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Johann Michael Reu
Translated by Everette W. Meier and Paul I. Johnston

Historical Introduction by Paul I. Johnston

Johann Michael Reu (1869–1943) was one of North America’s foremost Lutheran scholars and homileticians in the first half of the twentieth century. Born in Germany, Reu came to America after graduation from Wilhelm Loehe’s mission seminary at Neuendettelsau. After serving rural parishes in upstate Illinois for nine years, Reu became professor of practical theology at Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, in 1899—a position he held until his death.

Reu is best remembered for his monumental original researches into the history and use of Luther’s Small Catechism in sixteenth century Germany. Reu’s nine-volume Quellen, published in Germany between 1904 and 1935, provided original texts of both catechism and Bible history instruction in German-speaking lands, in addition to Reu’s own copious historical introductions to the texts. It was this work which won him an honorary doctorate from the theological faculty of the University of Erlangen.

Reu served three times as his church body’s official delegate to meetings of the Lutheran World Convention, and he gave major addresses at two of these gatherings of world Lutheran leaders. He was active in raising and sending American Lutheran relief funds to needy Lutherans in Germany following World War I. He also served as the Iowa Synod’s representative to the National Lutheran Council, and played a
pivotal role in the union negotiations which led to the formation of the American Lutheran Church (1930).

An authority on Luther and his translation of the Bible, Reu also has the distinction of being only the second Lutheran in North America to author a complete Sunday school curriculum singlehandedly, the *Warburg Lesson Helps*. His *How I Tell the Bible Stories to My Sunday School* books of children’s sermons make him the grandfather of this practice which many today consider standard in the Lutheran worship service. His various student editions of the *Small Catechism* sold over a hundred thousand copies during his lifetime. And his books on the history of the Augsburg Confession, Luther’s German Bible, homiletics, and catechetics continue to be standard works in their respective fields.\(^1\)

A researcher whose findings were incorporated into the Weimar edition of Luther’s works, Reu was a modest man whose love for and contributions to Lutheran scholarship and research were seldom appreciated by his peers in America.\(^2\) He died following surgery at Rochester, Minnesota in his 73rd year, still teaching a full load of classes at the seminary.

The following is a translation of a textual study Reu prepared in German for publication in the *Kirchliche Zeitschrift*, a bilingual theological periodical of the former Iowa Synod, which Reu edited from 1904 until his death.\(^3\) Reu taught courses in biblical interpretation at Wartburg Seminary on such New Testament books as Galatians and Philippians during his long and distinguished career. This study is an example of his scholarly acumen and his directed adaptation of a text for homiletical use—a task at which Reu excelled.

**An Exegetical Study of 2 Cor. 6:1–10**

**Johann Michael Reu**

The second letter of Paul to the Corinthians has a chronological-geographical construction. In spirit the reader follows the apostle from Ephesus (1:8–10) through Troas (2:12f.), to Macedonia (7:5ff.); here he remains with Paul for a short time in the congregations of Macedonia (chs. 8–9); finally he is led with Paul to the congregation at Corinth, to which Paul wanted to set out from Macedonia (chs. 10–13); or another way it could be expressed: the first part (ch. 1–7) deals with the
immediate past and its various misunderstandings; the second (chs. 8-9) with the present and its practical problems; the third (chs. 10-13) is devoted to the future and its concerns. Our text is derived from the first main part, and belongs here to the great realization concerning the New Testament office of the ministry (2:11-7:4). Within this section it needs in turn to be understood in the light of 5:20. Paul had spoken about the condition of reconciliation effected by God through Christ, i.e., by the restoration of peaceful relations between God and the world (5:16-19), and from there he goes on to the portrayal of the task which the apostles are assigned to carry out. It is a twofold one: 1. to the world, which has not yet entered into this peaceful relationship, they are to proclaim: *katallagēte tō theō*, be ye reconciled with God, i.e., enter into this relation of peace (5:20-21); 2. that they as co-workers with God are to admonish all who have already entered that state, to make sure that the grace they have experienced will however not be accepted without a result developing from it (6:1). Our text begins with this second task.

"As co-workers, however, we also admonish you, that you not receive the grace of God in vain. For it says, 'In the agreeable time I heard you and on a day of salvation I helped you.' Behold, now is the highly agreeable time, now is the day of salvation."

In company with whom is Paul concentrating himself here when he uses the first person plural and writes *parakaloumen*? With none other than Timothy, who at the moment of the composition of the letter was with Paul, who had undertaken the mission work carried out in portions of Corinth and Achaia, and who in 2 Cor. 1:1 is specifically designated by Paul himself as the co-author of this letter. From there up to 9:15 Paul speaks in the entire epistle with predilection for the first person plural and understands himself always together with Timothy of his statements do not take a completely general nature such that they can refer to all Christians, or else even if he is thinking of other co-workers, he still thinks primarily of him. It is that way in 5:20 and that way here. Then it is also apparent that the *synergountes* [co-workers] refers to Paul and Timothy, perhaps even to other co-workers, but not to Christians in general. But to whom will the *syn* in *synergountes* be understood as referring? Is Paul thereby designating himself
and Timothy as co-workers with God or as co-workers with the Corinthian congregation? One has considered the latter and suggested that with the call *katallagête* the apostle has invited the Corinthians to the work of entering into the relation of reconciliation and that now it would befit him and his co-workers to support this activity of the Corinthians and to cooperate with them. But by this the fact is overlooked that entrance into the relation of peace, i.e., faith, is never described as work that mankind has to do—it is precisely referred to in John 6:29 as God’s work, in contrast to the opinion of the Jews, who there thought that *they* could work the works of God; furthermore, it is forgotten that in 5:20 the world is thought of which has not yet entered, whereas 6:1 refers to the Corinthians and such others and refers to them as those who have already entered. The word *parakaloumen* indicates a different formulation. In v. 20 the same verb was used and it was stated: God exhorts through us. From there both the *synergountes* here and the *kai* in verse 1 explain themselves. Paul and his fellow apostles are co-workers of God. They are thus, whenever God admonishes through them: Be ye reconciled with God; they thus are likewise when it now is intended to admonish those Corinthians, who have already entered into the relation of peace, not to receive the grace of God in vain. The fact that they are God’s co-workers gives them the right to such admonition, and ought to impart double force to their admonition in the eyes of the Corinthians. These show, if they reject the opinion of Paul and Timothy, that they are not rejecting just a man who perhaps has risen to be admonisher himself, but no one less than God’s co-workers.

The admonition of Paul and his fellow apostles, which they as God’s co-workers are directing to the Corinthians, is to that effect, not to receive the grace of God in vain. As the position indicates, the emphasis lies on the *mê eis keron* and the *humas*. It is a question for the Corinthians, who apparently are in special danger of facing this aspect; and not for the purpose of being admonished that they in faith accept and receive the grace of God, which has appeared before and has been revealed to them in the message of the universal reconciliation and the friendly disposition of God over against sinners, that has been brought to their attention—it is assumed as already having happened—but that they themselves might not receive it *eis
kenon. That is the reason why Paul worries as he looks at his Corinthians. He fears the Corinthians might be receiving the message of God and his grace in such a way that it may result in emptiness, that no God-pleasing content, no fruit of sanctification may be produced from it. He knows how readily they like to be occupied with religious problems, how willingly they talk about the reconciliation carried out by Christ, how they also gladly hear the message of God’s grace, even that they have in fact accepted it in faith; however, he also knows how little an effect on their moral life has grown from it all the same. For that reason it cannot be allowed to continue; it must come to pass that they reflect a truly moral lifestyle as the necessary fruit of their acceptance of grace. Moreover the aorist infinitive dexasthai precludes any thought of their previous entrance into the relation of peace and the grace of God they received at that time; at the very least it precludes that this alone and above all is what is being considered. On the contrary, Paul is thinking only or surely in the main about the grace that is being offered to them and that continually anew is coming to meet them even now during the entire course of their Christian life. It is true of it, that it is new every morning. Then, however, it also needs to be received each day in such a way, that each day new fruits of sanctification develop from it and it must daily approach step by step more and more to obedience, to the imitation, to the transfiguration into the likeness of Christ. For that purpose, as co-workers of God it is the second task of Paul and his fellow apostles to admonish those who have already become believers.

When the apostle now by quotation of an expression from Is. 49:8 establishes a foundation, the question thus arises whether with it he intends to supply evidence in support of his plea that the Corinthians should not receive grace in vain, or is it the case that he now admonishes them in a more general way, hence whether he means to supply arguments to support what he and his fellow apostles are supposed to be doing, or the conduct of the Corinthians, that he admonishes them about? If the former is the case, then 6:2 must be the basis not only for the activities mentioned in 6:1 but also in 5:20, which speaks of Paul and his fellow apostles. They have to fulfill their twofold task, because now the moment has arrived of which Is. 49 has spoken. The decision depends on whether or not the apostle intends to use
the quotation in accordance with its original context. If he does not, then our second verse can serve as a basis for the plea that the Corinthians should not receive grace in vain. They should not do that because what Isaiah has prophesied concerning the Messiah has now occurred, God has now helmed him in the restoration of salvation, consequently now the acceptable time is at hand which the Corinthians should take advantage of, especially since they do not know how long it will last. According to Luther’s well-known saying it is indeed like this, that the time of salvation will not come back again, once it has been present. The time of salvation is like the cloudburst which never comes back to that place once it has passed it. Therefore, “seize it, while the opportunity is at hand, while the time of grace holds out and the weather is fair; idle hands are bound to have a bad year.” The matter appears different if the apostle is using the Isaiah quotation in accordance with its context. That is, according to the original Hebrew text the Isaiah passage reads: “In the time of pleasure, then I shall hear you, and on the day of salvation, then I shall support you, I shall keep you and make with you the covenant of the people.” The apostle follows the translation of the Septuagint, and this permits him to limit himself to the expression of the first half of the verse: kairō dektō epēkousa sou kai en ēmera sōtērias eboēthēsa soi [in the day of my right hand I have heard you and in the day of salvation I have run to your side to help you]: which is all that is of interest to him. In what way the translator intended these aorists to be understood is immaterial to him. For him they are a declaration of what has now come to pass, and the question is only, in what this consists for him. According to the context of Isaiah, the exaltation and the assistance which God bestows upon his Servant, the Messiah, consists in this, that to him it is granted to establish the community of God by allowing those who are bound to emerge into liberty; by permitting those who are sitting in darkness to come out into the light. That, however, is a matter for Christ, as it is for all those who as his co-workers carry on what he has begun. This, then, is the thought: Now the relation of peace with the world is established through Christ, with the special help of God; now the acceptable time, the day of salvation, has come near when the community of God can and must be built on the basis of this fact; therefore, it is now
up to Paul and all the other co-workers of God and Christ, that they take advantage of this time, that they with all the zeal and concentration, all the powers at their command, fulfill their double assignment: that they plead with all those who still belong to the world, to enter into the relation of peace which God has established through Christ, and that they admonish all those who have already entered, not to receive the grace of God in vain. Even though this formulation makes a practical application of these verses to the congregation somewhat more difficult, nevertheless there are two reasons why it is the correct interpretation: 1. the apostle is likewise not as a rule in the habit of using his Old Testament quotations indiscriminately, but uses them in accordance with their original context; 2. also in the following (v. 3–10) nothing is mentioned about what the Corinthians are or should be doing, but about that which they, Paul and his co-apostles, are accomplishing in their service as God’s co-workers. And is it not also valuable for the congregation to which one preaches on the basis of this text, to be told: The zeal of those who work for you in order to build you up better and better into God’s congregation, has its foundation, among other things, in the fact that now the God-agreeable time for such work has arrived, that now the day of salvation is here, in which it is intended that souls be won for Christ and those already won be strengthened, and God willing, that more and more you are made out to be people who do not receive the grace of God in vain? Furthermore, if one also calls to mind that, according to the rest of the New Testament with its doctrine of the universal priesthood, also all believers form part of the synergoustes in the broader sense, then v. 2, in light of the understanding advocated here, can truly become a powerful appeal for them to consider their own mission- and evangelization-duty and to put it into action, now and as long as the time of salvation still continues in which God desires to build his congregation on earth. For those in the office of the ministry themselves, however, our section is at the same time a reminder that in this time of salvation they have a twofold task to fulfill: They are not only to be full of zeal to build the existing church, also by no means are they simply to insist on sound doctrine in it, but they are also to insist on improvement of life, on the fruits of doctrine and faith; but they are to make the most of this time of salvation also in this
way, that they seek to win those who are still not won and to bring them into the relation of peace.

Vs. 3–10: “Not giving offense in any way, in order that the ministry not be criticised, on the contrary, we are proving ourselves in everything to be servants of God in great perseverance:

in hardships, in troubles, in difficulties;
during beatings, during imprisonments, during riots;
in drudgery, in all-night vigils, in times of fasting;
in purity, in understanding, in patience, in kindness;
in the Holy Spirit, in unfeigned love, in the Word of truth,
in the power of God;
wielding the weapons of righteousness in the right hand and the left;
in honor and dishonor;
in disrepute and good repute;
as deceivers and yet truthful;
as unknown and yet known;
as dying, and behold, we live;
as chastened and yet not being killed;
as sorrowful and yet always joyful;
as poor, yet making many rich;
as having nothing, yet possessing everything.”

When one bears in mind that the ancient church’s interpretation of this entire section was as an admonition to the reader or as an admonition of Paul to himself and to his co-apostles, it is apparent that this was a gross misunderstanding of its intent. Unfortunately, even Luther was unable to free himself of it and therefore he translates, “Let none of us give offense, so that our ministry will not be slandered.” The entire extended section would contain instead of an admonition to anyone, rather an account of Paul and his fellow apostles. The participial forms that are scattered throughout this section demand it. They are written parallel with the participle *synergoundes* at the head of the section in v. 1. Paul inserts this entire description of his own and of his co-workers’ administration of office here in order to remind the Corinthians of just what kind of men these are, who as God’s co-workers are admonishing them not to receive the grace of God in vain, so that the Corinthians might be all the more willing to heed their
admonition. Precisely the conditions which existed in Corinth, where people thought little of the apostles, where people felt themselves entitled to criticize them and where they so readily disregarded their admonitions, made it seem desirable to them that for once they should set aside their at other times wholesome self-reserve and really bring it home to them, just who these men really are who are admonishing them. It is precisely because Paul is concerned about them, and because he fears that they might be receiving grace in vain, that he postpones all other considerations and brings himself to do what he would normally never do on his behalf. It is the same situation and the same consideration out of which he later has written 11:16–12:11. The thought of being permitted to be God's co-worker, still more the recollection that the great and so long- and so earnestly-awaited time of salvation is now here and that in it they have the call to be permitted to build the community of God together with Christ—these thoughts help to give his words energy and power. But that is a secondary matter. What moves him to boast to the Corinthians like this is chiefly his concern for them mentioned above. Even if he doesn't exclude Timothy and the other co-apostles here, he is still primarily describing his own life and work. In the process, his speech rises to a rhythmical, organically-constructed hymn. His words flow past in a broad torrent, and towards the end roar in increasingly powerful chords. The great apostle is thereby raising up to himself a monument of honor such as is not permitted to everyone. It would not be appropriate for him to do so were it not for the previously-mentioned concern for souls, which put these words on his lips. As he does so, the Corinthians at the same time cannot avoid seeing in the life of Paul—even if it is not a matter of concern to Paul himself—what grace can make out of a person if he does not receive it in vain, but rather allows it to produce in him whatever it pleases.

Therefore who and what kind of men are these, who admonish them not to receive grace in vain? They are the ones who avoid giving offense in any way whatsoever, simply in order that their service or office not be defamed, but who in one and all circumstances show themselves to be servants of God in great endurance. They know only too well, and have given evidence of it to the Corinthians often enough, that all those who
do not willingly allow themselves to be admonished to fruitful conduct in sanctification, will look at the admonishers themselves to see whether they cannot discover something about them and in their administration of their office at which they can take offense, and then use that as an excuse for not allowing themselves to be transformed by grace in such a way as they should be. And if it is not a matter of such people, there are nevertheless so many honest but weak souls lagging behind in correct understanding and who easily consider a component of their pastor’s [Amtsträger] lifestyle to be a rock of offence. And in any case the old saying holds true, “The shepherd’s lifestyle is the gospel of the flock.” Paul and his co-workers understand this. That is why they made every effort to weigh the consequences of it, that they also not give offense in any way, and with that indeed to have nothing but a shadow fall upon their office which on that account might cause their congregations to dismiss the idea that they should take seriously the admonition not to receive grace in vain. Of what consequence is it, if they have to forgo many things which in themselves they would normally be allowed to enjoy unconstrained, if by doing so they achieve their goal, that their lifestyle and their administration of the ministerial office does not hinder or thwart the divinely-intended appeal of their message. Paul did not write 1 Cor. 8:1–13 and 1 Cor. 6:12 by chance simply for others, but first and always in accordance with that he includes himself. That in the process no unwholesome anxiety or even cowardice arose in his life which might have caused him not to dare to act in order to avoid giving offense. Paul’s whole life and work shows; when his office required him to appear resolute, he did so, above all in Corinth. He conducted his ministry first of all and decisively by always casting an upward glance to God, always in the endeavor only to make sure that God would not in any way disapprove of his actions (one should cf. esp. 1 Cor. 4:1–5); but he also realized that the conducting of this ministry in the sight of God also included conducting it in such a way that no one could justifiably take offense at it (cf. Matt. 18:7–9).

What Paul has first expressed in negative terms, he expresses in positive terms in v. 4a: Those who are admonishing the Corinthians are such as show themselves to be God’s servants in all situations. They admonish neither as such who
serve themselves, who are seeking their own advantage, or cer-
tainly not as those who are even serving the lust that is still present with them, nor as those who serve congregations with a perverse inclination that often causes them to give in to the so-foolish desires of the congregations, but rather as those who serve no one other than God, who has placed them into this ministry and to whom they are accountable (1 Cor. 4:1). *En hupomonē pollē* [in great endurance] Paul places emphatically at the end. Here that does not mean in great patience, but rather, as all the ensuing verses show it to be, in great en-
durance and steadfastness. He and his co-apostles were assailed by so many things that could have brought him to the point where he would be led either to give up his ministry altogether or just to give in here and there instead of inquiring about only one thing—the will of his Lord. He, however, allowed nothing to move him from it, but held his ground. Then it would be completely wrong to understand this *en hupomonē pollē* as the first item in the long series of *en*-phrases enumerated in the succeeding; not at all. The *en hupomonē pollē* is the principal idea: in all endurance he and the others made every effort to show themselves to be God’s servants in everything. That was the conspicuous mark of their administration of the min-
isterial office. What follows mentions the circumstances and situations in which they demonstrated this endurance in the effort to show themselves to be God’s servants. This thought then recedes later on (v. 10), but must not be completely forgotten even there.

One might very well say that the apostle enumerates a triple kind of situation during which they have given evidence of this endurance in the effort to show themselves to be God’s serv-
ants in all situations: 1. during situations when it meant to suffer (vv. 4b–5, hence from *en thlîpseisin* to *en nēsteiais*); 2. during situations when it meant to take action (vv. 6–7), hence from *en agnotēti* to *aristerōn*); 3. during situations that comprise nothing but opposites (vv. 8–10). The first cate-
gory is followed up in three sets of three terms apiece. They prove their steadfast endurance: a) in hardships, in troubles, in difficulties. These three form an ascending line: from an affliction that makes itself burdensome, mounting to the repre-
sentation of a dilemma in which one cannot help himself, and from here to a difficulty in which one no longer knows whether
he can endure; b) during beatings, during imprisonments, during riots. Here too an intensification is being put forward, to the extent that the physical abuse will surely pass, however imprisonment may continue and in respect of its outcome is uncertain. A riot, however, is not an orderly legal process, but would cause one to expect capricious and uncontrolled acts of violence; c) in drudgery, in all-night vigils, in times of fasting. Here it is a question of sufferings that are added to those previously mentioned, because his calling simply brings them with it: weariness from many different responsibilities connected with the strain of work and over exertion that make one weak and weary; sleepless nights in which the most natural kind of rest from the drudgery of work may not be permitted him; and in all sorts of fastings: either because of the situation of forced, involuntary fasting (thus in 2 Cor. 11:27) or voluntarily abstaining from the provision of new vitality by means of the medium of food, just as it happened because of burdensome troubles as well, even though they needed just this supply for new vigor when they had to be able to endure the drudgery of work and the sleepless nights. With this wording an intensification would seem to be under discussion in this third term also. But Paul and his co-workers were also brought forth from so many and difficult tribulations of these situations that one can document frequently from Acts and the epistles, yet they stood firm and still hold their ground and are making every effort precisely through this steadfastness and endurance to show themselves to be God’s servants.

But even in situations in which it mattered not so much to suffer as to act (vv. 6–7), these who now admonish prove themselves to be such as have not received the grace of God in vain, as servants of God. Whether at the same time one should allow the *en hypomonē pollē* still to be emphasized here also is debatable; however, precisely our rendering of this expression with “steadfast endurance” instead of with “patience” allows one to include this, and the situations referred to here which are of such a nature that the idea of steadfast endurance seems to combine in a free and easy way with them. Only the observation that here there are not strictly speaking situations, but attitudes and actions growing out of such attitudes are described, allows it to appear questionable whether the thought of the *hupomonē* still continues to operate afterwards,
or whether on the contrary the thought now referred to with *hupomone* cannot be used parallel to it and the idea is: as they prove themselves to be servants of God in steadfast endurance, so also in purity, understanding, patience, etc. Of the nouns enumerated, two are classed together every time: in purity and understanding, in patience and in kindness, in the Holy Spirit and in unstained love, in the Word of truth and in the power of God; nevertheless at the same time the first two pairs and the second two pairs by this constitute a unity in themselves. They make every effort to do their work in purity and understanding. *Hagnotes* can hardly mean sexual purity here, which as a rule it often does. Neither did Paul have a particular reason to emphasize this, nor would *gnosis* combine naturally with it. The word means also the purity which perhaps is also at the same time thought of with the self-seeking egotism which is perceived together with their work as being for their own advantage. Paul’s activity is pure from such subordinate motives; he wants nothing else but merely to serve. With that he combines the correct understanding, or rather, the necessary insight which enables him to perceive according to the peculiarities of both the people and circumstances he comes into contact with, and then proceed accordingly towards them and in them. When they have to deal with all sorts of shortcomings of people in their ministry, they allow patience and kindness to be exercised; they do not break the staff on top of them right away, do not at once cast them aside, nor do they instantly fly into a rage when these are given them to bear, nor do they immediately display a surly countenance. On the contrary, even under aggravating circumstances and in situations or towards people that put their kindness to a severe test, on their part there remains sincere kindness and gentleness, corresponding to the example of God, who after all lets his sun rise with equal kindness on the good and the evil, and allows it to rain on the just and the unjust. Also the other four nouns, with their more detailed designations, are two pairs that belong together, though the emphasis in the first pair is placed on the adjectives and in the second on the genitives. They are guided in their work not by a worldly spirit but by the Holy Spirit, and they carry out their ministry, not perchance in simulated and hypocritical love to the brethren, but in genuine and sincere love; and when their office requires them to speak,
then it is truth that they proclaim, and when it requires them to act, then they do not act in their own quickly exhausted and unimpressive strength, but in the power that God himself grants them. Their ministry brings with it the fact that they are compelled to engage in battle against the hostile elements that want to penetrate into the congregations from the outside, against Jewish and pagan opponents and against false teachers of all types, but also against the opposing elements in their own midst, in whom the Old Adam desires to take the victory from the new creature of God. Certainly the congregation at Corinth is proof enough of the latter. It means to engage in battle on the right hand and the left. Because the soldier of antiquity held either a spear or a sword in his right hand in order to attack his opponent with it, but held the shield in his left hand to protect and defend himself, Paul wishes with the more specific designation τὸν δεξιόν [the right hand] to speak of the attack which is needed in his combat, and with the more detailed designation τὸν αριστερὸν to speak of the defense. But regardless of whether it is a question of the attack or the defense, they never wielded any weapons other than the weapons of righteousness. Here that means, despite 2 Cor. 5:21, certainly not weapons of inquisitorialness [Glaubensgerichtigkeit], as a few clever exegetes asserted, but every time of the case of weapons that are morally incontestable and appropriate. The history of the church in the most ancient and most recent time is certainly replete with examples of the fact that even pastors and church leaders are not always very particular in choosing their instruments, as they drag half-truths and lies into the office, as they themselves arouse the passions and set the basest instincts in motion in order to achieve their purpose. Not so Paul and his co-apostles; their weapons are always irreproachable. Even when by their use they at times get the worst of it or when they lose completely here on earth, they nevertheless stick to them and resist the temptation to exchange them for dubious or downright morally questionable ones. Otherwise that might well cast a shadow on their ministry and cause their admonition not to receive grace in vain to lose its efficacy.

Vv 8–10 speak of the contrasts which they must go through and by which they must however not let themselves be dissuaded. It is a question of three series of contrasts: Their way leads through honor and dishonor, through ill repute and good
repute [, being treated as deceivers even though they spoke nothing but the truth]. Sometimes two are situated so close together chronologically that they are almost simultaneous, as in Lystra (Acts 14:8–19), where their elevation as far as to the gods is so suddenly overturned, that these same people stoned them and allowed them to be left for dead; sometimes they happened simultaneously, but the normal thing of course was for them to happen one after another. But they would not and did not allow themselves to be misled into vanity and pride by the recognition that was paid to them, nor did they sink down into despondency and hopelessness if their good name was defamed. Undissuaded by either, they continued on their way.

Verse 8b begins with ἡσ and thereby introduces a new set of contrasts whose enumeration runs to v. 10, but which in reality presents a double set, so that the figure of three is also adhered to here. Just as the discourse to that point was about contrasts that as a rule follow one after another, so now it is about such as inflict themselves on them simultaneously, but which do not deprive them of their inner peace or spiritual equilibrium: ἡσ planoi kai alētheis, ἡσ agnōumenoi kai epiginōskomenoi [as deceivers while being truthful, as unknown yet well-known]. People made them out to be—and many actually regarded them as—deceivers, whereas in conformity with their inner being they were of course truthful. Yet how one can suffer under such a contradiction, how his entire being of spiritual truthfulness, whose strength is being consumed in the service of the truth, can protest against the injustice and slanderous lies of people who make him out to be a deceiver of the people and a seducer of youth. Paul and the other apostles feel that way too, but they also get over it. Convinced before God of their intrinsic truthfulness, they proceed on their way with resoluteness despite this opposition. They lead their lives as unknown among those who do all the talking and determine public opinion here on earth. Or else who of the philosophers and learned men, who among the powerful and lordly recognized Paul and concerned themselves about him and his message, as he passed throughout the land? The few philosophers who learned to know him called him a vagabond, and men of position and influence like Felix and Festus mischievously evaded the influence of his word, and yet he knew that he bore
throughout the land the everlasting gospel, the most essential thing possible to give for the sake of a lost world, the power of God for the salvation of all mankind. He did not need to be vain to be plagued by this spiritual opposition; but he overcame it. The certainty that he was well-known to God and was esteemed by many souls as the bearer of the gospel who recognized him with gratitude toward God as the apostle of the truth, was compensation enough so that this opposition could not take away his equilibrium. One might perhaps understand the hagnōumenoi, which in other respects is sometimes used as the intentional desire not to know someone, as an intentional failure to appreciate and translate: “As the unappreciated, and yet appreciated”, whereby then also the epi would be able to come into its right; then it would agree still more appropriately with the previous “as deceivers and yet truthful”, because that also puts forward either an intentional or unintentional misrepresentation of Paul, when one calls him a deceiver.

The last four contrasts that are introduced by hōs once again belong together. Here too the talk is about contrasts that plague them simultaneously, however, in contrast to the former ones, this time these are such that are already raised spiritually in Paul and the other apostles. They are indeed dying, naturally here not spiritual but bodily dying, because as a result of the hostility toward them, they are at no moment safe from death; there is always only a step between them and death, in a way they work on and on to the brink of death; yet, oh miracle, they are still alive to this day in spite of it (comp. in addition to this and to the following Ps. 118:17–18). They go so far as to be chastened by God, they are not only reputed to be, but they actually are chastened; yet they are not slain. The same God who chastens them in different ways, nevertheless does not allow them to die from them in the process. As those who grieve, to whom a great deal of misery is directed in the world, yet at the same time they are always joyful because their joy in God and his eternal loving kindness grows uninterruptedly broader despite this misery. As poor, and yet they make many rich, for the spiritual riches which they distribute through their gospel and by which they make many spiritually rich, are neither diminished nor invalidated by their material poverty. As those who have nothing, and yet they possess everything; in this world they call nothing
their own, but because they have the Lord Christ, in him they possess everything, because to him belongs everything that exists in heaven and on earth. Though they are materially so poor that one could rightly class them among the “have-nots”, yet in Christ they are so rich in eternal goods that in him they actually own everything, even already the future world.

Oh, what the grace of God made out of Paul and his co-apostles! And it is just as such people that they admonish the Corinthians not to receive the grace of God in vain. How much more should the Corinthians therefore heed this warning and because of it be all the more willing to let grace also perform its work on them!

The practical application of this text presents few serious difficulties, although published sermons often rarely do justice to its unusual character. One may outline it as follows: What the grace of God wants to make out of us: 1. What it made out of Paul; 2. What it wants to make out of us. Or taking the magnificent picture which Paul here sketches about his own and his co-workers’ lives, particularly those powerful final verses, the realization suddenly occurs to one: such a life must appear to be a mystery to the world and to many in the congregation as well. How could Paul lead such a life; what was his secret strength? For that reason one may speak about the mystery of the Christian life: 1. In what does it consist (a. in what it consisted for Paul; b. in what it should consist for us); 2. What its explanation is (receiving grace again and again, and not receiving grace in vain)—that was the secret of Paul’s life; without that, it likewise also won’t come to that point for us, that we differ from the world, indeed become the mystery to it.

Notes

1 Some of Reu’s major works available in English include: Thirty-five Years of Luther Research (Chicago: Wartburg, 1917); Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism: A History of Its Origin, Its Distribution and Its Use. A Jubilee Offering (Chicago: Wartburg, 1929); The Augsburg Confession: A Collection of Sources with An Historical Introduction (Chicago: Wartburg, 1930); Luther’s German Bible: An Historical Presentation Together with a Collection of Sources (Columbus: Lutheran Book Concern, 1934); Homiletics: A Manual of The Theory and Practice of Preaching, trans. by Albert Steinhäuser, 4th
ed. (Chicago: Wartburg, 1934); *Catechetics, or Theory and Practise of Religious Instruction*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: Wartburg, 1931); *Thomasius Old Testament Selections with Interpretation and Homiletical Adapta-
tion*, trans. by Max L. Steuer (Columbus: Wartburg, 1959); and (with Paul H. Buehring) *Christian Ethics* (Columbus: Lutheran Book Con-
cern, 1935).

2 For further information about Reu's multifaceted contributions to North American Lutheranism, the reader is referred to Lowell C. Green, “J.M. Reu and Reformation Studies,” *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 42 (November 1969) 147–156; and to Paul I. Johnston, “Jo-

3 “Eine exegetische Studie zu 2. Kor. 6, 1–10,” in *Kirchliche Zeitschrift* 62 (February 1938) 65–78. Reu's exclusive language has been retained by the translators.

4 The third pair of contrasts announced here was apparently inadvertently omitted from the text at this point. The translators suggest that its intended sense be included with the editorial addition in brackets.