

A Study Guide for

Just Words: Understanding the Fullness of the Gospel

by Jacob A O Preus

Part 1: Just Words

Chapter 1 - The Gospel and Justification

Consider Preus' comparison on pages 19-20 between the two natures in Christ and the two natures of the gospel. Why is that such a critical distinction to keep clearly in mind as we preach?

On page 20 Preus speaks of "God's estrangement from us because of our sin." Why might it be better to speak of that as our estrangement from God?

Consider also whether the author's statement that "We need a solution to the problem that *is* God" (21) is the happiest way to express our situation under God's judgment because of our sins.

Both of the previous two questions raise the question long discussed among Lutherans whether justification is a change in God's attitude toward us in Christ or a change in man's status before God in Christ. Why have we typically leaned to the latter way of expressing what Christ has accomplished by his life, death, and resurrection?

While we give thanks for what the gospel accomplishes in us (faith, fruits of faith), what is the practical pastoral importance of remembering that the Gospel is something *extra nos* (21)?

Why is it so helpful to preaching to remember the two ways we use the word *justification* - both as a term for the doctrine of the gospel itself by which the church stands or falls as well as one very critical metaphor or picture by which this doctrine is taught and proclaimed?

As the **doctrine** of justification is taught in the confessions, it is the specific **metaphor** of justification that is used more frequently than any other picture. That frequent use of one particular metaphor for the work of Christ no doubt reflects that the forensic nature of the term assists greatly in answering the specific challenges presented by the false doctrine of Rome. What happens in our sermons, however, if despite the rich and varied imagery for salvation in text after text we default in our words to this one metaphor Sunday after Sunday?

What is the blessing that occurs when we make use of all the many different pictures and images that Scripture uses to proclaim the gospel?

Chapter 2 – The Gospel as Words

When hearers complain that they hear from our pulpits the gospel in the “same old way” (28) again and again, we might chalk that up as longing for what itching ears want to hear. But what would it be good for us to consider may also be at work when that impression is given?

What can be the danger (28) of creating our own terms and metaphors for the gospel? Why, to some extent, is it unnecessary?

On page 28, Preus suggests that our familiarity with these various terms and pictures for the gospel may be a cause for our lack of using the full richness of these other ways of teaching and preaching the gospel. Is that the chief cause, or do you see anything else at work?

On pages 34-35, the author makes the comparison between “dead” and “living” metaphors. What does he mean by that? How can we help make sure that we don’t lose the “life” in many of the metaphors of Scripture?

Consider on pages 36-37 the mini-parable that Preus uses as he speaks of the nine-course dinner reduced to a puree of itself. When am I guilty of doing that in my preaching?

How much would it help us avoid the problem referenced in the mini-parable if we kept clearly in mind the difference between the two valuable yet different theological branches of systematic and homiletics?

Part Two: Christ the Life-Giver: Creation Metaphors

Chapter 3 - Birth

As Preus notes with his question on page 45, “What is the Law behind this rich Gospel?”, the gospel metaphors serve to enlighten the law side of the equation almost as much as the gospel side. That gives us the pattern of the basic questions we will wrestle with in each chapter as one biblical metaphor after another is paraded before our eyes. As you wrestle to answer the next four three questions (which will repeat in each chapter), try to keep your answers specific to each metaphor. The more we see the unique facet of the twin diamonds of law and gospel that each biblical metaphor enlightens, the more we learn to avoid the pureed nine course meal he discussed in chapter 2.

One other insight: please note that Preus begins each chapter with a narrative illustration of the doctrinal point (yes – some of them are a bit contrived!). That shows an understanding of the storied culture in which we all swim! That shows an understanding of how much of Scripture draws on just such inspired narrative!

How does the biblical concept of birth/rebirth illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the birth/rebirth metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 4 – Life

How does the biblical concept of life illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the life metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

In the November 15, 2010 issue of Time magazine, physicist Stephen Hawking was asked the following question: “What do you believe happens to our consciousness after death?” Here is his response: “I think the brain is essentially a computer and consciousness is like a computer program. It will cease to run when the computer is turned off. Theoretically, it could be re-created on a neural network, but that would be very difficult, as it would require all one's memories.” (Here is a link to the full interview: <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2029483,00.html#ixzz155r9D7ZQ>) How does the metaphor of death/life help answer this attempt to escape the reality of the meaning of life and death? (Consider how helpful Ecclesiastes 3:11 might be in giving an answer.)

Chapter 5 – Salvation (Health/Healing)

Please note: some of the comments in this chapter, and in particular the third endnote on page 61, come perilously close to “spiritualizing” Christ’s miracles and downplaying God’s concern for the very real physical needs that were also alleviated by the miracles of Jesus. Jesus is no Gnostic, and his concern for our physical needs is a great comfort. The fourth petition is no weak sister among the other petitions in the Lord’s Prayer.

How does the biblical concept of salvation (health/healing) illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the salvation (health/healing) metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

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On page 56, Preus rather abruptly says about Gladys “What a dumb idea!” What was indeed “dumb” about the idea, and what may not have been so dumb? While agreeing that Jesus’ miracles were always “signs” that pointed to an even greater truth, yet might the author almost be downplaying the very real physical healings Jesus did do?

Chapter 6 - Light

How does the biblical concept of light illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the light metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

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Since, as Preus points out, this metaphor is exceedingly rich and multi-dimensional, how will we know in a given text which aspect(s) of light/darkness is (are) being stressed?

Chapter 7 - Bread and Water

How does the biblical concept of bread/water illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the bread/water metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Part 3: Christ the Redeemer: Commerce Metaphors

Chapter 8 – Ransom

How does the biblical concept of ransom illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the ransom metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 9 – Redemption

How does the biblical concept of redemption illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the redemption metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Although Preus doesn't get into the Old Testament concept of kinsman-redeemer (Ruth 2:20, for example). What added beauty does that angle on this metaphor add to our understanding of the gospel?

Chapter 10 – Property

How does the biblical concept of property illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the property metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 11 – Forgiveness/Remission

How does the biblical concept of forgiveness/remission illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the forgiveness/remission metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Part 4: Christ the Judge: Legal Metaphors

Chapter 12 – Justification

How does the biblical concept of justification illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the justification metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Note: It seems to be a rather glaring omission that the universal and objective nature of justification is not highlighted other than a brief hint of it while talking about the usefulness of this metaphor at the time of the Reformation.

Note: On pages 113-114 we have one of the first explicit references to the active obedience of Christ. It would seem that could have been emphasized in many of the previous metaphors as well! Perhaps if Preus had focused in on the metaphor of obedience it might have come across even more richly.

Chapter 13 – Intercession

How does the biblical concept of intercession illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the intercession metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Note: It may be worth noting that to call Jesus our “defense lawyer” takes the metaphor one step beyond the way it is used in Scripture. The technical Greek term for “defense lawyer” is not used in the New Testament. The words used of Jesus tend to have more the picture of “witness for the defense.” This does not change the point of comfort, but we do want to be careful that we don’t speak of the metaphor in a way that Scripture does not.

Chapter 14 – Adoption

How does the biblical concept of adoption illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the adoption metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Note: this metaphor for our salvation is really also found whenever the term υἱός is used for us since that term has the meaning of a full legal child (and heir) of the family.

Chapter 15 – Inheritance

How does the biblical concept of inheritance illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the inheritance metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Part 5: Christ the Reconciler: Personal Metaphors

Chapter 16 – Reconciliation

How does the biblical concept of reconciliation illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the reconciliation metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Note: endnotes 4 and 5 on page 143 are both a bit problematic. While universal and objective reconciliation is a biblical way of speaking, so is universal and objective justification (Romans 4:25, Romans 5:15-19). Also, we need to keep in mind that when Scripture speaks of God's grief there is anthropopathic language at work, so we must be cautious. While we do observe Jesus weeping over Jerusalem (Luke 19:41), yet to picture the throne of God as one of almost perpetual sorrow over human sin goes far beyond anything Scripture allows us to say.

Chapter 17 – Peace

Note: as Preus points out (146), the metaphors of reconciliation and peace are very closely related to each other. However, it is the opinion of this reviewer that the etymology and usage of the Greek and Hebrew words behind each metaphor do not support the distinction that reconciliation has to do with separation while peace has to do with friction. Separation and friction are found in both concepts. If a distinction is to be attempted at all, reconciliation stresses our change of status before God. God declared natural born enemies to be friends in his Son. Peace points to the harmonious completeness and fullness of the relationship that follows. Another way to say this is that reconciliation is the cause and peace the effect. Notice the way peace and reconciliation play off each other in Ephesians 2:14-18. There peace – between God and us and also between human beings – is the result of the reconciling work of God.

How does the biblical concept of peace illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the peace metaphor provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 18 – Forgiveness

Note: There is a failure to identify clearly the point of another anthropopathic expression in this chapter. And this unclarity can easily lead to burdening tender consciences. We at times without careful explanation throw out the encouragement to “forgive and forget” (as this chapter seems to do). But what does it mean to “forget” as God has done by “remembering [our] sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34)? Is it really proof positive that we have refused to forgive someone whenever a memory of a particular painful incident comes to mind? Not necessarily!

What point is Scripture making when it says that God “forgets”? As with every scriptural anthropopathic expression, a point of comparison is being made to how humans think, feel, or act. Here it is a comparison by contrast, since when God “forgets” our sin he is doing something far different than we do by nature.

What do we often do when someone hurts us? We actively rehearse in our minds the evil and injustice of what that person has done to us. We ignore Paul’s encouragement about not keeping a “record of wrongs” (1 Corinthians 13:5). With Peter (Matthew 18:21) our sinful hearts love to “keep score,” thereby justifying who deserves our forgiveness and who doesn’t. Our memory of the evil done to us is our justification for turning the golden rule (Luke 6:31) upside down: we do to others as they have done to us. With a cold shoulder, or cold words, or icy actions we give them their just deserts. In other words, we “remember” the sin for the purpose of dispensing our version of justice (as twisted and distorted as such justice often is). It is that kind of “remembering” and refusal to “forget” that gives evidence of an unforgiving heart.

To put it another way, “forgetting” is not a secondary action that follows forgiving. “Forgetting” and forgiving are two pictures for the same activity. We cause confusion when we treat “forgetting” as a secondary activity after forgiving and then give it a meaning it does not have in Scripture (as if we have not forgiven unless we somehow scrub our memory banks clean so that we never, ever recall the incident). Rather, “forgetfulness” is a picturesque way of defining forgiveness by calling attention to a mindset of refusing to harbor a grudge or acting on it to pay someone back.

It is just such a refusal to harbor a grudge or act on it that is the key to understanding what it means that God “remembers [our] sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). While the words “remember” and “forget” are not found, Psalm 103:8-12 may be the best single scriptural reference that expounds the concept of what it means that God “forgets” our sins and “remembers” them no more. “The LORD is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.” Since God treated Jesus as we deserved, he can in perfect justice and grace treat us as dear sons and daughters. In this sense he “forgets” our sins: in Jesus he harbors no ill will against us and will not inflict his just judgment on us for our sins. When it comes to being liable before God as guilty and due subsequent punishment, it is as if those sins had never happened. They are “forgotten.”

If we were Becky's dad (the opening narrative of this chapter), how might we encourage her to forget as God has forgotten our sins? We would urge Becky to refuse to treat Abby as her sins deserve. But unless we want to unduly burden our daughter's conscience, we must be careful that we don't give the impression that every memory of the incident is already proof positive that Becky has failed to forgive. Highly emotional events in our lives are burned deeply into our memories. It is not sin that our memory banks may still possess knowledge that this particular event took place.

However, temptation does lurk whenever that memory is suddenly called to mind - perhaps by some similar incident. What could Becky's dad have said about that? "Whenever the memory comes back, Becky, Satan will want you to ponder how mean that was of Abby so that you are angry with her all over again. Instead, whenever that memory comes back, remember that your God has not treated you as your sins deserve. The power of God's forgetfulness will enable you to refuse to nurse that grudge or plan how to get even. That's how you find God's strength to imitate him and forgive - that is "forget" - what Abby did!"

How does the biblical concept of forgiveness (in its relational aspect) illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the forgiveness metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 19 - Marriage

How does the biblical concept of marriage illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the marriage metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Part 6: Christ the Priest, Christ the Lamb: Sacrificial Metaphors

Chapter 20: Expiation/Priestly Mediation

Note: On pages of this chapter Preus wisely seeks to defend the proclamation of God's wrath over sin. However, this "defense" loses its way in at least two places.

In the middle paragraph of page 172. When the author draws the comparison between the father and the child, he is confusing two different biblical concepts (punishment and chastisement) that, although they use the same words in the original language, are clearly distinct when read in context. That leads to a statement that cannot stand without significant qualification: "God's anger is for the good of people." In fact, as it stands, it is a confusion of law and gospel.

It is certainly true that, for those who flee with repentant hearts to the mercy of Christ, all punishment in this life has been transformed into nothing but the loving discipline of our heavenly Father for his dear children (Hebrews 12). But that does not change the fact that Scripture holds up the ultimate purpose of God's anger over sin as delivering sinners to their just judgment. When the angel swings his final sickle on earth and throws sinners into "the great winepress of God's wrath" (Revelation 14:19) there will be no good purpose being served for those people. Yes, the foretastes of hell that God's anger brings into unbelievers' lives now may serve as a wake-up call. But that good by-product of impending judgment does not suddenly change God's anger over sin into something that is essentially for people's good. Hell is the ultimate evidence that God's anger in itself is not for people's good. It delivers sinners into something that will never serve their good through all eternity. Without apology God's wrath will not seek to restore but to destroy, not to heal, but to hurt.

Since developing a clear way to speak of God's wrath over sin is critical as we preach to those who live in a tolerant postmodern age, it may also be wise to point out another chink in the logic of this chapter. On page 170, as Preus is defending the rightness of God's wrath, he introduces something that moves the metaphor of expiation/priestly mediation beyond safe biblical boundaries. He speaks of God's wrath resulting from "the hurt brought about in God because of sin." That easily introduces into the picture of God's anger a flaw of human anger: we want to cause hurt as we have been hurt. We lash out like an angry wounded animal.

Once again, an anthropopathic expression of Scripture – God's grief over sin – is pressed beyond its point of comparison. I can bring no real direct hurt to God – other than soiling his reputation in the eyes of other sinners.

But isn't that defense of the goodness of his name the key to understanding God's wrath over sin? God's wrath over sin has nothing of the quality of wrath because of personal hurt. God responds in just anger over evil because "sin is lawlessness" (1 John 3:4). Sin is the exaltation of evil as good, and good as evil. To refuse to judge evil – to refuse to express his just anger – would be to allow Satan's wicked purposes to triumph and God's own plan of salvation to be negated.

Doesn't that also help explain the related – and equally challenging – anthropopathic expression of God's "jealousy." God jealously guards the goodness of his saving name and judges in his wrath anyone who clouds his goodness. He does this since his greatest glory is his saving purpose for sinners – and that salvation is found alone in his name (Isaiah 44:6-8). Therefore the LORD jealously expresses his

anger over sin since it always is at work to cloud the view that “there is no other Rock; I know not one.” God’s wrath is not reacting because he has suffered some personal “hurt.” Instead his wrath brings his jealous judgment on all who dare to cloud the glory of his saving name.

Why, for instance, do we notice in the Old Testament so many quick and severe judgments of God’s wrath on Israel? He has set them up before the nations of the world as his very own to show the glory of his saving name (Exodus 19:5-6). When instead they defame his saving name before the nations, his anger is swift and often stunning!

All of that brings us back to the problem of the first statement referenced above: “God’s anger is for the good of people” (172). That is true for those who by his grace in Christ do not fall under the final judgment of anger. For them, God’s anger judges those who seek to rob them of the treasure of salvation. But for those who remain in unbelief, God’s anger is anything but good. From it they will taste nothing but eternal death.

But may all these cautions not cause the reader to lose sight of the fact that Preus has put his finger on a particularly pressing challenge of preaching to a postmodern, tolerant age. It has never been easy to proclaim the anger of God, but so much in our culture is seeking to make that proclamation almost unintelligible. Of course, if we cease to speak about God’s wrath, what finally becomes unintelligible is Good Friday. If there is no wrath of God over sin, then what is Jesus suffering on that day? And from what is he rescuing us? Every attack against the law of God finally ends up as an attack on his gospel!

May God remind us with Timothy that he “did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love, and of self-discipline” (2 Timothy 1:7). But even if we do grow timid to proclaim the reality of the wrath of God over sin, God still knows how to get that message out. Even if every preacher in this tolerant age lost the courage to speak of God’s just wrath over sin, God has provided a way to proclaim it without us if he must. “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness” (Romans 1:18). If we lose courage to speak about God’s wrath, his creation will continue its own revelation to all who have eyes and ears as he parades in full view of people the birth pangs of a crumbling world.

How does the biblical concept of expiation/priestly mediation illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the expiation/priestly mediation metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 21 – Sacrificial Lamb

How does the biblical concept of sacrificial lamb illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the sacrificial lamb metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Note: Preus makes a somewhat curious statement in this chapter’s endnote that “while shepherd may not be an appropriate justification metaphor, it is an excellent sanctification metaphor.” The searching shepherd who hunts down the lost and strays – even to the point of laying down his life for the sheep (John 10:11) would certainly seem to qualify as a powerful justification metaphor.

Chapter 22 – Hallowing/Cleansing

How does the biblical concept of hallowing/cleansing illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the hallowing/cleansing metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Part 7: Christ the Savior: Deliverance Metaphors

Chapter 23 - Salvation

How does the biblical concept of salvation illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the salvation metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 24 - Liberation

How does the biblical concept of liberation illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the liberation metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Chapter 25 - Victory

How does the biblical concept of victory illumine our understanding of our hopeless condition apart from Christ?

What unique blessings for grasping the beauty of the gospel does the victory metaphor (in its relational aspect) provide us?

Is there anything about this particular biblical metaphor that makes it especially useful in a postmodern, post-biblical culture?

Every metaphor limps when pressed beyond its intentions. Is there any way we need to be careful lest we press this metaphor beyond its biblical meaning?

Part 8: The World Mission and the Gospel's Words

Chapter 26 – God's Mission in Words

How does Preus (209-212) help us appreciate why the many and varied gospel metaphors are such a rich treasure for the world-wide mission of the church?

How might this same point be equally valid when it comes to building up in Christ the many different members of our congregations (young and old, married and single, rich and poor, male and female, etc.)?

On pages 214-215, what are the twin dangers into which we can fall as preachers when we do not appreciate the rich variety of the ways that Scripture proclaims the gospel?

Preus makes much of the advantage for our hearers of a rich variety in gospel proclamation, and briefly mentions a blessing for the preacher himself on the top of page 216. What is the blessing also for the hearers when the preacher has enjoyed mining treasures new and old from the text? (This question deals with the importance of what is often called the *pathos* of preaching.)

Note: We will be disappointed in much of what Preus mentions in the section on Ecumenical Dialogue (216-218). At first it almost seems that the different metaphors themselves allow or even to some degree cause the variations in the doctrine of justification found among the denominational families of the visible church. It could have been stated more clearly that false ideas in our human hearts cause unbiblical distortions of “favorite” metaphors. The fact that some parts of the visible church focus on one or two of the biblical metaphors did not cause their false teaching. But it is true that a failure to value the wide range of biblical gospel metaphors may leave them more susceptible to various strains of error. To use an analogy, all the Gospel metaphors together are like a full spectrum antibiotic that fights all the different types of harmful bacteria of false doctrine. To the degree that we as Lutherans learn even more to value all the biblical metaphors for the gospel, we safeguard the proclamation of the gospel in our midst. We also learn even better in the midst of the visible church to be a clearer (and more patient and humble) voice for the truth of the gospel.

Consider how easily in evangelism we can fall back on one “prepackaged” (219) way of sharing law and gospel no matter how different the situation may be. On 218-219, how does the author suggest valuing all the Gospel metaphors of Scripture can enrich our witness to those who do not know Christ?