, but let the Holy Spirit fill you.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Reckless behavior, unrestrained by good sense. (TLSB)

"Debauchery" literally means "unsavingness." The translations are interesting: "excess, debauchery, dissipation, wild living." (Buls)

Drunkenness leads to a wretched, careless existence. Intoxication leads to a loose licentious, dissolute existence and life, that ruins and shatters powers of body and soul, that makes man incapable of thinking, desiring doing something good and honest. (Stoekhardt)

Barnes (p. 104) says that “do not get drunk on wine” refers to “a vice to which those around them were much addicted . . . It is not improbable that in this verse there is an allusion to the orgies of Bacchus . . . He was ‘the god of wine’ and during these festivals men and women regarded it as an acceptable act of worship to become intoxicated, and with wild songs and cries to run through the streets, and fields, and vineyards. To these things the apostle opposes psalms and hymns and spiritual songs as much more appropriate modes of devotion, and would have the Christian worship stand out in strong contrast to the wild and dissolute habits of the heathen.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Proverbs 28:7 “He who keeps the law is a discerning son, but a companion of gluttons disgraces his father.”

Luke 15:13 “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.”

Galatians 5:21 “and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

be filled with the Spirit. The Greek present tense is used to indicate that the filling of the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience. Repeatedly, as the occasion requires, the Spirit empowers for worship, service

and testimony. The contrast between being filled with wine and filled with the Spirit is obvious. But there is something in common that enables Paul to make the contrast, namely, that one can be under an influence that affects him, whether of wine or of the Spirit. Since Col 3:15–4:1 is very similar to Eph 5:18–6:9, we may assume that Paul intends to convey a basically similar thought in the introductory sentences to each passage. When he speaks here of being filled with the Spirit and when he speaks in Colossians of being under the rule of the peace of Christ and indwelt by the “word” of Christ, he means to be under God’s control. The effect of this control is essentially the same in both passages: a happy, mutual encouragement to praise God and a healthy, mutual relationship with people. (CSB)

As the Spirit is poured out on us, we are under His influence, as if “drunk” on the Spirit (Acts 2:4, 13-15). The result is threefold: heartfelt worship, thanksgiving, and mutual submission (Eph. 5:19-21). (TLSB)

"Be filled" might mean "be controlled." Phillips translates: "Let the Spirit stimulate your souls." (Buls)

The three participles in verses 19-20 are explanatory to this imperative. The parallel passage Colossians 3:16 is very helpful: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him." Buls)

People are filled with the Holy Spirit when they hear the Word of God and keep it. (Buls).

The Formula of Concord (Tappert 623.42): In the same way many receive the Word with joy, but after that they fall away again, Luke 8:13. But the reason for this is not that God does not want to impart the grace of perseverance to those in whom he has begun the good work. This would contradict St. Paul in Philippians 1:6. The reason is that they willfully turn away from the holy commandment, grieve and embitter the Holy Spirit, become entangled again in the filth of the world, and decorate their hearts as a tabernacle for the devil so that their last state will be worse than the first, 2 Peter 2:10; Luke 11:24-25; Hebrews 10:26; Ephesians 5:3-11,18. (Buls)

Scripture sometimes speaks of Christians who had already received the Holy Spirit (at Pentecost or in Baptism) being “filled” with the Spirit (Acts 4:8, 31; 6:3, 5; 7:55; 9:31; 11:24; 13:9,52; etc.). This does not denote a “second baptism” or a “baptism in the Spirit” separate from Holy Baptism. Instead, it refers to the Spirit, who is already in the hearts of all baptized believers, equipping individuals for special acts of service. The *Concordia Self-Study Bible* notes on *plērousthe*, “The Greek present tense is used to indicate that the filling of the Spirit is not a once-for-all experience. Repeatedly, as the occasion requires, the Spirit empowers for worship, service and testimony. The contrast between being filled with wine and filled with the Spirit is obvious. But there is something in common that enables Paul to make the contrast, namely, that one can be under an influence that affects him, whether of wine, or of the Spirit.” The preacher may make use of the similar-sounding words “spirits” and “Spirit.” If this is attempted, take special care that what results is more than merely a smile-producing digression. *The Life Application Bible* (Tyndale, 1988) notes: “What matters is not how much of the Holy Spirit we have, but how much of us the Holy Spirit has. We need to submit daily to his leading and draw on his power.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

playroo – To make full to the very top and even cram it in. This is a continuing experience. Verse 19 gives ideas on how this can be done.

John 15:11 “I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.”

Ephesians 3:19 “and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Colossians 1:9 “For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.”

5:19 psalms ... songs. Every kind of appropriate song—whether psalms like those of the OT, or hymns directed to God or to others that Christians were accustomed to singing—could provide a means for praising and thanking God (v. 20). Actually, however, all three terms may refer to different types of psalms. – These songs belong to the mutual association of Christians with one another. By singing and praying together Christians encourage, inspire and edify one another. Spiritual songs are another form of using and applying the Word of God. (CSB)

λαλοῦντες ἑαυτοῖς [ἐν] ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς πνευματικαῖς, ᾄδοντες καὶ ψάλλοντες τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν τῷ κυρίῳ—The participle λαλοῦντες is dependent on the imperative πληροῦσθε in the previous verse: “*be filled with/by the Spirit ... in such a way that you speak to one another ...*” It is the Holy Spirit who gives rise to right worship. In line with Paul’s preference in this chapter for groups of three,⁴⁵ he contrasts the false worship of pagans (5:3–5) with a threefold description of the right use of words in the Christian liturgy. This patterning suggests there might be no clear distinction between the three nouns for Christian song, though the question is intriguing for students of early Christian worship. (CC)

The first of the three nouns is ψαλμός, which can mean “song of praise” and therefore might be just another word for a Christian hymn. But with few exceptions, in the Greek OT ψαλμός refers to the hymnal of the OT, the book of Psalms.⁴⁶ Since the NT follows this usage in the clearest examples,⁴⁷ it is likely that references to ψαλμοί in p 587 Christian worship refer to “psalms” (1 Cor 14:26 [where it occurs in the singular]; Col 3:16). The earliest patristic literature demonstrates that Christians sang the Psalms in their Divine Service. It is not clear, however, that the cognate verb ψάλλω (“psalming,” 5:19b) always refers specifically to psalm singing. Originally it referred to the “plucking” of the strings of an accompanying instrument (e.g., harp), but came to refer more broadly to music making, with or without instruments.⁵⁰ There are therefore three possibilities for the meaning of the two participles ᾄδοντες and ψάλλοντες in the present verse: (1) they refer respectively to “singing” and “playing instrumental music (or accompanied singing)”; (2) they refer respectively to “singing [Christian] hymns” and “singing the OT psalms”; and (3) they are near synonyms with little distinction, “singing and making melody.” (CC)

The second noun, ὕμνος, *hymnos*, is a religious song, from which the English word “hymn” is derived. The present verse and its parallel (Col 3:16) contain its only NT occurrences, though it is frequent in the LXX, where it often refers to the psalms of David. The third noun, ᾠδή, is a near synonym with less explicitly religious p 588 associations, though it frequently appears coupled with ὕμνος in the LXX.⁵³ The combination of the three nouns in LXX Ps 66:1 (ἐν ὕμνοις· ψαλμὸς ᾠδῆς; MT 67:1; ET superscription)⁵⁴ further suggests that no significant distinction should be made. In fact, it may be historically accurate to view “psalms and hymns and songs” as a category referring first and foremost to the canonical psalms as the hymnal of the early church; second, to other biblical canticles; and third, to newly written Christian hymns, of which there is some evidence in Ephesians itself (5:14). Thus, Paul himself models the use of psalms (4:8) and hymns to edify the church in this very letter. (CC)

The adjective πνευματικαῖς, “spiritual,” is not restrictive, implying that some Christian songs are “spiritual,” while others (such as the aforementioned biblical psalms) are not. Neither does “spiritual” imply unintelligible “speaking in tongues,” since they are addressed ἑαυτοῖς, “to one another,” which

implies the corporate edification that this letter has so often stressed. Nor is there any reason to believe it means only songs that are uttered ecstatically or spontaneously. Inasmuch as the previous verse has spoken of the Holy Spirit as the one who fills all Christians (5:18) and thus enables them to sing, the adjective should best be understood as modifying all three nouns (ψαλμοῖς καὶ ὕμνοις καὶ ᾠδαῖς) and indicating that they are all songs inspired by the Holy Spirit: “psalms and hymns and songs that are [all] of the Spirit.” (CC)

This, then, informs the meaning of the phrase τῇ καρδίᾳ ὑμῶν, “in/with your heart,” which refers not to internal, silent worship, but to the heart as the instrument of true worship inasmuch as the heart of the baptized is the dwelling place of the Spirit p 589 (1:18; 3:16–17). The Spirit’s role, furthermore, is always to direct the heart towards “the Lord” (τῷ κυρίῳ)—which, in view of the use of κύριος in the next verse (5:20), probably refers to Christ, the usual referent of κύριος in the NT. (CC)

Foul talk (v. 4) is replaced by wholesome words of worship. There is no clear distinction between these terms. OT psalms are certainly in view. “Hymns” and “songs” likely include OT canticles (Rev. 15:3) and Christian compositions (cf. Eph. 5:14b; Rev. 5:9-10). Spiritual probably applies to all three compositions. Addressed to “one another” as well as “to the Lord,” the songs include both teaching and adoration (Col. 3:16). (TLSB)

Probably meant here are Old Testament Psalms, worship hymns as we know them today, and popular Christian songs. Note that the third is qualified by the adjective "spiritual" which makes it clear that they were not secular songs. (Buls)

"In your heart" is used in the same sense as when we say of a person "It's not just a matter of the head, but also of the heart." It's not merely intellectual but of true faith and conviction. (Buls)

Such singing is done to the glory of the Lord and for His Kingdom. This kind of conversing and singing is done in church, in the home, at Christian gatherings. One can imagine a family, or a husband and wife, doing the things mentioned in verses 18-19. The Lord blesses such activities. There should be more of them. (Buls)

Although Paul does not specify where or how this activity is to occur, he does seem to imply that a public worship life with liturgical forms was being developed and used (1 Cor. 14:26. We should also note that Paul once more stresses the importance of the proper use of the tongue. At least three times in this letter Paul has touched directly on that subject (4:25, 29; 5:4), each time in the context of using speech to help build one another up to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. (PBC)

The believers, being filled with the Spirit, are to minister to one another, speaking and singing to one another, with the Lord being the subject of this praise, which must have the heart, as well as voice, in it. Melody and music have their place when God’s people gather. Lenski (p. 617): “Here is the way in which Paul wants us to go about doing the will of the Lord: with joyful, enthusiastic, grateful hearts. This is good sense, the right tone for wise Christians living in wicked days. Did not Luther also say that music drives the devil away?” Even tone-deaf monotones can make sweet “music” in their hearts to the Lord, and an occasional encouragement would seem to be in order for everyone to put their hearts into their hymns! In our public worship we are to interact with “one another.” That can’t be done by the absentee. Attendance at public worship is part of the Christian walk. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

The Christian life is to be lived in such joy and thanksgiving that it needs the exalted forms of poetry and God's gift of music to express it fully. Praying the "psalms" gives us God's own Word to express our emotions and experience of walking in faith in this world. "Hymns" do this also but in addition express Christian hope, prayer, confession, and the like. "Spiritual songs" are *ōidais pneumatikais*, odes, any lyric poem, but spiritual and not secular. It should be noted that Christian or "church" music is never intended to *produce* a particular emotion but to proclaim Jesus Christ and faith in him. On the other hand, that a hymn or song can *trigger* an emotional response as a result is admitted and to be expected. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 22, Part 3)

Deuteronomy 6:7 "Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

Psalms 145:11 "They will tell of the glory of your kingdom and speak of your might"

5:20 *giving thanks always* – This means to have a thankful life-style. It is a good way to keep the heart in good tone. – The Christian will always find some cause for thanksgiving. Under the divine control even painful experiences, calamities etc. must bring us spiritual benefits such as driving us closer to God to seek his protection, making us search his Word more earnestly for comfort. (Lenski)

A description of public prayer. (TLSB)

On this verse compare Colossians 3:17. "Always" is an adverb of time meaning "all the time." "For everything" is an adverb phrase meaning "about everything" which excludes nothing. Look at Romans 8:28. (Buls)

If God makes all things work together for our good, and He does, than we ought thank Him for everything, even adversities and death. (Buls)

JB makes the participle "giving thanks" the result of verses 18-19. That is interesting. We are not necessarily recommending it but where there is constant study of Scripture and the singing of hymns and religious songs there will be thanksgiving. (Buls)

The simplest way to take the phrase "in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ," is "because He is my Savior and Mediator." God is our Father through Jesus Christ. (Buls)

Note that our text does not include verse 21. Grammatically it belongs to verses 18-20 because of the participle. Thus it is translated in NKJV. NEB made a separate paragraph of it, separate from verse 20 and separate from verse 22. But, so far as the thought is concerned, verse 21 goes with the following. This is the way it is translated in JB, RSV, AAT. TEV and NIV also make a separate paragraph of this verse, as does NEB. (Buls)

Paul urges that the Christian life be marked by "always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." Let's not forget that Paul himself acknowledged that "the days are evil." All kinds of things can discourage, irritate, and disappoint Christian, harried as they are by the devil and the world and hampered by their own sinful flesh. But filled with the Spirit, they know that "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose" (Rom. 8:28). Daily they can rise and confidently say, "This is the day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). (PBC)

For what do Christians give thanks? Barnes (p. 107): “in heaven we shall see occasion to bless God for his dealings with us . . . We shall see that all our afflictions, as well as our mercies, were designed for our good, and were needful for us. Why then should we not bless God in the furnace as well as in the palace; on a bed of pain as well as on a bed of down; in want as well as when sitting down at the splendid banquet? God knows what is best for us; and the way in which he leads us, mysterious though it seem to be now, will yet be seen to have been full of goodness and mercy.” *The Life Application Bible* notes: “When you feel down, you may find it difficult to give thanks. Take heart . . . Thank God, not for your problems, but for the strength he is building in you through the difficult experiences of your life. You can be sure that God’s perfect love will see you through.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

All these activities are to be done in the name of our Lord (“King of Kings and Lord of Lords”) Jesus (“He will save his people from their sins”) Christ (our God-appointed and promised Messiah, the “anointed One,” Immanuel)! In his name, which proclaims his matchless love for us, lies our motivation. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Colossians 3:15, “Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.”

5:21 submitting – Taking one’s proper role in God’s order and laying aside one’s selfish interests (Gal. 5:13). Described in detail in Eph. 5:22-6:9. Based on the Greek, verse 21 likely introduces the next section. (TLSB)

Reverence for Christ must be our motivating force. Otherwise we will find the responsibilities irksome and restrictive. (PBC)

The reading calls for taking verse 21 with what follows, not with what precedes. KJV, NKJV and NASB take it with the preceding. AAT, RSV and JB take it with the following. TEV, NIV and NEB make verse 21 a separate paragraph. Grammatically verse 21 goes with what precedes. (Buls)

"Submit" is the fifth of the participles. But, so far as the thought is concerned, verse 21 goes with what follows. Verse 22 gets its verbal thought from verse 21. (Buls)

Note carefully that the idea of subjection is limited to verses 21-24. Children are to obey their parents, compare 6:1. The same verb is used of the "slave" in 6:5. The verb "submit" is limited to the mutual relation in verse 21 and the attitude of wives to husbands in verse 22. Two of our versions indicate that the verbs in 21 and 22 have a light difference in meaning. AAT reads: "As you respect Christ, SUBMIT to one another. You married women, OBEY your husbands as you obey the Lord." JB has this: "GIVE WAY to one another in obedience to Christ. Wives should REGARD their husbands as they regard the Lord." (Buls)

Stoekhardt: The Christian's conduct toward God, which is expressed in song, praise, and thanksgiving, is placed beside their behavior toward one another, although the latter is here not described as mutual love, but as proper mutual submission. Christians are to submit themselves one to another, each is to consider the welfare of the other as his own welfare, each is to respect and give honor to the other, moved to do this by humble reverence for Christ, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister to others. See Romans 12:10; Galatians 5:13. (Buls)

Lenski: No rivalry, no self-exaltation, no divisive pride is to interfere . . . Each is to subject himself, voluntarily, freely.(Buls)

The phrase "out of reverence to Christ" is a rare one. It denotes manner, how they deal with each other mutually. "Christ" is both subjective and objective genitive. Christ is both author and object of this Christian reverence. Christ is simply everything to the believer, not only in justification but also in sanctification. (Buls)

Verse 21 contains no main verb; the last such verb is in v 18, "be filled with the Spirit." The participles which follow in vv 19–21 describe the result of the Spirit's work. A literal translation would then be: "Be filled with the Spirit . . . [v 19] speaking to one another . . . [v 20] giving thanks always . . . [v 21] submitting to one another in fear of Christ" It is the Spirit who empowers Christians to live in this manner. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

Reinecker (*A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980] p. 192) says the participle *upotassomenoi*, "submitting," means "to line oneself up under . . . the word has primarily the idea of giving up one's own right or will, i.e. 'to subordinate one's self.'" (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 1, Part 3)

The word and concept of "submitting" are central to this entire text. This word or concept is used in verses 21, 22, 24, 25, 28, 31. – Paul uses five Greek commands in 5:15-18 and end with "but be filled with the Spirit." The five Greek participles in 19-21 describe how the Spirit-filled life lives out those five previous imperatives. Being Spirit filled is the only way this can be done. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

Luke 14:10 "But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, 'Friend, move up to a better place.' Then you will be honored in the presence of all your fellow guests."

Luke 22:26 "But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves."

Romans 12:3 "For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you."

1 Corinthians 16:16 "to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it."

Hebrews 13:17 "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you."

1 Peter 5:5 "Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

out of reverence – phobos -To be alarmed or even terrified. With God living in us there is nothing we have to fear. Even when we forget, we are forgiven and reminded of God's love and his living in us in Baptism. Then our fear turns to reverence. The phrase "out of reverence for Christ" must be our motivating force. Otherwise we will find the responsibilities irksome and restrictive. This is inspiring because Christ came "not to be served, but to serve, and give his life as a ransom for many." (Matthew 20:28) God knows how much help we need and so he doesn't give us anything to do without the proper

gifts and inducement. – Reverence for Christ is the essential foundation for all other relationship in which the Christian lives. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 7, Part 3)

5:1–21 Like the Ephesians, we are confronted every day by a world rebelling against God’s way. In our struggle against its temptations, we can rely on Christ’s Word and Spirit to lead us. • Lord, strengthen me to speak and act as You desire. Replace all foul talk from my mouth with praise for You and encouragement for my brothers and sisters in Christ. Amen. (TLSB)

GOSPEL – John 6:51-69

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.” 52 The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” 53 So Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. 55 For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink. 56 Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him. 57 As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.” 59 Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

6:51-58 Not an obvious reference to the Lord’s Supper: the words of institution are not recorded, no wine is present, Jesus speaks of flesh” and not “body,” and the crowd is generally hostile and unbelieving. However, John records many veiled references to Jesus’ future service, such as His work on the cross (1:50; 2:4, 19-22; 4:32; 6:62; 12:32). Whereas the other Gospel writers collected Jesus’ parables, John collected Jesus’ enigmatic, or riddle-like sayings. (TLSB)

6:51 *the bread I give* - Life-giving bread; synonymous with “bread of life.” Cf. 1:4; 5:26. (TLSB)

For the third time Jesus says: "I am the life-giving bread." Here we have a repetition of the thought in verse 50, except that this time He speaks of eternal life. (Buls)

The last five words denotes the vicarious atonement "in behalf of the life of the world." (Buls)

Ylvisaker: It is the true human nature of Jesus, the Bearer of eternal life, which faith must appropriate in order to partake of the life . . . His human nature, or, in other words, Himself, as the One made man, is food, indeed which satisfies the inmost needs of humanity and apart from Him, this food may not be found . . . It is ever correct to say that Jesus uses the term 'flesh' and 'blood' because He would choose a clear and adequate expression to designate His human nature, as of flesh and blood. . . . To eat is, then, in this passage, to believe. He that believes also eats and drinks Christ . . . If He were merely 'flesh', a human being only, then the eating and drinking of Him would not avail unto eternal life, it would have no beneficial effect whatsoever. But He is also 'spirit', that is, God in essence and in truth, and it is this 'spirit' which permeates and animates His true humanity which makes Him the true Bread from heaven. (Buls)

come down from heaven – Katabas “having come down” Jesus draws upon the imagery of the manna to explain what we confess in the creed, “who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Martin Luther uses an excellent and time-honored illustration to explain this “coming down,” this incarnation of the Son of God as true man: When iron is without fire, it is surely still iron. But when it is made to glow, and fire or heat enter into it, then I can say, “This iron no longer acts like iron; rather it acts like fire.” It is iron, to be sure, but it is so full of fire that when you see or touch it, you cannot say, “This is iron.” But rather you feel sheer fire, to the extent that you have fire before your eyes. Now if you want to burn a hole through a barrel with it, or burn a brand on something, it is not the iron that does it, but the fire. For if I took cold iron which was not glowing, I could not burn a brand onto anything with it; I must take iron which has fire in it. On the other hand, the fire does its work nowhere except in the iron; [in that very place it burns and bores]. Thus here the divine power is present bodily in the humanity of Christ and acts as God should act, or acts as the fire acts in the iron. One indeed sees only flesh and blood, which are like a fiery iron, for they have been entirely deified – God through and through. (WA 33:191) Therefore, to partake of this living bread from heaven, which is Christ’s flesh, is to receive the very life of God and the salvation it brings. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

This verse is like a benediction. Observe how the claim expands upon the claim of v 40. Of interest are the three tenses in which *katabainō*, “come down,” appears: present (vv 33, 50), perfect (vv 38, 42), and aorist (vv 41, 51, 58). The three tenses emphasize the mysterious reality of the divine incarnation: Christ came (aorist), has come (and remains—perfect), and continues to come (present). In all these the theological truth is that salvation is God’s initiative and God’s act. God comes down: human beings do not reach up. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

The phrase “eats this bread” metaphorically means “believes that Jesus is God incarnate.” Grammatically, the whole sentence is a future more vivid condition which, in Greek, raises the certitude of the claim. The word *sarx*, “flesh,” brings to mind Jn 1:14 and would challenge and correct any reader with docetic tendencies. The word will be used four more times in the verses immediately after our text, emphasizing the humanity of Jesus and the reality of his saving life, death, and resurrection. Jesus is not just a good idea, a lovely attitude, or an inspiring ideal. In his humanity he brought God into our world, and now he invites us to “eat” that truth, i.e., to make it our own. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 4, Part 3)

Although the everlasting life Jesus promises is free to the believer, it is costly for the donor, Jesus. This truth is suggested first by Jesus calling “this bread” that he gives also “[his] flesh,” and second, by the word *give*, which has levels of meaning. *Give* not only means “distribute” or “hand out” (as in Jn 6:27, 31–32) but also means “give unto death” (a reference to Christ’s imminent crucifixion). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

Whether or not the Gospel selections from John 6 are talking about the Lord’s Supper (before it was instituted by Jesus) is debated by exegetes. Certainly, the average reader or listener can hardly avoid associating the passages with the Eucharist. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

To legitimize and facilitate that association, I suggest a Gospel handle approach, that is, simply suggesting a connection between these passages from John 6 and those Scripture passages elsewhere that record the institution of the Lord’s Supper—without getting bogged down in the exegetical question whether the imagery of bread, flesh, and blood in John 6 are generic in intent or specifically applicable to the bread/body and wine/blood of the Lord’s Supper. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

The Gospel handle could be the question of Jesus’ audience in the verse right after our text (v 52): “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” The answer they expected was a negative one: “He can’t. It’s impossible.” Surprise, surprise! Lk 22:19–20 and 1 Cor 11:20–29, with their descriptions of the institution of the Lord’s Supper, give an unexpected, positive answer to the question in Jn 6:52. In the Lord’s

Supper, Jesus does give us his flesh to eat! In the Lord's Supper, Jesus' "flesh is real food and [his] blood is real drink" (Jn 6:55)! (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

The use of this Gospel handle approach is not intended to solve the exegetical question. Its selection is intended only to make sure the listener is enriched spiritually by thinking of the Lord's Supper in connection with the fabulous truths of the texts from John 6. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 16, Part 3)

In the early Christian Community the heresy of Docetism arose. That is the teaching that Jesus did not truly have a human nature, but only apparently so. To counter Docetism the Christian Community insisted that the Words of Institution in Matthew, Mark, Luke and St. Paul be taken literally. Therefore, in order to correct both errors, Docetism and the literal interpretation of the Words of Institution are to be taken figuratively. (Buls)

eats of this bread. Appropriates Jesus as the sustenance of one's life. (CSB)

phagēi, "devour, eat." FC SD VII 61–62 explains that eating is believing and believing is eating. *hē sarx*, "flesh." John uses this term differently than does Paul, who often uses flesh for man's corrupted nature (Rom 8:6; 2 Cor 1:17; Gal 6:8; Eph 2:3; but notice also the neutral sense simply referring to the human body: 2 Cor 10:4; Eph 5:31; 6:12). John favors the term as emphasizing man's most physical sense, most crucially when he says the Word became flesh (1:14). The Father has given Jesus authority over all flesh (17:2). Outside Jesus, the flesh resists God, but Jesus obeys God and his flesh strengthens the obedience of others. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

I will give...the world...my flesh. Looking forward to Calvary. Providing eternal life would be costly to the Giver. (CSB)

Note from 1:14... God's Word was embodied. John elsewhere refers to Jesus' humanity (4:6; 11:35; 19:28). "The Word, that is the Son of God (John 1:14), assumed the human nature in the womb of the Blessed Virgin Mary. So there are two natures – the divine and the human – inseparably joined in one person. There is one Christ, true God and true man" (AC III 1-2). "The divine essence is not changed into the human nature. But the two natures, unchanged, are personally united" (FC SD VII 36). (TLSB)

The incarnate Word offered Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of the world (1:29). "The Sacrament was instituted to comfort terrified minds. This happens when they believe that Christ's flesh is given as food for the life of the world" (Ap XXII 10). (TLSB)

Jesus then expanded the thought to show for whom He is the bread and at what cost. He came to give the bread, His human flesh, for the life of the world. God's own Son came as a human being to give up His perfect life for the life of all in this world. Jesus' words pointed to the cross and His sacrifice for us there. (PBC)

Anyone partaking of Him by faith will live forever. Jesus here gave a powerful testimony of His own person. By repeating the great facts which are the substance of His sermon, Jesus wants to work faith in the hearts of His hearers. The teaching concerning Jesus, His person and His office, the great facts of His salvation, is the means by which God draws hearts to the Savior, works willingness to believe And in one short statement Jesus also tells the manner in which He will earn salvation. He will give Himself, His body, His flesh, into death, for the sake of the life of the world. The human nature of Christ was sacrificed, was given for the salvation of the whole world, for all men without exception. In this way Jesus becomes the Bread of Life, the Bread from Heaven. (Kretzmann)

6:52 *Jews then disputed among themselves* – Heated argument erupted over Jesus’ language in v. 51, which the audience found offensive. (TLSB)

Their fighting showed itself in words. The truth often divides people from each other. The fault lies not with the truth, but with the flesh of man. When human reason, devoid of saving faith, asks "How can this be?" (verses 42, 52) Jesus counters with what God, in Christ, can and does do. He does not argue. He preaches the Gospel. But the way, their first "how" was asked because they rejected Jesus' divinity. With the second they reject the Gospel. (Buls)

Bengel: The Jews were questioning as to the possibility; Jesus replies as to the necessity; for in fact the latter infers the former. (Buls)

Luke 12:51 “Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division.”

The Jews do not understand the nature of faith, which must lay hold of and “inwardly digest” the flesh of Christ as the only way to God and only source of salvation; nor can they grasp Christ’s allusion to the Sacrament of the Altar, which He would institute on the night of His betrayal. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

6:53–58† Jesus’ statement that “unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you” (v. 53) is not a direct reference to the Lord’s Supper. In this discourse he emphasizes faith in response to testimony (see vv. 35, 40, 47, 51). Flesh and blood here point to Christ as the crucified one and the source of life. Jesus speaks of faith’s appropriation of himself as God’s appointed sacrifice. (CSB)

trōgōn, “chewing”: conveys gnawing, crunching, or gnashing with teeth. John uses this word almost exclusively, here and in 13:18, where “He who chews my bread has lifted up his heel against me” (author’s translation). Present tense here points to ongoing activity. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

6:53 *unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man* – Here we have the fourth and last "In very truth I tell you." This clause always denotes Jesus' divinity and authority. It is always used of an important truth. It was used the first time, verse 26, to reveal something about His hearers which they did not realize fully, if at all. It was used the second time, verse 32, to show them several errors in their thinking. It was used the third time, verse 47, to stress the faith alone theme in His sermon. And, finally, it is used here in verse 53 to introduce a present general (axiomatic) condition which serves as a warning to which there are no exceptions. (Buls)

This verse speaks of the present. The "as your very own" means "as your very own to satisfy your great spiritual needs." Faith in Jesus Christ is the closest personal relationship known to man. (Buls)

"Son of Man" appears thrice in this chapter: here and in verses 27 and 62. Look at each use in its context. The flesh and blood of this man are so precious because they give life. In verse 62 it speaks of His exaltation. This is no ordinary man. (Buls)

Lenski: To parallel the eating of the flesh with the drinking of the blood of the Son of man, as Jesus parallels them here, is to point in the clearest way to his own sacrificial death. (Buls)

Luther: To eat is synonymous here with to believe Remember during your entire life that all depends on this doctrine Wherever this doctrine remains in the pulpit, there is no danger from any heretics or errors In his Gospel St. John is intent upon impressing the doctrine of justification on the consciousness of the world and on making it clear. (Buls)

ean mē, “unless”; used sixteen times by John, much more than Matthew (six times), Mark (five times), Luke-Acts (seven times), or Paul (ten times). (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Jesus does not give some sort of spiritualized explanation of His previous statement. Instead He affirms the utter physical-ness and concreteness of what He said. “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” These words emphasize the fact that we should not separate faith from the person of Christ. To believe in Christ means to be united with Christ, who is flesh and blood. It is not a coincidence that Luther’s explanations of faith rely heavily on physical metaphors: grasping, hanging on, clinging to, and so forth. Faith is taking hold of the concrete person of Jesus Christ as a present person, one who is truly there both as God and man. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Faith is not mere spiritualized reflection about Jesus who is present only intangibly or solely in the heart. In contradiction to the enthusiasts who want to self-reference their spirituality and find Christ within themselves, we know that Christ is present with us and comes to us externally and outwardly. “We must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one His Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word. . . . We should and must constantly maintain that God will not deal with us except through His external Word and sacrament” (Tappert, Smalcald Articles III, VIII, 3, 10) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

There is to be no talk about faith that is divorced from the object of faith, which is the flesh of Christ, who comes to us in His preaching and His supper. “Now, these people are so foolish as to separate faith from the object to which faith is attached and bound on the ground that the object is something external. Yes, it must be external so that it can be perceived and grasped by the senses and thus brought into the heart, just as the entire Gospel is an external, oral proclamation. In short, whatever God effects in us He does through such external ordinances” (Tappert, Large Catechism, Baptism, 30) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

6:54 *who ever feeds on my flesh...blood* – “There is a twofold eating of Christ’s flesh. One is spiritual, which Christ describes especially in John 6:54. This ‘eating’ happens in no other way than with the Spirit and faith, in preaching and meditation on the Gospel, as well as in the Lord’s Supper.” (FC SD VII 61). (TLSB)

Therefore, it would be absurd to say that Jesus’ words in this verse have no connection with the Sacrament of the Altar: “Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.” To say that these words are only speaking of faith is to separate faith from the real presence of the One to whom faith clings, the One who comes to us with His flesh and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. The fact that Jesus’ words are meant to be taken literally is emphasized by His concluding remark, “I will raise him up at the last day.” We look forward to a real, bodily resurrection on that day because of our real, bodily receiving of Christ’s flesh and blood in the Sacrament. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Again and again Jesus came back to the truth those Jews resisted. By including His blood in the picture, He made sure they would be proven wrong if they took Him literally (Leviticus 17:12). But if they saw the spiritual truth (Leviticus 17:11), they would see in Jesus’ blood the blood of atonement. With the blood the reference to His sacrifice on Calvary was complete. (PBC)

has eternal life – Verse 53 is a warning. Verse 54, which states the opposite of verse 53, is a promise. (Buls)

Note that the verb is in the present tense, continued action. Twice before Jesus had spoken of "life eternal," in verses 27 and 40. In the first instance Jesus spoke of having the lasting food which results in life eternal. In the second instance He spoke of seeing, which is believing, the Son of Man for life eternal. There Jesus added: "I will raise him on the last day." Now in verse 54 once more Jesus speaks of life eternal, the possession of the one who is closely bound to Jesus' flesh and blood by faith. Again Jesus adds "And I will raise him on the last day." (Buls)

Like golden threads these themes run through Jesus' sermon. He yearns for their conversion and at the same time His is strengthening His disciples' faith. (Buls)

John 3:15 "that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life"

John 3:36 "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him."

6:55 *true food and my blood...true drink* – As the Jews grumbled among themselves, they denied that Jesus could be the bread from heaven. They balked at the very idea of eating Jesus' flesh. Many felt He was a fake: "Eat His flesh! Drink His blood! Preposterous! In response Jesus insisted He was talking of true meat and true drink. The Jews had known figurative flesh and figurative blood. The OT feasts and sacrifices were shadows; Jesus was the reality. (PBC)

Only through faith in Christ crucified do people have what they really need for eternal life, a life with God that earthly food and drink cannot provide. "His flesh is a truly life-giving food and His blood a truly life-giving drink" (FC SD VIII 76). (TLSB)

The verse is a compound sentence. Why use the word "real" or "genuine" here? Bengel says: "This affirmation is opposed to the doubt of the Jews." Evidently he means that the Jews were rejecting Jesus' flesh and blood as that of the God-Man. (Buls)

Lenski: 'Real' denotes food that will then do exactly what Jesus says. (Buls)

Ordinary food for the body is temporary and merely sustains life. Jesus' flesh and blood is eternal and gives eternal life. Ordinary food is produced by the earth which is God's creation. Jesus' flesh and blood comes from Him Who is the eternal God. This food and drink are true, genuine, real both as to essence and purpose. (Buls)

6:56 *abides in me and I in him* – In Baptism Jesus came to live in us through the Spirit.

This is a major theme in John, defining the relationship not only of persons in the Trinity (1:32-33; 14:10; 15:10), but also between believers and Christ (5:38; 8:31; 15:7, 9-10). St. Bernard of Clairvaux: "I wish to follow with all my strength the lowly Jesus; I wish Him, who loved me and gave Himself for me, to embrace me with the arms of His love, which suffered in my stead; but I must also feed on the Paschal Lamb, for unless I eat His flesh and drink His blood I have no life in me. It is one thing to follow Jesus, another to hold Him, another to feed on Him. To follow Him is a life-giving purpose; to hold and embrace Him a solemn joy; to feed on Him a blissful life" (SLSB, pp. 292-293). (TLSB)

Compare this verse with verse 54. The first part is identical. But in verse 54 we are told what the individual believer has and what will result from this on the last day. In verse 55 we are told that the individual believer is closely bound up with his Lord. (Buls)

"In" should be compared to John 17:23. This "in" denotes the mystical union between believer and Savior. This use of this preposition is found only in the New Testament and no place else in literature. Even a husband and wife are not so closely bound as are believer and Savior. Furthermore, the bond between husband and wife ends when either one of both die. But the death of the Savior brought about this bond between believer and Savior, and it will last forever. (Buls)

John 15:1 "“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.”"

John 15:5 "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”"

John 17:23 "in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.”"

These words draw us into the Upper Room on Maundy Thursday, where Jesus said, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit" (John 15:5). We "remain" in Christ and He in us by the eating of His flesh and the drinking of His blood. John 15:1 "“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.”" (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

When one partakes of this flesh and blood of Christ, one is participating in the divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) and through faith receives all the blessings of life that Christ has and gives. Martin Luther: "[Chris wants to say,] 'If you grasp my flesh, you are not grasping ordinary flesh and blood, but you eat flesh and blood which deify, that is, which give the character and power of the Godhead.' They do not act like flesh and blood, but they have the character and power which God has. ... This flesh ... will deify you through and through, that is, give you divine power, virtue, and activity, take away sin, and help you out of all misery" (WA 33:188). So it is that the ancients often referred to the Sacrament as "the medicine of immortality. John 15:1 "“I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.”" (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Jesus was also talking about an intimate spiritual union that takes place between His and us when we believe in Him and continue to feed on Him. Each Christian needs to see the importance of continuing to nurture faith in Jesus. We do that by the Word, as Jesus shows elsewhere (8:31). When faith is so nourished, the believer remains in Jesus and Jesus in the believer. So in our faith we are united with Christ. We cannot explain how that works; we just know it does because Jesus said so. Each day and each hour we have the comfort of knowing that He stays with us. (PBC)

6:57 *I live because of the Father* – The Son, begotten of the Father from eternity (see Nicene Creed), is one with the Father (10:30). (TLSB)

The first clause speaks of Father and Son. The second clause speaks of Son and believer. (Buls)

Luther: This means that just as Jesus derives His life from the Father from eternity, so we, too shall live in Him, but with this difference, that He is God's Son from eternity, and that He accepts us in mercy as heirs of His possessions and makes us partakers of His divinity. (Buls)

John 10:30 "I and the Father are one.”"

John 10:38 “But if I do it, even though you do not believe me, believe the miracles, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father.”

John 14:10 “Don’t you believe that I am in the Father, and that the Father is in me? The words I say to you are not just my own. Rather, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work”

6:58 *the bread that came down from heaven.* As in v. 49, the value of the manna is limited and is contrasted with the heavenly food Christ gives. For the tenth time in this chapter reference is made to Jesus’ coming down from heaven or to the bread from heaven. (CSB)

From verse 32 to 51 Jesus uses the word "bread", which is figurative. From verses 51 to 58 He uses "flesh" which is literal. And in verse 58 He uses the word "bread" twice figuratively. (Buls)

Lenski: The concluding statement merely rounds out the entire discourse . . . Jesus means to say: 'I have not told you fully about this Bread that actually came down out of heaven and how it differs from that manna . . . It makes him who eats it live forever.' The discourse thus closes with an implied invitation. (Buls)

Compare verses 48 to 51^a with verse 58. Verse 58 summarized what Jesus had said earlier. He uses bread of Himself, the incarnate Christ, figuratively. Eating this bread means believing in this Christ. (Buls)

By the way, note that Jesus speaks of Himself as flesh and blood in verses 51-57 but that for "blood" there is no counterpart as there was with "flesh." He does not say "bread and wine." This is another indication that Jesus was not speaking of the Lord's Supper. (Buls)

The sermon began with Jesus speaking about life eternal (verse 27) and it ends here in verse 58 with "he shall live forever." He yearns to give those who reject Him eternal life. (Buls)

The manna had limited value but the heavenly food Jesus gives us has eternal use. (PBC)

To summarize and close His talk, Jesus repeated the comparison He made earlier with the manna (verses 49, 50). Those who heard Jesus that day did not misunderstand Him. He made sure of it by continually returning to key thoughts. Each of the following repeats several times:

- Jesus is bread.
- Jesus, the bread, came down from heaven, sent from the Father.
- Whoever eats the bread, that is, believes in Jesus, has eternal life.
- Jesus will raise that person up at the Last Day.

Jesus taught these truths at the synagogue, where worshipers met regularly. (PBC)

6:22–59 Unlike the perishable manna God gave to Israel through Moses, Jesus comes down from heaven as the true bread to give life to all who believe in Him. Contrary to popular notions, no one “chooses” to believe in Christ; the initiative belongs entirely to God through His Word (v 44; cf 14:6). Those united by faith to Christ will be raised up on the Last Day to enjoy eternal communion with the Father. • O God, draw me ever closer to You through Your Word and Sacraments. Amen. (TLSB)

The Words of Eternal Life

60 When many of his disciples heard it, they said, “This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?” **61** But Jesus, knowing in himself that his disciples were grumbling about this, said to them, “**Do you take offense at this? 62 Then what if you were to see the Son of Man ascending**

to where he was before? 63 It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life. 64 But there are some of you who do not believe.” (For Jesus knew from the beginning who those were who did not believe, and who it was who would betray him.) 65 And he said, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless it is granted him by the Father.”66 After this many of his disciples turned back and no longer walked with him. 67 So Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you want to go away as well?” 68 Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life, 69 and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God.” 70 Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve? And yet one of you is a devil.” 71 He spoke of Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray him.

6:60 Of our versions only KJV and NKJV translate "Therefore." Likely the word means this is a narrative. It is not an easy word to translate. Very often translators leave the little words untranslated, sometimes with, sometimes without, justification. (Buls)

They say: "Why waste time listening to Him." Compare John 10:20: "He has a devil and is mad." The Gospel is foolishness to the unbeliever. (Buls)

NEB has an attractive rendering: "This is more than we can stomach! Why listen to such talk?" (Buls)

"Hearing" is used in two senses in this verse. They heard Him and yet they could not hear Him. (Buls)

disciples - This is wider group of followers than the Twelve. (TLSB)

hard. Hard to accept, not hard to understand. The thought of eating the flesh of the Son of Man and drinking his blood was doubtless shocking to most of Jesus' Jewish hearers (see note on vv. 53–58). (CSB)

sklayros – means “hard, dried, rough,” with the connotation here of something that is harsh and unpleasant. It is interesting to note that the noun form of this word sklarotas means “hardness of heart, stubbornness,” as in Romans 2:5. And sklarotrchos means “stiff-necked, stubborn” as in Acts 7:51. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

This raises the question of what actually is hard in this instance. It is Jesus' teaching or the hearts of the hearers? The answer is the latter. Jesus' teaching is only hard to sinful man because of the sclerosis of our spirits, our stubborn, hard-hearted refusal to listen to and believe His Word. Jesus' life-giving teaching ricochets off of stony and faithless hearts. Sinful man fails to see the real source of the problem and instead blames Jesus for being hard, harsh and unpleasant. It is only such that Jesus is sklaros, “a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall” (Romans 9:33) (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Ironically, without making that connection themselves, they were saying Jesus was hard to accept. (PBC)

1 Corinthians 2:14 “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

2 Corinthians 4:4 “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God.”

Ephesians 4:18 “They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.”

6:61 *disciples were grumbling* – The Greek implies that no one needed to inform Jesus as to their reaction. All of John 6 is replete with evidence of Jesus' divinity and humanity, and furthermore, by virtue of the incarnation divine powers and attributes were communicated to the man, Jesus Christ. (Buls)

The emphasis is on a "snare" rather than on a "stumbling block." The Truth ensnares the unbeliever, not because it is Truth, but because of the unbelief of the individual. Jesus is not asking for information. He is reminding them of the consequences of unbelief. (Buls)

Again there is grumbling reminiscent of what the children of Israel did in the wilderness in the days of Moses. Note especially that those who are doing the grumbling are the disciples of Jesus! Thought this is not a reference to the Twelve, there is nevertheless dissension in the ranks of the other followers of our Lord. Trouble is not coming to Christ from the “outside” but from the “inside.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Already in 6:15 we can see that there were other expectations and agendas at work here. So it is in the church still today. Many of the “disciples” of Jesus often have worldly goals and plans that are not consistent with the Gospel. When Jesus and His Word don’t turn out to be quite what they expected, they begin to grumble and murmur, turning away from the Lord’s teaching or wanting to change it to make it more palatable. Their motivation is earthly success rather than godly faithfulness, human acceptance rather than divine favor. Unbelief is just as much a threat from within the visible institution of the church as it is from the outside. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

do you take offense at this – Offend is a form of scandalon. A “scandal” a *trap stick* (*bent sapling*), that is, *snare*. This draws to the mind of the original hearers/readers the stick an animal stumbles over, causing the trap to shut. The Jews would see the crucifixion of the Messiah as a stumbling block because anyone killed on a cross was cursed. It was scandalous to think that their God was executed as a criminal.

skandalizei, “to stumble.” Matthew uses this word and its root *skandalon* nineteen times, but John only twice—here and 16:1. A metaphorical understanding presents no scandal; those offended must have taken Jesus’ words literally. (Concordia Pulpit Resources - Volume 19, Part 3)

Scandalon includes both the idea of being offended as well as falling away or going astray. Those who do not receive the truth of Christ in faith are scandalized by His words; they fall into unbelief and go astray from following Him. The Gospel creates faith or causes people to stumble. “We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor.1:23-24). The incarnation of Christ and the sacramental nature of faith caused these disciples to stumble. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Isaiah 8:14 “and he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare.”

Matthew 11:6 “Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.”

Matthew 13:57 “And they took offense at him. But Jesus said to them, “Only in his hometown and in his own house is a prophet without honor.”

Romans 9:31-33 “but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.” As it is written: “See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.”

1 Corinthians 1:22-24 “Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

1 Peter 2:8 “and, “A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for.”

6:62 *Son of Man*. The conditional sentence is an example of what is called "aposiopesis." (Buls) Robertson: "It is a conscious suppression of part of a sentence under the influence of a strong emotion like anger, fear, pity." (Buls)

Jesus is disappointed in them. (Buls)

We supply "what then?" AAT: "What if you see the Son of Man go up where He was before?" (Buls)

They "saw." Look at verses 2, 14, 26, 36. A similar thought occurs in 3:12. Also 8:28 and Matt. 26:64. There are far greater things which would yet follow: His crucifixion, death, resurrection and ascension. These great saving acts of Jesus Christ would stagger people's imagination. He is saying: "You will need faith to accept these great truths." (Buls)

ascending. Probably refers to the series of events that began with the cross, where Jesus was glorified. (CSB)

If the claim that Jesus is God in the flesh was offensive, how much more shocking would it be for them to see Him ascend in the flesh to His heavenly throne as Lord over all creation! If the notion of eternal life being given through the body of Jesus was appalling to them, how much more appalling would it be for them to behold the true humanity of Jesus sharing fully in His divine glory as the Son of God! (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

If they can't accept that Jesus is God and man they will also not believe it when he ascends back to heavenly glory.

where he was before. Referring to Jesus' heavenly preexistence. (CSB)

6:63 Cf. 3:5–6, 8. *are spirit and ... life*. Are the Spirit at work producing life. (CSB)

Just as fleshly bodies need spirit to have life, believers need the Holy Spirit to make them alive. The Spirit is given through Jesus' words. When Jesus is talking about "flesh" He is not saying "My flesh," as

in vv. 51, 54-56. Jesus contrasted the sinful nature (“flesh”) with the spiritual nature, which lust for bread rather than the things of God (v. 26), which cannot help in spiritual matters. (TLSB)

The Holy Spirit proceeding eternally from the Father and the Son, uses the Word of God to create faith and life in hearers. (TLSB)

Note that this verse begins with a compound sentence the parts of which are divided only by a comma. In the first member of this compound sentence both subjects and predicate have articles. They are interchangeable. (Buls)

No law can "make alive" in the sense of "justify." People are made alive, are justified, only through Christ and His Gospel. No one or nothing else can do that. (Buls)

The words "Spirit and flesh" in this verse have evoked much discussion and many books. The Calvinists explain "flesh" as "**MY flesh**" (Jesus' flesh). But if that is what Jesus meant He contradicted what He had said in verses 51, 53-56. In fact, He would be denying the whole discourse. (Buls)

Lutherans have interpreted this word in two ways: (Buls)

1. Kretzmann and Luther: "The contrast between flesh and spirit in 63 has nothing whatever to do with the Eucharist, since it opposed the work of the Spirit of God and the unprofitable working of the nature condition of man."
2. Ylvisaker and Bengel: "If Jesus were merely 'flesh,' a human being only, then the eating and drinking of Him would not avail unto eternal life, it would have no beneficial effect whatsoever."

Furthermore, Lutherans have interpreted "Spirit" in two ways:

1. Luther and Kretzmann: "The Holy Spirit." (Buls)
2. Ylvisaker and Bengel: "But He is also 'spirit,' that is, God in essence and in truth, and it is this 'spirit' which permeates and animates His true humanity, and make Him the true Bread from heaven which mediates eternal life for everyone who eats and drinks of Him. He is God and man in one person." (Buls)

Compare what Jesus says about "His Words" in verse 63 with what Peter says in verse 68. The Lutheran teaching about the means of grace is very important. We find the Lord only in His Word, especially His Gospel. (Buls)

Jesus words in this verse are not meant to be taken as a denigration of created, material things. Rather, His words refer to the inability of ordinary temporal things to give eternal life. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

“The words I have spoken to you are Spirit and they are life.” Jesus gives us His Spirit and life by means of His words. Christ’s Spirit and life are left to float around un-locatedly for us but are joined concretely to the Word. Therefore, we should not seek these gifts apart from this Word of Christ. Martin Luther explains:

If the Lord had stopped short after the words “It is the Spirit that gives life,” the schismatic spirits would have shouted: “Spirit! Spirit! Baptism and the Lord’s Supper will not do it. No, you must creep into some corner and wait for the Spirit.” To anticipate and forestall this, Chris adds these

words: “The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life ...” Christ does not want to give you the right to run to and fro in search of the Spirit, to lose yourself in reverie and say: “I have this by inspiration of the Holy Spirit.” Actually, it may be the devil who inspired you! ... [Christ] binds us solely to His Word. He does not want to see the Holy Spirit divorced from His Word. Whenever you hear anyone boast that he has something by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and it has no basis in God’s Word, no matter what it may be, tell him that this is the work of the devil. Christ does not bind you to anything but His mouth and His Word. He does not want to leave you wandering aimlessly about; He wants you to hear His Word. He declares: “The words which I speak are spiritual. Therefore if you want to obtain the Holy Spirit, you must adhere to My words; for they are spirit and life.” (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

The Jews’ offense at Jesus’ Word is not surprising. They were depending on their flesh, trusting their own reasoning, for understanding. But their flesh could not comprehend Jesus because His message was of the Spirit and was meant to reach their souls and give spiritual life. (PBC)

6:64 *some of you do not believe* – It is not a surprise to our Lord that even many of His disciples are rejecting His teaching. As the Son of God He was aware from the beginning who the unbelieving ones were, those whose motives for following Him were impure. He knows very well that even among the Twelve there is one who sklaros and faithless, one who would betray Him to death. Again we are reminded that some of the worse assaults on Christ’s church and His teaching come from among those who are known as His followers. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Does the first sentence of this verse mean that some of the crowd did believe? The commentaries hesitate to answer this question. Does the word "crowd" in verse 66 denote a group different from the "crowd" in verse 60? The fact that John narrows it down to Judas in verses 70-71 perhaps indicates that all of the hearers who had been with Him at Bethsaida and came to Capernaum left Him. But we cannot be dogmatic. The text does not inform us on this point.

"From the beginning" -- how far back does this phrase take us? In any case the phrase plainly indicates Jesus' divinity and that Jesus knew before this day in Capernaum who would not believe and also that Judas was going to betray Him. We stand in awe of the love of Jesus. Though He knew that some would *nodssot* believe and that Judas was going to betray Him, Jesus made every attempt to bring these people to Christian faith. (Buls)

Lenski: As regards Judas: Jesus chose him 'not for the purpose' of betrayal but only 'with the knowledge' of that betrayal This foreknowledge rested on the act of Judas, not the act of Judas on the foreknowledge. (Buls)

That's about as far as anyone dare go in explaining this verse. (Buls)

Bengel: John has diligently marked the successive steps in the deadly wickedness of Judas and entertained an especial antipathy towards him. (Buls)

Judas and those who arrested Jesus did not catch Jesus off guard. Long before they laid their plans Jesus knew what they were going to do. (Buls)

Even from the time Judas joined the disciples, Jesus knew Judas would betray Him. This does not mean Judas was predestined for damnation. (TLSB)

6:65† Coming to Christ for salvation is never a human achievement (see vv. 37, 39, 44–45). (CSB)

Expression used for faith five times in ch 6 (vv 35, 37, 44, 45, 65). Cf Eph 2:8–9. (TLSB)

unless it is granted him by the Father – Faith and its object are a gift of the Father. Trace this thought through the whole discourse. In verse 65 we have a present general, axiomatic conditional sentence to which there are no exceptions. Ponder the "it has been granted" phrase. God has granted this gift before the believer is even aware of it. Forms of this verb are found in verses 37, 39, 51, 52, and 65. A sermon could be preached on this verb in these five verses. Christianity is monergistic throughout. Confessional Lutheranism is very sensitive concerning this matter. (Buls)

The NIV translation “enabled” is weak and could give the synergistic impression that the Father activates a dormant ability with ourselves to come to Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

He told them again, therefore, that they could not come to Jesus, that is, believe in Him, unless the Father enabled them to come. Every Christian can thank God for Jesus and faith. (PBC)

6:66 *From this time.*† May also mean “For this reason” or both. (For two meanings possibly implied in one phrase, see notes on 1:5; 3:3; 6:35; 16:9.) (CSB)

many ... turned back. Jesus had already made clear what discipleship meant, and many were not ready to receive life in the way he taught. (CSB)

As a result of what? They rejected the offer and gift of faith from the Father. Look at verses 37, 44 and 65. Man has no ability to bring himself to God. His rejection of God's gift of faith is fatal. As a result "they no longer associated" with Him. "Walk" is used metaphorically in the Scriptures to denote a style of living. (Buls)

We see in this sixth chapter of John a great reversal in Jesus' popularity. After the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand, Jesus had throngs following Him; they had wanted to make Him king. Now upon hearing the specifics of His teaching, the great crowds are gone, and Jesus is left with only His closest followers. Even when the Messiah Himself is doing the preaching, the Gospel doesn't always meet with numerical success. In fact sometimes just the opposite is the case – the preaching of the truth drives away unbelieving followers. Large crowds don't necessarily mean large numbers of believers. Sometimes the Lord grants numerical success, as He did on Pentecost; sometimes He doesn't, as this account shows. This should be of great comfort to the preacher. It is not his task to be successful in a worldly sense but to be faithful to the Word and to leave the results to the Lord. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

6:67 *do you want to go away as well* – Jesus doesn't direct this question to them as if He feared that they too were doing to leave or as if He were ignorant in regard to their attitude. The way the question is worded in the Greek shows that He expects a negative answer. Jesus asks this question not for His own sake but for their sake. He wishes to draw them closer to Himself. The question invites a confession of faith. It is an opportunity for them to be revealed as ones who were truly given by the Father to come to Jesus. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

Jesus does not coerce people to follow Him. (PBC)

6:68 As in the Synoptic Gospels, Peter acts as spokesman. (CSB)

words of eternal life. The expression is general. Peter was not speaking of a formula but of the thrust of Jesus' teaching. He perceived the truth of v. 63. (CSB)

We sing this verse when we about to hear the Gospel lesson as a part of our worship service. Like Peter, we are saying that this is the only word that counts and we want to hear it.

The materialistic Jews, verse 34, and Peter use the same term, but how differently! "Words" are those which contain and which give eternal life. Compare what Jesus says about "His Words" in verse 63 with what Peter says in verse 68. The Lutheran teaching about the means of grace is very important. We find the Lord only in His Word, especially His Gospel. (Buls)

Peter's reply shows that Jesus is not just one religious option among many others of equal value. He is the only one who reveals the Father. He is the only one who gives everlasting life. Any other place that the disciples might go would only offer false teaching and false hope. Jesus alone has the words that are Spirit and life. Having been brought to faith in Christ, they will follow no one else. Peter's confession stands in sharp contrast to references to Judas in vv64, 70-71. (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)

6:69 *We have believed and come to know.* Since the Greek verbs are in the perfect tense, they mean, "We have entered a state of belief and knowledge that has continued until the present time." (CSB)

The conviction of faith precedes the acknowledgment. Furthermore, Peter uses the Greek word "know," to know with approval, as opposed to know without approval. (Buls)

the Holy One of God. Applied to Jesus in Mk 1:24; Lk 4:34 (see Ac 2:27). (CSB)

Further description of Jesus' identity as Messiah (cf Ac 3:14; 4:27, 30; 1Jn 2:20). Title used once by demons (Lk 4:34). (TLSB)

There are variant readings for "Holy One of God." Some have "the Christ," "the holy one of God," "the Son of God," "The Christ," "The Son of the Living God." In all simplicity Peter is they had said nothing, as far as we know, they were deeply impressed. Furthermore, they did not follow Judas, a devil, who rejected Jesus and His Word. (Buls)

The word for "Holy One" is *agios*, which can also be translated as "saint." Jesus is the Saint of God. All those who are made one with Christ in faith, who are baptized into His body, and therefore call "saints." For they have been made holy by the redeeming work of the "holy One of God. This title for Jesus calls to mind similar designations in the OT: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are Mine ... For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior (Isaiah 43:1, 3). And it is written in Psalm 16:10, "You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay." (Concordia Pulpit Resources – Volume 10, Part 3)