Jouko Haapsaari sermon excerpts and statements

Jouko Haapsaari, Rockford, 24 December 2020, John 1:1-14

[31:55] … “His glory was full of grace and truth.” Full of grace and truth. It was full of both. Everything was so gracious -- full of grace and full of truth. They belong together. Grace and truth belong together. They are not in that sense separate items. [There is] not without one [without the] other. If there is no grace there is no truth. If there is no truth there is no need of grace. All grace is no truth. All grace is leniency. All grace is that love which a thoughtless parent does when they [support] their child’s evil doing. They protect them and hide them. They lie for the sake of their own children to protect them, because they think that it is love. That is not love. It destroys the poor child. If the poor child is granted the permission to do whatever they wish and the parents play after them and lie to the other people and explain everything away, it will destroy this poor child. So, all grace and all love is no love at all.

How about all truth? If we would [only] understand fully. If God would open onto us how corrupt we are, we couldn't live. It would be too much. Truth is good when it comes with grace. All truth is the law. It is like whipping with an iron whip. It is not [the] truth anymore. It is only the law. So, when Jesus worked here in this world, he gave the truth. And sometimes the truth hurt the listeners. If we think about Stephen, the first martyr of the New Testament time. He died when he was stoned [to death] because he told the listeners the truth. They did not want to have grace. They believed in the Law and the fulfilling of the Law. When they heard the truth, they got so mad that they killed him. Truth goes together with grace. It is interesting how John says it: “Full of grace AND truth.” How can something be full of grace and full of truth? That is how it is. This Kingdom, God's kingdom, is a kingdom that is full of grace and truth. They belong together. If a person has no sin, they have no need of grace. That is how the enemy of the souls works. There is a very interesting sermon that Laestadius kept, when he speaks of this. I won't go into it any deeper. The text that he used is about when the sun became darkened. Laestadius says that the sun of grace becomes darkened by the moon of the law, when man's reason takes ownership or it takes over everything. Laestadius said that what happens is that feelings disappear. The feelings of sin or the knowledge of sin disappears. Then the knowledge of grace disappears. It makes sense. If there is no sin -- if there is no knowledge of sin, there is no need of grace. Then Laestadius explains how the joy disappears. All of a sudden one by one all of the characteristics of living faith disappear. Then there is darkness. The sun has disappeared. It was an interesting sermon that Laestadius kept about 150 years ago.

So, Jesus appeared to those who followed him full of grace and truth. That is so wonderful that God's kingdom is still the kingdom of grace and truth. The truth is that we are sinners. You know the truth for yourself better than anyone else. God knows it better, but you know what you are. If you are in the need of grace, there is grace [available]. God's kingdom is full of grace. So, my dear brother and sister, uplift your heart. Believe your sins and doubts and whatever they are, believe them forgiven in Jesus’ name and precious atoning blood. Be of good cheer. Be of good comfort. Be thankful and joyous. That is why Jesus was born into this world that he would pay for our sin debt, so we can believe and be free and joyous. So, uplift your heart and believe your

sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious atoning blood. May the hope and the joy of Heaven fill your hearts. Can I also believe my sins forgiven? I want to believe together with you. In Jesus name, amen [39:11]

MBMAC 21 November 2020

Jouko Haapsaari [7:10] I am thankful for the presentation and the discussion. It has answered my spirit. And my spirit has rested, when listening to the discussion. This is how I believe. This is how I want to believe. And I am thankful for that. I have a question that is troubling my heart and it is very difficult to talk about it. But I feel that I have to. My question is this. We have been visiting about serving in Minneapolis. We have felt the direction of God's spirit is that we can't go there now. I have asked in my heart, what about Wolf Lake? We had a meeting not long ago where we talked about this confirmation camp development. Two camps were arranged [only one] on their own. No response was received in that meeting. For me, when I heard of those camps being arranged, it felt like a huge statement. I am asking, what do we do? How does the spirit guide this difficult question? This is my question. I feel uncomfortable. I have to say that I do not feel at home there. I am not the one who says yes or no. It is God's congregation. So, I am at peace [when] asking this question, because I know that I can sit and listen when God speaks. In a human sense, it is very difficult. I would love to just be quiet, but I can't. My heart aches for those who for years have resisted. They have felt comfortable teaching, but not hearing. The voices have become louder and the difference is greater. I have been asking

myself, where is the fear of God? It is a dangerous thing if we lose the fear of God. The fear of God means respect to the voice of the congregation. This congregation to me is God's congregation. As I started [out by saying], my spirit has rested when I have been sitting and listening to the speeches. It has answered my spirit. This is how I believe and how I have been raised and taught. It is how I want to believe. I have heard the voice of the Good Shepherd. So, even these big and difficult questions -- it is comfortable to ask them where there is the spirit of God. I trust that God will answer in His time. If I am too hasty, I want to hear it. But if it is God's time, we will hear it, as well. I feel small and insignificant and a sinner. Can I believe my sins forgiven? I want to believe. [12:37]

Rockford Meeting on 18 October 2020

Jouko Haapsaari kept the presentation: Let us open with thanksgiving and prayer. Holy and righteous God. our true heavenly Father. We thank you for this day of rest, which you have seen good for us that once a week we can stop and pause from our daily labor to gather together to hear your word. Dear God, you see what we have gone through. You see what is ahead [of us]. Please prepare us for the battles ahead that we could keep faith in a good and undefiled conscience. Help us to journey so that we can finish our course of life victoriously and see you in heaven forever. We pray that you would guide our discussion with the presence of your Holy Spirit, which is the spirit of all wisdom, all gifts and all understanding -- even of discerning the spirits. Please help us. We need your help. [1:51] Our Father, who art in heaven … Dear brothers and sisters, during the course of these years we have come to the day to gather to discuss and visit burning questions that we have struggled with for years. You know how it is gone. The separation and differences and thoughts has gotten bigger and not smaller. With a prayerful heart I present [to you] what our dear brother in faith, Jim Frantti, put together. He presented it at a meeting about a week and a half ago [October 6] in Monticello where all Minnesota congregation's boards, delegates and speakers were invited. We had about a five and a half hour discussion. The discussion revealed those differences. What else could it be? The discussion revealed it. The discussion consisted of two ways of seeing things. It consisted of warnings. We felt that the trumpet was blowing warnings to those who see [things] differently or are lukewarm in between. These kinds of discussions cannot continue on and on. We don't need to stop them, God will. We don't guide or lead, God does. The truth is -- the history of

living Christianity has shown it so many times, even at those times that we have witnessed or have heard from those who have witnessed them. It always happens. It always goes basically the same way. The enemy is the same and his methods are the same. The questions vary but the methods are the same.

So [the topic is] “Citizens of the Kingdom of God.” I don't have a written presentation. The gifts of my brother [Jim Frantti] are such that he doesn't have notes or a written manuscript that he would follow. If he had [a written manuscript] I don't know if I could follow it. … There is not much text here. That is also his gift. On the first slide, there is one quote. The Scripture portion is from Romans 14 verse 17. “The kingdom of God is not meat or drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.” It is the Bible's description of the essence and the nature of God's Kingdom. It is not a temporal matter that we can see or touch. We enjoy [temporal things]. It is God's great blessing. God's kingdom is not that. It is righteousness, peace and joy. All of these things are affected by him through the Holy Ghost. Without the Holy Ghost, there is no righteousness. Without the Holy Ghost, there is no peace or joy. It is good that Jim did not have much text on the screen. If you don't see it, it takes faith to believe that it is here. So, this is God's Kingdom. Righteousness. Because of righteousness, there is peace. I don't need to do something to be righteous. God prepared the righteousness for me. I can own it. That satisfies my conscience. Although I am a sinner, it satisfies [God] because God did it. It pleases him. And that brings Joy. The Bible gives many pictures of the kingdom of God, including this. Golden candlestick [Zech 4:2]. This kingdom is a golden candle-stick. It does not have blemishes. The whole picture does not make sense, because it is made [up] of sinful people. In our minds how could it be -- no blemishes, although it is made [up] by sinful people. Again, it is the kingdom of God. And God makes it perfect. If and when the doctrine of righteousness [justification] has opened up, the joy that it brings that I am saved without my own works, it brings joy but also a heart and mind of forgiveness. If God has forgiven me so much, why wouldn't I forgive the others? Paul writes of his sinfulness. He is the chief or the greatest of all sinners. He said that I am the greatest of sinners. That means that there are no small sinners in the kingdom of God. Everyone needs God's grace very much and daily. It is interesting. The Bible mentions only twice that we stand in God's grace. It is a beautiful picture. I stand in God's grace. In God's kingdom I stand in grace. What else do I need but grace -- God's grace, God's ever-present grace? In God's kingdom there is always grace. Grace means that there is forgiveness and life [?] There is no better place for a sinner than in God's Kingdom. This makes this Kingdom like a golden candlestick. It is pure in its entirety. One of the earliest times of the difficulties, personal difficulties, is when someone begins feeling that the sermons are not good. If they feel that there is finger pointing in the sermons. If they start feeling that there are so many faults in this group of people. The [vision] of the work of the Holy Spirit is starting to disappear. His kingdom is not holy because of us sinful people. It is because of the Holy Spirit. If we lose sight of the work of the Holy Spirit through sinful people, we have lost a lot. One brother in his sermon long ago in Finland said that the enemy shoots fiery darts [as it says in the Bible]. He first tries to hit the eyes [Pauli Korteniemi] so he could blind the person. When the person is blinded because of the fiery darts that hit the eyes, they lose their eyesight. What do they lose? They lose [sight of] the golden candlestick -- God’s kingdom. They start to see sinful and lacking people. I have said in personal discussions -- I can [also] say this publicly -- if someone wants to find fault in me, they

will not be disappointed. It does not take long to find fault. It is the same with everyone. We are faulty. We cannot deny it. That is why the vision of the work of the Holy Spirit is so crucial. It is so important. If we start to hear humans speak, everything is relative. It is like -- how can I trust that? It is easy if the message hurts my feelings, it is easy to push it aside. It is that person's opinion or agenda. They are harsh words. They push aside the work of the Holy Spirit. I tremble. Then a lot of damage happens. Then the person goes astray from the path of the Kingdom. It is always good to think [about this]. If a person goes to another path, where will it lead? ... The enemy of the souls will never tell. We know when we have made foolish decisions when we were young. the enemy never told us what is at the end of the path. The second picture of God's kingdom is our mother. Again, God gave this definition or this picture for a reason. What is a mother? What does a mother work? Those of us who have been married for a long time, we remember how tireless mother is. [We remember how] loving and caring mother is. That is a picture of God's Kingdom. Do not kick the mother. Let us hear what the mother says. Mother speaks through the spirit of God or the Holy Spirit. The teaching of the mother is the most important. God does not speak straight from Heaven. Lacking people should not boast that we understand everything what the Bible says. I know the Scriptures. Why do I say this? There were scribes who tried to tie up Jesus in his words. They had devoted their entire life to read the scripture. Do you remember what they once told Jesus? One man was married seven times. They asked Jesus, whose wife shall he be in eternity? Do you remember what Jesus said? You err because you do not know the scriptures and the power of God. Those were people who knew the word inside and out. No person should think -- I will figure it out myself. I will find [it out]. It is a sure way to displease God. I will listen to both sides. I am measured. I don't get excited. I will just listen. I will figure it out. The goal is good in itself, but impossible to bring it all together. Only God can do that. We humans should fear God. We should pray to God that he would lead and guide me because I don't see or understand. If God takes his protection away from me, I have no hope. That is why I am so thankful that I have a home congregation. I have believers around me. I have asked many times, and I still ask. Care for me. I need it. … There is only one Savior, who died for our sins. We cannot save one another. It is God's work. The mother talks. The third picture is the body of Christ. Sometimes we hear a statement that you speak too much of the congregation. You should talk more about Christ. It is a common saying during the tumultuous times. It has been during the previous heresies. Why do you concentrate on the congregation so much? It is because the congregation is our mother. Is the golden candlestick. It is the body of Christ. Christ is the head of the body. When Christ sent his disciples to preach, He commanded them to speak and preach of the congregation -- God's kingdom. I know that you do not need me, but I need you. God's kingdom does not need me [but] I need God's Kingdom. I want to humble myself to hear what the mother says. It is my highest hope and joy to hear what the mother says. I feel so sorry when I hear people say -- This is unclear. I don't know? Is it the majority voice or what is it? I have heard people say, which [one] is the congregation? Is it the group that I feel most aligned with? Or is it the group that you feel most aligned with? I feel sorry for that. I have heard the mother speak every time. Every time. I have also heard another voice, which was not the voice of the mother. It was a voice of anger or confusion or full of questions. The mother has spoken every time the congregation has assembled. It has been wonderful. It is God's gift to be a member of his kingdom of children. Jesus said that this is the kingdom of children. Is it possible that as adults

can accept being part of the kingdom of children? We need to be children in our heart. But Paul also writes that we should -- what is hylata? -- reject childish matters. It does not mean that if we reject childish matters that we become big and self-confident and strong adults [through 23:03] This is the kingdom of children. We should learn -- in that sense we should be like adults. We should learn of the history of living Christianity and the battles the believers have gone through. There are many things to learn. Especially knowing that we are all lacking. There is nobody who can say that I have battled well. I have not made mistakes. I have done everything perfectly. But it hurts my heart to hear that the Church Law of Christ has not been followed. There is gossip going around. They just hide the real matter. Nobody can say -- I think -- I have followed the Church Law of Christ to the T. That is not the matter. Of course, we would want to. Of course. Why not? At least for the sake of pride, that nobody could poke me and say that that you have not been perfect. But that is not the matter. The matters that have caused the need for care and the need for discussion -- private and public. Public statements are public statements. If they are public, and somebody says that you must not talk about that, you'll first have to go to the person. I disagree with that. A public statement is a public statement. It is a wrong application for the Church Law of Christ. And it is used as a weapon to silence the person. You don't talk about that. Maybe that person himself feels the right to speak in their group. But they are not allowing it to the others. It is not right. It is God's gift to be a member [of God's kingdom]. That gift can be taken away. It can be lost. Oh how many have lost this gift. I do not say that I am old, but I am bold enough to have witnessed that so many times. A person says with tearful eyes that I want to believe like you. But they have ended up leaving God's Kingdom. They are no longer with us. Many of them have passed away. It is not a small thing to own the gift of living faith and the gift of the home congregation. We are not to leave the home congregation for our personal … something that even our conscience says that is not right. It is not right. We should fear God that we don't displease him. Because if I displease God, who fights for me and who protects me. As citizens of God's Kingdom, we are saved only by faith, by grace, and by the merits of Christ. That's how it is. Faith of the heart prompts us as brothers and sisters in faith to love one another, to bear one another's burdens, and care for offences between us, to wash one another's feet. What is love? What is to love one another? I will take a picture? I see a person going towards danger. Is that love that I won't try to stop him? I don't think so. If they want to go there, they may be offended that I tried to interfere. Still, it is love. If the person says that I don't see it as sin. There are two options or two possibilities. One, the matter is not sin, and they see it right. The other is that it is sin, but they don't see it [as sin]. But the others see it. There is also the question of anger or bitterness. If someone says that he took the bitterness card and waved it before the others to scare them. No. Bitterness and anger can be felt by others way before the person himself feels it. I have personal experience with this. I have a daughter who senses it so clearly. She has told me many times that you are angry. Many times it took me to realize that yes she is right and I am wrong. She said that you raised your voice. I thought that it's just my nature. No, it was not. I was getting angry. But I did not see it. I did not feel it. Again, if I think that it is just their opinion. I brush it aside. Who do I trust? Do I trust myself? I don't think we should trust ourselves very much. Do you think that it takes the foundation away from us? No. we should trust one another -- God's congregation. Jesus said that they hear the voice of the Good Shepherd. They hear it and follow him. What is the voice of the Good Shepherd like? How does one describe it? We have heard the voice of the Good

Shepherd many times, haven't we? It pleases us, and we follow that [voice]. We don't follow man, but we follow the Good Shepherd. If someone else hears the same voice and follows the Good Shepherd, we go together. We don't follow one another. We go together. The congregation is a united group. It is a tight group. Jesus says it is the body. My hand fits very well with the rest of the body, my fingers and so on. It is a picture that God wants to describe how united God's kingdom is, because the spirit of God joins us together. John says, a new commandment I give unto you that you love one another. As I have loved you, also love one another. By this all men shall know that you are my disciples if you have love one to another [John 13]. I realize that I have used a lot of time. But these matters have been swirling in my heart and my head. I have listened to this October 27, 1972 meeting several times. It is about eight and a half hours [long]. It was the last meeting before the previous heresy broke off. It is a very [good] learning experience, because you [can] hear the person speak, [who] you know went into heresy. I have read about the three previous heresies in Finland. I have the documents from there which are a few hundred pages [long], [telling] of the discussions. It is so interesting to read the person speak, who later went into heresy. So, it is the benefit of hindsight, when reading and listening to it. It is a learning experience. How does Christian love manifest itself? What is Christian love? Bear one another's burdens. That is what we have all been doing. We have been under heavy weights for years now. When one member suffers, we all suffer. You recognize this. There is care for offenses. There is the Church Law of Christ in Matthew [18:15-18]. That is one of the most difficult lessons, because it is so hard. For sure, I cannot say that I have done well. I hope nobody feels very confident to say that that Church Law of Christ has not been followed. I don't think that we can rise to the level that God wants and his perfection about his wishes to be accomplished. I am not saying that we should --- because we can put it aside. No. We should try to do our very best. But there is another side to this. We should also accept care. It is not only caring for something. There is another side. Have I accepted the care? Have I heeded the warnings? Have I seen the troubled brothers and sisters, [who are] feeling weak, unsure and trembling around me? Or do I feel comfortable -- nobody has approached me strong enough. Speak the truth in love. That in my thinking is one of the clearest signs of the Christian love, that there is truth in it. Love without truth is leniency. Truth without love is the law. There are two ditches alongside this road. They are both deep and close, because this pathway is narrow. The enemy wants to push us to either side into the ditch. Wash one another's feet -- meaning, to forgive even before asking. There is a long portion of the Bible from 2nd Thessalonians. “But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us. For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not disorderly among you; …For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But ye, brethren, be not weary in well doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed. Yet count *him* not as an enemy, but admonish *him* as a brother.” [vs. 6-7, 11-15] In Ephesian 4:1-3, “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Then from Luther's large catechism, the

explanation to The Third Article of the Apostles Creed. “I believe that there is upon earth a small holy flock, a holy assembly of pure saints under one head, Christ. They are called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, one mind and one understanding. They possess many gifts, but are one in love and without sect or division. Of this assembly I am also part, and a sharer and owner in its blessings through the Holy Spirit … [Jouko reads from another edition] he gave me membership by having heard and continuing to hear the Word of God, which is the beginning of entering it … Everything [all appointments], therefore, in the Christian Church is ordered to the end that we shall daily obtain there nothing but the forgiveness of sin through the Word and signs, to comfort and encourage our consciences as long as we live here. Thus, although we have sins, the [grace of the] Holy Ghost does not allow them to injure us, because we are in the Christian Church, where there is nothing but [continuous, uninterrupted] forgiveness of sin, both in that God forgives us, and in that we forgive, bear with, and help each other. But outside of this Christian Church, where the Gospel is not, there is no forgiveness, as also there can be no holiness [sanctification]. Therefore all who seek and wish to merit holiness [sanctification], not through the Gospel and forgiveness of sin, but by their works, have expelled and severed themselves [from this Church].”

This is what the presentation gave. I want to leave as much time for the discussion as possible. So, I want to encourage you all. Uplift your heart and believe sins in Jesus’ name in precious atoning blood. No matter how faulty and lacking you find yourself in Christian love and in taking care of matters, whatever it is. Uplift your heart to believe sins forgiven in Jesus’ name in blood. Can I also believe my sins forgiven? I want to believe. [17:30]

Southern MN board meeting 6 October 2020

Jouko Haapsaari, Rockford [2:50:49]: This matter weighs heavily on everybody's mind -- for sure, on my mind as well. I felt very strongly when I heard about confirmation camps/ schools being held privately on their own in Wolf Lake. If I am correct, it happened twice. That in my mind was a very strong statement. Those [people] fail to understand what kind of a message -- a troubling and Shockwave type of message that it sends to the other believers. The reason why I talked about this. I feel the need to be open about it. I do not know the reasons. The path did not feel right. It sends a message that our [camp] is better. And it sends a message of mistrust. When we heard what happened in Minneapolis, almost all of the board members and both ministers and a [large] number of the congregation members left. Knowing the difficult discussions that had happened, it felt like a natural continuation. The reason why I asked for this speaking turn is to blow the warning sound, as I understand it. In the fourth book of Moses [Numbers], chapters 22, 23 and 24, it speaks about Balaam. He was a so-called prophet who was asked by the king of Moab to come and curse the Israelites. The Bible speaks of him later, but always in a warning tone. The end of Balaam was not good. He was killed in the next war after these happenings. And he dwelled [?] … with the Midianite kings among the unbelievers. He died there. He did not leave a testimony. When Balaam was on his way to curse the Israelites -- the trip was long. It lasted maybe two weeks. God tried to stop him three times. The

Bible says that God's anger kindled against him, because he went to where he was warned not to go. He was warned not to go. But he went. The Bible says in the New Testament that he loved the reward, because of money and fame, whatever. God tried to stop him three times. Every time something bad happened to him, the difficulty increased. The second time it was worse. And the third time it was the worst. Also, the road that he traveled became more and more narrow. Is is another sign. When God tried to stop [him], Balaam refused [to listen]. [The Bible] also says that [Balaam] beat the donkey that he used with a staff. The Bible uses [the staff] as a picture of the Gospel. He was stopped three times. Finally, God allowed him to see -- we understand that he was blinded. He did not see. He saw a ... and he repented, but not correctly. He said that I have sinned. If you do not agree, I will come back. He meant -- if you do not like it, I will stop sinning. The angel said, go on your way. [You are free to stay or go.] God does not force anyone to do what he wants us to do. It is in our doing. We decide. But we have to live with the consequences. Before we do something, it would be wise to ask if this pleases God or not. We have now heard a warning in many speeches. God is warning [us]. These developments are not of the spirit; they come from the flesh. There is no question of that. The differences of understanding have prevailed for years. I think it was Jon [Bloomquist] who said, it is not so dangerous to understand wrong because no one of us understands a lot. We should not think that it is odd if someone does not understand [a lot]. because no one understands everything. We talk about the mystery of faith. What is dangerous is when we do not take heed and to just keep going against the warnings. I can say clearly, we have been warned tonight. We all have to ask with a prayerful heart God, where do I stand? It can be [so] that someone is so blinded that they do not see. They do not see the anger. They do not recognize it. If you pray to God, he can open your eyes, like he opened the eyes of Balaam after the third stop. If Balaam would have turned back and gone home, God would have forgiven him. That was the last point where God spoke to him. He was disobedient. He continued, although he knew. He confessed that I have sinned. He said, I did not know that you were standing against me. He confessed that I asked. And he continued. That was the last time that God spoke to him. He lost the last chance. Dear friends, pray to God. You have to be sincere. You have to be open before God. You have to pray like a child. You have to be ready to beg for forgiveness, because God searches the hearts. I have to say that I felt sorry when I read the letter [from Minneapolis]. The words were nice, but it did not add up thinking of the history four to five years before that. It is like a speech that is flattering with sweet words. The words … I have to say -- and I am talking from my own perspective -- I find it kind of impossible to go to Minneapolis and preach like nothing has happened. How can I go there when my brothers have left from there? How can I go? I am not angry. It is not hatred. But I am concerned about myself. I do not dare to put myself in danger, because I can go into the flesh very easily. My close ones at home know best. I will say it one more time. I am not angry. I don't want revenge. I do not want to show my power. What is my power? I fear. I am weak. That is why I do not dare [to go]. I do not feel comfortable. So this is where I am. I wanted to say it openly, so no one can say to me on the last day -- you loved my flesh and not my soul. Why didn't you speak … This is how I believe. And I have to speak. I hope that I do not offend [anyone]. I just have to be where I am. If someone believes differently, [then] we believe differently. That is basically all that I have to say. Can I believe my sins forgiven? [3:02:26]

Jouko Haapsaari in Monticello on August 15, 2020, Revelations 3:1-6

[35:50]: Then he said, “If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.” [verse 3] … Then Jesus says [37:00], “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments.” [verse 4] What is this defilement? It is sin. The picture in living Christianity that has often been used to describe the danger of sin is a wedding garment. In our culture and tradition the bride is clothed in white. It is a beautiful sight. When I have been marrying a couple, it is a very touching moment when the father escorts his daughter, and they walk up the center aisle. Oftentimes in the Rockford Church the sun shines from behind. It is a very beautiful site, when the bride walks dressed in white towards the groom. It reminds me every time how the congregation of God is like a bride and Jesus is like a groom. It is the picture that the Bible uses. We are journeying towards the eternal wedding in heaven. It is the Bible's picture. God knows that it is easier for us to understand when he uses these kinds of pictures from real life. We all understand that when a bride is clothed in white, which is oftentimes a very long dress, it is easy for the dress to become soiled. I have no experience of this, because I have never been a bride. But you ladies who have been there [at your wedding], you remember from your own life how you have to be very careful not to stain the garment. White [color] gets stained very easily. Long dresses get easily dusty from below. There is a concept or a picture in the language of Canaan. It is in the vocabulary that we use. I have heard it here, and I would say that it is a mistranslation. The word in the Finnish language is ‘helmasynti’. It has been translated as a ‘bosom sin’. The bosom is not ‘helma’. ‘Helma’ is hem [in the English language]. ‘Hem sin’ would be a proper translation. If you are walking along and are clothed in a long dress -- a long white garment -- the hem is closest to the ground. It easily gets dusty. This is the picture that [this word] carries. We are all unique [beings]. Every believer is unique. We have our weak spots where the enemy attacks all of the time. That is the ‘hem sin’, which easily collects dust. We need to take care of that sin oftentimes. The enemy comes and says -- you have asked for forgiveness too many times already for that [matter]. It is a lie. God forgives happily a penitent sinner. There is no quota for forgiveness. There is no upper limit how many times you can have it forgiven. That is the picture of ‘hem sin’. Sin does destructive work against our faith. It soils the garment, the white beautiful wedding dress that we are dressed with. I have heard discussions about this, which are very dangerous in my mind and unbiblical how sin does not stain. It does [stain]. Sin is a destructive force. It battles against faith. The gospel is God's power to wash sin away. That is why the gospel is so precious. That is why it is so wonderful. I would say, that is why the enemy has attacked the gospel so viciously. Jesus said here. I will read it again. “Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy.” [verse 4] The picture of washing the wedding garment with the blood of Christ is a wonderful [and] biblical picture.

Then Jesus said, “He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life.” [verse 5] The concept of the book of life is a very biblical picture. There is a book of life that God keeps. It contains the names of the children of God. That is what matters. In the Book of Revelations, where it speaks of the last judgment, it

says: Whose names were not recorded in the Book of Life, they were thrown into the Lake of Fire. We understand that those people whose names were recorded in the Book of Life, they were not thrown into the Lake of Fire. The question is this -- whose name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life? They will make it to heaven. The focus [as I] recognize sometimes goes to sinlessness. It sounds [correct], but actually it is not quite right. The question is to have a name in the Lamb's Book of Life. Jesus once said when the 70 disciples returned after the mission trip to Jesus. [They said], even the spirits are subject unto us for your name's sake. Jesus said not to rejoice over that but rather Rejoice that your names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. That is what matters. Believer's names are recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. So, my question is [this] and our worry should be: How should we live so our name would stay there, so they would not be blotted out from the book. The Bible encourages and teaches us very simply -- keep faith and a good conscience. That is it. Keep faith and a good conscience. They belong together. Elsewhere it says, holding the mystery of faith in a good conscience. A good conscience or sinlessness is not the focus. A good conscience is like a container for a precious gift, which is faith. To keep faith means to keep a good conscience. How do we keep a good conscience? We take care of it. We tend [to] it. We wash it. When sin attaches, as it does, it stains are garments, we wash it with the blood of the Lamb. So, God keeps our names recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. And we will make it to heaven.

"He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." [verse 6] God speaks through his spirit. The spirit of a child of God receives it, and it answers Amen in their hearts. Yes, this is how I believe. This is how I want to believe. God's Word warns us of the other spirits, which the Bible calls evil spirits. Here we had seven spirits of God. And the Bible warns us of the evil spirits. There are two powers in this world -- the enemy of Souls and the power of God. They battle against one another. We battle in ourselves every day until the end of our life. May God keep us alive. May God keep our conscience tender that we willingly receive the forgiveness of sins; that we [would] feel the need to believe and take care of our matters. God will help us, bless us and protect us, guide us and lead us all the way to heaven. Dear brothers and sisters, Uplift your heart and believe. Sins are forgiven in Jesus's name and precious atonement blood. Be of good comfort. Be thankful and be free. Can I believe my sins forgiven? I want to believe together with you. In Jesus' name, amen. Let us pray … [48:37]

RLLC Home and Family Presentation

1-26-20

Jouko Haapsaari

Let us join into thanksgiving and prayer. Heavenly Father, we have come before you with our joys and with our sorrows. We bring our weakness before you, and pray, please keep us. Take care of us. Bless our lives with the greatest blessing, the gift of faith. Dear God, please open your Word unto us as you see that is beneficial and needful for us. Open our hearts, ears, and minds to listen, accept, and believe. Encourage us, uplift us. Rekindle the hope which is weak, oftentimes.

> We say, Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. Amen.

2:15

Before we go into our topic, I don’t know and I don’t think that we have chosen a moderator for tonight, and I would wish that we would choose someone else to serve after my presentation if possible. And so I ask, if you had someone in mind that could prepare for that duty, before the presentation, and could kindly take that and serve us with that duty. Who would you suggest? (Mike Kariniemi suggested and confirmed to do this.)

4:06

The topic that we have is tender and dear. Forgiveness. And we have talked in small and big gatherings a lot during the last previous years. And I have heard others say the thought that I have had in my mind that the matter of forgiveness has been kind of endangered or has been debated, or there has been something around forgiveness which I have felt uncomfortable. And I say like one person said, that when the person heard of the discussions that are taking place here, the person is from Finland, a believing person, he said, "who in the world is pondering that kind of questions. I've never pondered those – I've just believed." So we have had to talk or ponder or almost debate of the questions or topics which should have been self-evident, or there shouldn't have been much to discuss except rejoice of. So, I'm thankful despite my weakness and lack of understanding, that we have this topic and I can share what is in my heart about this treasure of God's Kingdom and a treasure of my life, the topic of 'Forgiveness'. And when the committee gave the topic of 'Forgiveness', I added these two words, 'Joy and Blessing' of Forgiveness. That's how I see it.

6:38

What is your goal? I talked with one young person about the questions in this society. Obviously kind of political questions, what's going on? And this person said, "I don't care. I want to make it to heaven." And I thought, "Wonderful." That was his

goal, to make it to heaven. Of course these temporal matters are important and necessary, but his goal was to make it to heaven. “Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.” (Revelation 21:3-4). That’s from Revelations, where our dear troubled, tempted, or persecuted brother John was allowed to see from afar off what is the goal of his life and faith. And if and when the goal is to make it to heaven, everything else kind of shrinks and becomes secondary. They still can be important, meaningful, and so on. Rewarding. But they are still secondary, very secondary. The difference, the gap, between the goal and everything else is big. Because everything else is transient. Disappearing. It lasts for a time, and then it’s gone. But this goal lasts.

9:15

Sin and Grace are kind of opposite, opposing powers. Or, let me put it this way, that sin fights against God, it fights against faith, it fights against what is important to a believer. Sin fights against it. It is like poison. During the last few years, we have almost become intimidated speaking about sin. I have been approached, that I speak too much about sin. And I’ve been troubled with that. If I have a lethal enemy, why wouldn’t I speak about it? If there is only one power that can rob my faith,

close the way to heaven, and open a gaping hole towards hell, why wouldn't I talk about it? The enemy does not go away if I turn away from it or stop talking about it. Of course, to be in balance, there is grace. Even Laestadius in his time spoke of a phenomenon where he described it, that reason blocks the sun. Like moon blocks the sun, reason blocks the sun of grace. And he explained it, how feelings disappear. He said the feeling of sin disappears. And then the feeling of grace disappears, which is logical. If there is no sin, what do you do with grace? Temptations disappear, he said. Fear disappears. He said all the elements of faith disappear, and what's left is death. Like James writes in his letter, of temptations. How temptations cause sin. And when sin is fulfilled, it causes death. And of course we understand, that in death he speaks about spiritual death. Losing the greatest gift, the gift of faith.

12:31

So, some thoughts about sin. "Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me:" Who is talking? "My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah." (Psalm 32:1-4). It's King David. King David stayed home when he should've gone to war. And when he stayed at home, he fell into temptation. I don't know how it happened. My imagination may go too far. But I

have thought that he knew Bathsheba. Maybe he was looking for something and he found it. He found when Bathsheba was bathing. Neighbor's wife. So he fell into temptation. And he fell into adultery. He fell into sin. Sin fights against faith. Sin does not expand our understanding nor increase our faith. It weakens us. He kept silence. He cried all day long. He felt the pain. Day and night, God's hand was heavy upon him. He felt it, he knew it. The sin that he had fallen into troubled him. Where did it lead him to? Bathsheba became pregnant and sent a message to the king, that I have a child, I'm pregnant. And the war was long, and Uriah, the husband, was on the battlefield. He kept his silence. He did not want to talk about it. He tried to, I guess at least that's what I have tried many times, to forget it. To brush it aside. I don't want to talk about it. And he invited Uriah home, hoping that when Uriah would stay at home, he would go and sleep with his wife, and then the pregnancy would have a natural, kind of explanation, and maybe somebody would think that to be a premie child – he's pretty well formed – but anyways, he tried to cover it. And he was unsuccessful. God didn't allow it to happen. Uriah didn't want to go there. He followed the rules. The rules were, you don't approach your wife during the war. So David did not want to admit it. He didn't want to talk about it. His strength went to less and less. He wrote a message, and I don't know how he could have done that, he gave it to Uriah. And Uriah gave it to his leaders in the war, and the message was, "put Uriah into the heaviest battle, withdraw, and let him die." Just like prophet said, "You killed him" with the sword of the neighbor country army. David fell

into another sin, or well, in lying to Uriah he fell already into sin, but again, so it's a spiral that leads only downwards and it sucks the power. I know what I'm talking about. I've battled throughout my life against sin. I've fallen into sin enough to know what I'm talking about. And that's how he felt.

18:03

Then God sent the prophet. "I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD." How do you confess to the Lord? I remember, I was a high school student, I think I was a senior or something like that, and I went to play volleyball with a couple of my friends who were not believers. They were from a self-righteous home. And they pulled me to the evening devotion of their way. And that tipped my bottle, when I listened to that self-righteous sermon, I started talking to them on our way back home, that I don't believe that way. And we talked about sin, because that's the issue, and what to do with unforgiven sin. And those, my age men, they said that we beg for forgiveness from God, we confess the sins to God. I said, I remember I think I could pretty much pinpoint the place where we stood when we talked, and I said, "you have made it so easy to yourselves" and they said, "No! It's painful to confess. It's shameful to confess to God." And I remember the joy, my heart jumped with joy when God gave me the thought, and I said, "There's nothing that you can confess to God that he doesn't know already." He knows it already. And I remember how their

tools dropped from their hands, and they started coming to services, but their parents stopped it. They didn't allow them to come. They came a couple times, but the parents, who lived elsewhere, they came to get them home on Wednesdays' that they were unable to go to service, and weekends they always had to go home. So the parents didn't allow them to go. One of those brothers is now a preacher in his church. I wonder if they would recall the discussion that we had.

20:34

And so, "I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD", this is where the worldly churches think, that, "yes, I confess my transgressions to God." That's what we hear all the time on mission trips. God has revealed (to) us through His Word, and through our life's experience, what does it mean, how do we confess it to the Lord? Like Luther teaches us very simply, we confess that we are sinners to all manner of sin as we say and pray in the Lord's Prayer. But to confessor father, we confess only those sins which we know, which trouble our hearts. David had no problem knowing what troubled his heart. He had been crying all day long. Day and night, God's hand was heavy on him. And when that happened, he says, "thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin." (Psalm 32:5). God forgave him, through a believing man. That's how God operates. And this is, it's so interesting when, and I think that I share the thoughts of the speaker brothers here, when we go to say to those care centers where we preach to the people who are of age. Some are very

firm in their understandings. They accept the Word, except this, they hear the Word, they follow the Bible message, and they say, “yeah, it was very Biblical” but that part they reject. It’s too lowly. This hymn that we sang, the dear song leader who picked the song kept a good pre-sermon for us. It strips all majesty from us, and it puts us into the Calvary with all the sinners. God is against pride, and He gives His humble (grace) to the poor, to the humble. He sends rich ones empty away. That’s what He says in His Word. But oh how much He blesses the weak ones, the poor ones. God encourages us, the weak ones, the poor ones, but sends rich ones empty away. That’s how God works.

23:38

Of Grace. The Word of God encourages and emphasizes how God’s Kingdom is the kingdom of the forgiveness of sins. How we gladly and freely, willingly, preach the message, the freeing message, of the forgiveness of sins. We are not searchers of the heart. How could we, how could we know what is in a person’s heart, if they don’t say it? If they say it, then we know. But when Jesus kept His sermon on the mount, He said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.” There is no better place for a sinner than God’s Kingdom. Lauri Taskila said this is an odd hospital, where the ill ones, where the sick ones, take care of one another. One is limping this way, one is limping that way, and they help one another. This is the best place for a sinner. There is so much understanding. I want to

say to you young folks, do not believe when the enemy says that nobody understands you. We've been through it. Barely made it, but with the help of God, with the power of the unending Gospel, we're still believing. And that is a miracle. Jesus said, "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?" (Matthew 18:33). You remember this story. There was a man, this man, who owed ten thousand talents to the king. One talent, by the way, have you ever thought about the word talent? Ability to do something. It comes from this word talent here, and that was money. It was the biggest sum of money, at that time, there were no printed paper bills. It was precious materials, and the value was the weight of it. It was very heavy. One talent, it varies, I guess the estimates are rough, but they are, I think the smallest that I have seen is about 20 pounds. So a talent of silver, or a talent of gold, it was a big thing. You don't put it in your back pocket and forget it there. You cannot sit – if you sit on it you're gonna have a sciatic nerve, very bad. So, he owed ten thousand talents. One talent was worth six thousand days of work. Six thousand days of work? Depending on how long work weeks are, how long vacation, well I had in Finland six weeks' vacation, think about it, what I sacrifice when I came here! (Ahem). So, it's about twenty some years, between 22 and 30 years of work. One talent. He owed ten thousand. If it's 30 years, ten thousand times 30. Three hundred thousand years to have ten thousand talents. This man owed to his king ten thousand talents. And the king commanded him to come before him and said, "pay what you owest". And he said, "Lord

be patient with me and I will pay you all." Who do you think could pay to God what we owe to him? No one. No one. But he didn't have any other way, he just tried to make it up, to be able to live. And his king forgave him all, the whole debt. Everything was forgiven. He went out and found his fellow servant, who owed him a hundred pence. So one talent was six thousand pence, and this man owed him one hundred. But, the ratio between ten thousand talents and one hundred pence is, now if my memory serves me right, it is one to three hundred thousand. Okay. If somebody has a mortgage for three hundred thousand for their house, and they would get a phone call from the bank, that unknown, anonymous donor, has paid for your mortgage. Congratulations! Have a good day! You will get your mortgage papers by mail in about a week. Well, ears ringing, he puts the receiver down, well nobody puts the receiver down anymore, that's right, he puts his smart phone into his right pocket, and thinks, "oh boy, this is unreal!" And the believing neighbor would come to the front door and say that, "I have a funny need, but I need one dollar. Could you please give me a dollar that I'm not sure if I can ever pay it back." And you would grab them by the throat, right after the phone call from the bank, you would grab the person by the throat, like that, and say, "I'm not going to throw my money left and right!" You have to kind of smile, or laugh because it's so absurd! It doesn't make sense. And that's exactly the parable that Jesus told, of a unforgiving heart. And then he said, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matthew 18:35).

This is the kingdom of forgiveness. Where weaknesses are being forgiven. Where there is abundance of sin, there is more abundance of forgiveness. We are to forgive one another. That is, that's very clear teaching of Jesus, of God.

31:38

And then the third and the last, kind of perspective to this matter of forgiveness. Grace heals and kindles hope. In John 8 we read, "When Jesus had lifted up himself, and saw none but the woman, he said unto her, Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" This happened in the temple at Jerusalem. This woman was found in sinning, in the act of sinning, and these men, who were Pharisees, who were teachers of the law, who knew the law, they dragged her before Jesus and they said, "Master, Moses has in the law said that those should be stoned unto death." They had witnessed. They were right. They knew exactly. And the Word of God was on their side. They knew the Word of God. They were exactly right, to the point. And then they said, "but what sayest thou?" to Jesus. Jesus, as John writes, stooped down, and wrote on the ground. Bible does not elaborate on what did they write, or what did he write. There is in the Old Testament, one statement at least where the prophet says that those who will be condemned, their names are written on the ground. It's interesting, because those who will make it to heaven, their names are also written, but they are not written on the ground. You know where they are written. They are written in the lamb's

book of life. And that's what matters. So this whole talk about sinlessness has troubled me, I have to say it honestly, it has troubled me. Because God's Word does not put sinlessness as the ultimate demand for making it to heaven, but it speaks of, if you're name is written in the lamb's book of life. Those are not being judged on the judgement day, whose names are recorded in the lamb's book of life. This discussion about sinlessness is almost right, because we fear sin, and we understand that sin steals and robs faith. It's dangerous. But this matter of our salvation has not been left into our sinful hands. It is in the grace of God. And the grace heals and kindles hope. This woman, when she was dragged into the temple area, she know that that was the end. She was to be stoned. She saw it from the face of those young men who were ready to kill her, right there, because the Word of God supported them. It was according to the law. And Jesus wrote down, and they still demanded on him when they saw him write on the ground, they still demanded on him, and Jesus said, "The one amongst you who is without sin cast the first stone." And they were all convicted by their own conscience, and they left, beginning with the eldest. I have in my heart, oftentimes, been there and thought about this moment, when the first, the oldest, and of that society he had the most respect of the others. What did the young ones say, when the old man turned, and took the first step to walk away? What did they think? Then left the second, and the third, and the fourth. The stones got dropped from their hands. They were unable to stone, because their conscience convicted them, that "I'm a sinner as well. I have sinned."

37:14

“She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more.” (John 8:10-11). The Gospel had an advice, a loving advice. Do not sin anymore. Sin is dangerous. But there was full grace, unconditional grace, with the word of exhortation. It was in balance. God is in balance, always. It is true that grace is deeper than any one of us can understand. If we think from our own lives what it has been. How much sin? How many falls, weaknesses there have been? The grace has covered it all, and God has promised, “I will not forsake you.” My dear brother and sister, there may have been, and there may be days in the future, where the enemy says, “You are so sinful. You have used so much grace, that you are out of quota.” That’s not God’s thought towards you. It’s what the enemy of the souls wants to push to you. But God’s Word encourages us, both the written word and the living word that we hear from the pulpit, they encourage us to battle against sin and to put sin away, that our names would stay recorded in the lamb’s book of life. That we could live here in this world happily and hopefully, keeping faith, the mystery of faith, as Paul says, in good conscience. Conscience is not the matter, the good conscience, but faith is. Faith save us, not good conscience. Paul writes elsewhere that I don’t know anything between me and God, but I am not saved for that reason. Faith saves us, this weak faith that we carry, that weak faith which is like a flickering candle. Oftentimes we marvel

and fear, that how am I going to make it? Because I'm getting weaker and weaker. My travel is getting worse and worse. I see my sinfulness clearer and clearer. How am I going to make it? Why doesn't God come right now when I still have a little bit of faith, that I would make it to heaven? We don't need to teach God. He will protect that little flicker of faith. God knows that you want to believe. If you are sincere before God, fearful and timid, He loves you and He will take care of you. It is His joy to take care of you. You bear much fruit when you want to believe your sins forgiven. It is pleasing to God that you recognize that "I am a sinner and I want to believe." It's pleasing to God. He never gets tired of that. He doesn't think that, "okay, again this same person!" No! He's pleased because we believe unto Him that we do not see. Oftentimes it feels that the enemy is more real, although we don't see him and I don't care to see him, but it feels like the enemy is more real than God. The temptations are more real, aren't they? Those feelings are stronger than the feelings of grace, and that kind of trust or whatever God brings. So it's pleasing to God that we believe unto Him that we do not see. God loves you for that very reason. And God wants you to stick with that, to keep that dear to you. And therefore we speak of sin, because it wars against this faith. Our faith is weak. And sinning never adds or gives increase to faith, that we could just believe. It feels like it extinguishes that little flickering flame of faith in our hearts. And that's why we need the oil of the Holy Spirit, because that lamp uses this oil of the Holy Spirit to be able to burn. And like the ten virgins' parable speaks, the foolish ones says, "our lamps are going out." They

did not have the oil. They did not have the container. There were two pieces in that parable, the lamp and the container. And the container was for oil. You are the containers to one another. You add the oil, just like in that second kings, was it five, where the widow lamented her poorness, and the prophet said, “get all the empty oil vessels into your home, gather as many as you can.” And then they started pouring, from empty vessels to one another until all the vessels were full. (Laughs). It’s God’s mystery, how we empty ones fill one another’s vessels. Dear brothers and sisters, uplift your hearts and believe all sins forgiven in Jesus’ name and precious atonement blood. Be thankful and be free. I came here with many temptations and very weak. Can I believe my sins forgiven? (Gospel preached.) I want to believe. That’s our joy. That’s our blessing. That’s our lifeline. That’s the source of our strength. It rekindles the hope and returns, the peace returns, it washes away sins, all good things happen because of the forgiveness of sins. Isn’t it wonderful that we have such a gift which is to be used freely, as much as needed, as often as needed? There is no limit. There is no quota. So this is what I put together with the prayer that God would give you good thoughts, we go to the discussion.

Jouko Haapsaari MBMAC 23 November 2019

Jouko Haapsaari [5:35] I feel the need to say a few words. First of all, I am thankful for this topic that the mission committee came up with. I am thankful for the blessing that God gave for Ray … It was easy to listen. My heart felt very light and thankful when I heard the presentation. I have felt discomfort for years. But mostly I have felt the joy of believing. I do not want to forget that. I'm thankful [?] that I can be a child of God. But discomfort centers around the question of the forgiveness of sins. In one sense, we should not even have the need to talk about it. It should be so clear. On the other hand, of course, it is a favorite topic for the enemy of souls,

because it is our lifeline. It is the treasure of God's Kingdom. It is the reason how God has preserved me living faith. I think or I feel that in discussion there has been a shift of focus away from what I feel is centermost piece or part or the essence of God's Kingdom. This is the talk about sinlessness. It is almost -- how would I describe it. The question of sinlessness. The enemy has used it for his benefits. The Bible speaks about sin. It warns about sin. Our own life's experience warns about sin. The examples of the Bible warn about sin. I'll read from Psalms 51 verses 7 through 11: “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; *that* the bones *which* thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy spirit from me.” [Ps. 51:7-11] That is the prayer of a child of God. And that should be the prayer of a child of God that God would not take his Holy Spirit away from us. It should be our greatest concern that we do not displease God, who is the Majesty. Now about this sinlessness. In Hebrews 12 there is an interesting description of two mountains -- the mountain of the law and the mountain of Grace. They mean the world and God's Kingdom. It says who lives in God's Kingdom. I'll read verses 22, 23 and 24. “But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven [Jouko’s main point], and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than *that of* Abel.” [Heb. 12:22-24] I want to stop at this point, “ which are written in heaven,” The Bible describes that there is a book of life, the Lamb's Book of Life, where the names of God’s own are written. When Rick spoke about those three different perspectives of putting sins away. He mentioned that those who are in the middle of the road they put sin away to keep faith and a good conscience. And I would say they put sin away to keep their name in the Lamb's Book of Life. That is what matters. When I hear those theoretical ponderings about … [?] ... sin on conscience, I cringe [?]. [12:26] The enemy tends to twist it against us that you can never be clean enough to make it to heaven or sinless enough to make it to heaven. The Bible does not speak that way. It speaks about having a name recorded in heaven. That is where my hope and salvation is that my name is recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life. I would have to say that I feel slightly uncomfortable about this phrase or term of ‘continual forgiveness’. I'm not hung up with words. Please don’t say that ... But the words have meaning. The concepts and words mean something. As we have heard often times, we have a term that describes God's grace towards us. It is clear and biblical, which is Grace. I will read from Romans chapter 5 verse 2. “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.” My hope of the glory of God is standing in grace and staying there. to be constantly in God's grace. If God does not take his grace away from me, it means that he does not take his Spirit away from me. He does not take my name away from the Lamb's Book of Life. That means I will make it to heaven. So, that is why I tried to say that the shift of the focus I would like to turn it away from sinlessness to the Lamb's Book of Life, to grace wherein we stand. That is what the Bible says. That brings me peace. That brings me hope, of which Paul writes to the Romans -- the hope of salvation. The living hope of heaven. It shifts away from me being sinless, to God who is gracious and full of grace. Of course, grace teaches me to battle against sin. It teaches me to put sin away. I don't know how everyone is. I can't see you to

any heart. But if there is someone here thinking, what should I do? What should I repent of? Repent of what God's spirit reveals to you. You do not need to repent of something that is theoretical. Repent from sin. Sin causes this. There's no question about that. We have these turmoil and difficulties. There is no other reason. Everything else is theoretical. These are not some kind of human conflicts or [differences in human] natures. These are not misunderstandings. These are not based on rumors. It is based on sin. Put sin away. and believe them forgiven. And God forgives. That is how an unbeliever becomes a child of God. That is how a believer is cleansed from the defilement that sin causes. This is how I believe. I pray and hope that God would open even one heart to humble oneself. We are troubled. We are all tempted with pride. And it takes so much humbleness to accept that I am wrong and that I'm lost and I do not know where I am. If God gives a penitent heart, he also forgives. God forgives penitent sinners always. Can I believe my own sins forgiven? I want to believe. [17:50]

Jouko Haapsaari Rockford 10 November 2019

Jouko: The presentation answered my spirit. I believe in the same way. It touched me when there was a parable of the fig tree. For three years, three consecutive years, it had not borne fruit. It was given one more year. We have struggled for about 4 years now. Are we coming to the time when the differences are so big that they are irreparable, they cannot be fixed. During the first discussions I remember that I was perplexed. I was timid. I couldn’t [believe] what I heard. I did not understand everything. Later, I heard some comments, then I thought how in the world could somebody say something like that? I have felt that I have been very timid during these years to speak up. Sometimes I have tried to say something. Now, I want to say that I am very worried about the situation we are [in]. This is a spiritual battle that we are [in]. The minds are divided. The hearts are divided. I would say that the most important thing is not who is right, but the most important thing is [if] God is pleased with me or not. Do I please or do I displease God with my actions and the thoughts of my heart? We were pretty close four years ago in words. In one meeting a person said at the summary or the conclusion of the discussion that we are this close. And he put two fingers very close to one another. That was four years ago. We are not very close anymore. So, I think that it is sober and right to recognize that the differences are big. There is even disagreement on whether we disagree or not. People say, we are all the same. We speak the same thing. The brother said that the differences may seem subtle. They seem small. But God's congregation has no differences. And the spirit is very discerning. I thought about Naaman the Syrian, who was leprous. In the Bible it is a picture of sin. He went to the prophet. The Prophet said you must immerse yourself in the River Jordan seven times. The Syrian was wroth. He was very unhappy. He said, I thought that the prophet would come and put his hand on my sore spot. Thus, he would heal me. He thought that he had a sore spot. The prophet thought that he was all leprous. He needed to immerse himself. The differences are not small, but they are big. What else can I say? I pray as I have prayed that God would open the hearts. Not only that but that God would give humbleness to accept that. If there is someone here tonight thinking that I feel the difference but I am not going to admit it. The discussions are like God's word in general. It either heals or it offends. And if somebody hardens their heart and walks out thinking that I will stay firm. It means that they are hardening their hearts even more. As we heard through our dear brother [Eric Jurmu], God does not wait eternally. I don't know if this 3 + 1 years had any significance in God's word. That is what the parable said. I have prayed

to God that I would be protected as one. I have prayed that if somebody feels the difference that they would find the difference. And that God would give them a penitent heart and believe it forgiven and put it away, and return to the center.

Jouko Haapsaari at minister's teleconference on 1 November 2019

Jouko Haapsaari [1:21:35]: Dear brothers, I want to confess my faith. I am very thankful that God has brought us into this kind of phase where it feels like the thought is disappearing. These [last] couple of years, especially this year, has been difficult. I have understood that I don't understand very much. It is kind of humiliating. As an old speaker, how little I understand. These new concepts, new ideas felt so odd. And for sure, I may have been too fearful or careful with them. But on the other hand, I fully agree with what Rick [Nevala] said. There is wrong teaching, also. There's no question about that. For your information, I want to tell [you something]. When I moved here 11 1/2 years ago, almost 12 years ago, during the very first month I got an email from a person from another area, who told that that he has been talking about the matters of faith with other believers. They have come up with some conclusions. He listed a long list of things, like the moderate use of alcohol, the moderate use of worldly music. I can't remember what all was in that list. But the last on that list was a new concept to me. It was the concept of continual forgiveness. This was over 11 years ago, since I got [that letter]. I replied to the person. I told that I am worried. I don't believe that way. The [last item of] continual forgiveness is a totally new concept, and it is very worrisome to me. In this email he said that that you can expect many phone calls from my friends. When I replied -- [he said], please delete this email. It is confidential. I did delete it, so I can't remember the list. I deleted it, but I didn't get any phone calls. So, that was the end of that discussion. The message of the forgiveness of sins is the core of our faith. It is the Heavenly food of which our souls live. I eat it every day [1:25:08] ... I don't think it is just a happening that God that compares Heavenly food with temporal food. We need it daily. It is so important. And now the enemy has attacked the treasure of God's Kingdom, against the treasure or the core, the fuel of God's Kingdom, which is the message of the forgiveness of sins. There has been a lot of smoke, as one brother said at the minister's camp [Olli Vanska]. There has been a lot of smoke. And the Believers have been shy or surprised with this new thinking, which felt so much wiser that it felt like maybe I just don't understand. I think it is also important to recognize what the word of God says. We stand in God's grace. We stand there. It is part of our daily life. We stand in God's grace. It speaks of that in Romans 5. We stand in the grace of God and boast of the glory of God and also the hope of Heaven. I still wanted to take one little more portion of the Bible. When Nathan spoke to David. I find this so interesting how the newest Finnish translation translates the words of Nathan. When David said that I have sinned against the Lord. Nathan said, the Lord frees you NOW of this sin, and you don't need to die. There is the word NOW. I like the translation. It's pretty clear, isn't it? Nathan didn't say that God has forgiven you this sin before, but please remember that. God frees you NOW from this sin. It is a beautiful portion, which aligns with how we have been taught when we were young. It is how we have believed. I say like Rick. I don't want to move away from this. And whoever teaches differently, I say that it is a wrong teaching. It is the wrong gospel. It is another gospel. The Bible speaks very strongly -- may he be

accursed who brings another gospel [Gal.1:8]. We have the gospel. There is only one gospel. And I am thankful that God has brought us here. When we have gone through a desert for a few years, it now seems like the sun is breaking through the clouds. I feel free and happy. I feel thankful. This is how I believe in Finland. I've been here a little over 10 years. I was over 50 when I moved here. I have been way longer in Finland than I have been here. I preached over 20 years in Finland and only ten years here. So, it feels so odd that the people dare to say that they believe differently in Finland. No, they don't. There are, I don't doubt, people who believe differently [in Finland]. There have always been those. There's no question about that. And obviously, there is a connection. Like for instance, people find one another. Even in this email that I mentioned, there was a connection to Finland -- this email about this list of things. Part of the group was from Finland. So, of course it is there. Why wouldn't it be? If it is here, why wouldn't it be be there. Let us be comforted that this is God's Kingdom. And the word of the Gospel, the message of the forgiveness of sins, washes sins away. And not only that, it brings new strength, new hope, it revives the hope and makes us want to battle one more time [one more time, one more time] until the day comes when we don't need the battle. Brothers, can I also believe my sins forgiven? I want to believe. [1:30:20]

Haapsaari, Rockford, Aug 19 2019 (37:20 min) You hear what I speak. Do you believe? You decide. If there are two messages which are being spoken, you have to decide if they are opposing. You have to decide which one of them you like. You cannot believe them both, if they disagree with one another. You have to! If you try to be neutral you are in "no man's land". In old warfare, everyone knew that it was the most dangerous place, because both parties shoot through it. "No man's land" does not exist is spiritual battles. And we are in the battle. We battle in ourselves, against ourselves. We battle outside to this world. We battle against the enemy of the souls. And there is turmoil in God's Kingdom. So there are lots of battles. Don't stay in "no man's land". Beg and pray to God that you would not be counted as wise and prudent. That God would not hide the matter of faith from the eyes. That you could be one of those of whom Jesus says "blessed are your eyes, for they see" (39:00).

Minneapolis Meeting on 31 May 2018

Jouko Haapsaari [1:18:45] I will start with the [Hanna Nurminen's thesis]. It was written in Finnish, so I was able to read it. I tried to understand it. First, I want to say, like Walt [Lampi] said, it's not based on God's word. It is a doctoral dissertation. It is made under the rules of theology and the rules of scientific method. Hanna Nurminen has said herself in an interview, right after it was published that it's not a description of God's Kingdom. It's a great error if we think that it describes right and wrong, black and white. Like this Grace line is God's Kingdom and the sanctification line is a legalistic group inside of God's Kingdom. It is a theoretical structure, where she describes two .. like Valde [Palola] explained it at the April [2017] meeting [at the LLC office between LLC, SRK and SFC]. She drives two kinds of ways or two ideas to the extreme, to the furthest extreme possible. That is the method that she was using. She kind of slices a message, she takes sentences, little excerpts from here and there, supporting this idea and the other idea. Valde Palola, for instance, himself said that my sermon excerpts are on

both sides [in Grace line and sanctification line ideas]. I got a chuckle out of that. It is not a description of how God's kingdom is now here. God's kingdom stands in between those extremes The sanctification line extreme ... The whole idea in the dissertation was to push to the extreme. To try to find excerpts to support [that idea]. Like the confession doctrine. If one does not confess everything perfectly, they are not believers. That is the sanctification line extreme. The grace line extreme is -- I am Christ. I don't need the congregation. I don't need any connection with living Congregation of God. Neither line is a picture of God's Kingdom. So, God's kingdom stands in between those [two]. As it has been said, we confess our sins when they trouble us but it's not our Christ. And we live in God's congregation. We don't, in that sense ... That is what this world teaches. I don't need any middleman. I take care of my matters between myself and Christ..

Secondly, about birth control. I believe [that] God is the creator of life. Without God's active involvement and will, there is no new life. Those families that cannot have children, they know it most deeply. Secondly, God is wise beyond any understanding. His ways are way above ours. And thirdly, God is love. He loves His own. God loved the whole world so much that he gave his only son to die for the sins of mankind. If I put these three together, God is the creator, who does not make mistakes and who loves his own. I cannot think that God would need my involvement in birth control. This is how I believe. This kind of vague statement that for health reasons ... Yes and no. It depends on what it is. I am not a doctor. I'm not going to go into that area at all. But I heard several times being said that it is between the mother and the doctor. Where is God? I think there's more involved in that than the mother and the doctor. It is a question that we know this world is fully supportive [of]. My thinking supports it. My brain supports it. And so many people struggle with it. I know it because I have children who are in that age. They speak of their experiences in Finland, [of] how many families young families ... I don't know many details. I have unbelieving children, [who have] struggled with these questions. I had something else that was on my mind, but I can't remember it anymore. But these were the two most burning matters in my mind.

Just one simple thought about continual forgiveness. I tried to understand it I tried to understand the difference. And I hit my ax on a stone. I realize that God has not given me much understanding, so I have to accept that I understand little. But my question is, if continual forgiveness is the same as grace, why do we need new terminology for that? I don't worry about [it] if it's the same. Like Russ said in his presentation. We also heard the statement that the past, present and future sins are forgiven. That sounded odd. That troubles [me]. So, those are my two thoughts. But I feel so lacking and so weak and so confused. Can I believe my sins forgiven? If I can believe, I'll make it to heaven. I don't need anything else. [1:27:03]

[1:41] "The doctrine of justification is very important. I think that we mostly agree on it. At the Southern Minnesota speakers meeting some 2.5 years ago, Craig said that "When Christ died on Golgotha, he forgave the sins of the world." I thought it was a slip of the tongue. I have understood, that he paid for the sin debt. That's the difference in my understanding. I've been

told that they are the same. I don’t agree. I've also heard that when Christ died, he forgave the sins of the whole world. I don’t believe that way. If God forgave the sins when Christ died, then they are forgiven. It mean that there is no sin. When God forgives, he draws them; they disappear. If he forgave the sins of the world, it means that there is no sin. I can’t agree with this , that when Christ died, he forgave the sins of the believers. If they are forgiven, nobody can get them back. They are forgiven; they don’t exist. This is the biggest reason for my concern. I believe that when Jesus died, he paid the sin debt of the whole world; he atoned it. There was a statement made in Finland that, when we confess our sins, they have already been forgiven. I don’t agree with that. “ [1:47] (Jouko Haapsaari, at Craig Kumpula Board Meeting, May 9, 2019)

Vanhurskauttamisoppi on hyvin tärkeä, ja enimmäkseen, me ymmärrämme sen samalla tavalla. Elälä MN puhujien palaverissa noin 2.5 vuotta sitten, Craig sanoi, että “kun Kristus kuoli Golgatalla, hän antoi maailman synnit anteeksi”. Minä ajattelin, etta han sanoi sen vahingossa. Minä olen ymmärtänyt, että, Jeesus maksoi synnin velan. Siinä, meidän käsitykset poikkeavat. Minulle on sanottu, että ne tarkoittavat samaa. Olen eri mieltä. Minä ole myos kuullut, etta kun Kristus kuoli, hän antoi synnit anteeksi koko maailmalle. Minä en uskoo sillä tavalla. Jos Jumala on antanut anteeksi, kun Kristus kuoli, niin ne ovat sitten anteeksi. Se tarkoittaa, että ei niitä syntejä enää ole. Kun Jumala antaa anteeksi, hän vetää ne synnit puoleensa, ja ne häviävät. Jos hän on antanut maailman synnit anteeksi, se tarkoittaa, että ei ole syntiä enää. En voi yhtyä tähän, että kun Kristus kuoli, hän antoi uskovaistenkin synnit anteeksi. Jos ne ovat kerran anteeksi annettu, niin niitä ei voi saada takaisin. Ne ovat anteeksi annettu, ja niitä eivat ole olemassa enää. Siinä on minun suurin huolen aiheen. Minä uskon, että kun Jeesus kuoli, hän maksoi maailman synnin velan, eli hän sovitti maailman synnit. Kerran Suomessa, oli väite, että kun uskovainen mene ripille, niin hänen synnit ovat itse asiassa jo anteeksi. Minä en voi yhtyä tähän.

(40:25) God left the keys of the kingdom here upon the earth, and did not take them with to heaven. They are not needed in heaven; there is no sin in heaven. Sin happens upon the earth. Therefore, it is so wonderful that sins can be forgiven here, on this earth. That’s where they are needed. Also, that the order is in this way, that whosoever sin you forgive, they are forgiven in heaven. What if it was the other way around? Those sins, which are forgiven in heaven, can be forgiven here. How would one ever know? How would one dare to forgive anyone their sins, because we would not know. This is the order that Jesus gave. They are forgiven here and God hears this message and agrees and forgives. So, if you hear the message, which a believing person preaches, it is not in the words. There was a heresy in Finland, who thought that these words are so holy, that they convey the forgiveness of sins. That the person only needs to receive it in faith. They don’t need to know weather this person believes or not. That’s how they thought. This office of the forgiveness of sins is an office of the Spirit, not the office of the Word. So when a person hears the words of absolution from a believing person, and receives them in faith, God forgives. Somebody may ask, “how about the other sins?” We don’t want to go into God’s mystery. We don’t need to understand it. I need to confess those sins that trouble my

concencice; which I feel. I don't need to confess sins that I don't know. How would I confess something, which I don't know? Why do I confess those sins that I know? Because they trouble me. I want to be free from them. If I can, why wouldn't I? What's wrong with that? If God has left a gift into his kingdom, why wouldn't we use it? I encourage you to use it a lot. You cannot overuse it. The more you use it, the more blessings it carries to you. (Haapsaari, April 28 2019 Rockford, 43:13)

Jumala jätti taivaan valtakunnan avaimet tänne maan päälle, eikä ottanut niitä mukanansa taivaaseen. Niitä ei tarvita taivaassa. Seilla ei ole syntiä. Synti on täällä maan päällä. Sen takia, on hyvä, että synnit annetaan anteeksi täällä maan päällä. Sen takia avaimet tarvitaan. Järjestys on myös tärkeä. Se, mitä on päästetty täällä maan päällä, on päästetty myös taivaassa. Mitäs, jos se järjestys olisikin päinvastainen? Entäs jos synnit, mitä voidaan taivaissa antaa anteeksi, antaisi anteeksi sitten täällä maan päällä. Miten joku voisi tietää? Miten uskaltaisi antaa jollekin synnit anteeksi, kun ei tietäisi. Jeesus on antanut se järjestys. Synnit annetaan anteeksi täällä, Jumala kuule sen viestin, yhtyy siihen, ja antaa anteeksi. Kun kuulet viestin, joka on uskovaisen ihmisen julistama, voima ei ole vain sanoissa. Suomessa oli eriseura, jossa uskottiin, että sanat olivat pyhät, ja niissä oli synninpäästöä. Ihminen tarvitsee vain ottaa uskolla vastaan. Ei tarvittu tietää, oliko julistaja uskovainen, tai ei. Näin he uskoivat. Tämä anteeksiantamuksen virka on hengen virka, ei Sanan virka. Kun ihminen kuule sovituksen sanan, joka uskovainen ihminen julistaa, ja han uskolla vastaan ottaa sen, Jumala antaa anteeksi. Joku saattaa kysyä, että "entäs ne toiset synnit". Me emme tarvitsee purkata Jumalan salaisuudet. Me emme tarvitsee ymmärtää. Minun pitää tunnustaa ne synnit, jotka ovat minun omantunnon vaivana; jotka tunnen. Minun ei tarvitse tunnustaa ne synnit, jotka en tunne. Miksi minun pitäisi tunnustaa synnit, jota minä en tunne? Miksi minä tunnustan ne synnit, jotka tunnen? Koska ne vaivaavat minua. Minä haluan päästä niistä vapaaksi. Miksi en haluaisi päästää niistä, jos kerran voin? Mikä siinä olisi muka huonoa? Kun Jumala on kerran, jättänyt tällaisen lahjan hänen valtakuntaansa, miksi en käyttäisi sitä? Rohkaisen sinua käyttämään sitä, ja paljon. On mahdotonta kayttaa sita liikka. Mitä enemmän sinä sitä käytät, sitä enempi siunaukset virtaavat sinun kohdalle.

[38:35] "…God wants us to believe without seeing, without understanding. Just simply, God wants us to put our lives into His hands, and stay as little children, looking for the help from the Mother. Luckily, God has given us a Mother, this congregation, which is around us, through which we hear God's voice. The voice of the congregation is God's mouth. God speaks in His congregation and through His congregation. That's how God operates. Do you hear it? Do you accept it? Do you believe it? It's up to you. Nobody can force … " [39:30evd] (*Jouko Haapsaari, Rockford, huhtik. 28, 2019)*

- "Jesus is the bread of Life. Jesus is not the bread of this world." (Haapsaari, March 31, 2019 RLLC, about 20:15 min)
- God wants us to believe without seeing and without understanding. (Haapsaari, April 28 2019 Rockford, 36:40)

Rockford annual meeting March 2019

Opening Devotion (Haapsaari)

Text: I Tim 1:5 “The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.”

(14:00) If we now take this list of three and turn it to positive, from negative. We get a list of items or things that help us on our way to heaven. So if the question is “I want to make it to heaven, how should I live that it could be possible?” So let’s turn these three to positive. Well, they are positive here, so we see kind of two paths here. There is this positive what helps in keeping faith and making it to heaven and what battles against it. So, a pure heart. Keep your heart pure. Keep your conscience clean, and be sincere in your faith. `(15:30) If you are sincere, you speak what you believe. You don’t say something that you would expect that should be said. One minister in Finland, not a believing minister, but a state church minister said that whenever I wish, I could keep a Laestadian sermon. That’s what he thought. Obviously, he had heard lots of them and he was a smart man. He thought that it's possible. But one thing he didn’t take into consideration was the Spirit of God. He forgot that the listeners who have the spirit of God know it, if it answers to the spirit or not. God’s spirit does not dwell here, it dwells in the congregation. (16:15) God’s Spirit is the ultimate judge, because it's God’s Spirit. It's not man’s spirit, its Gods. God’s Spirit judges everything; it's His work. The Bible speaks of how the congregation should judge the servants, if it answers or if it doesn't. It's the work of the congregation. That’s how God comforts. (17:07)

Haapsaari, Phoenix Winter Services, February 2019. (34:00) I feel sorry for Solomon. King Solomon. For years I thought that he made a good request when God said ‘ask me for one thing, and I will give it to you’. If God would say to me today ‘ask me one thing and I’ll give it to you for sure’, I would say that I’ll make it to heaven. I don’t care to be wise. He asked that “I would be a wise king’. I don’t care to be wise.I care to make it to heaven. That’s my wish. I feel sorry for Salomon. He received wisdom. So much, that even today, even unbelieving people who don’t know the Bible very much, they speak of Solomon's judgement. He is so famous. It was such a wise judgement, that I can’t think of a higher one. But he didn’t make it to heaven.He is not mentioned for instance in Hebrews 11. The Bible says that these strange women turned his heart away from the living God. That’s the goal of the enemy of souls. He has a tool for everybody (35:11)

Haapsaaren alustus Loppiaispäivillä January 2019 ReKrO. (37:40) Minä olen kuullut, omilla korvillani, kun ihminen sanoo, että 'voitte te minut potkia ulos, mutta uskoa ette voi minulta viedä'. Miltä kuulostaa sinun sydämellesi semmoinen sanaa? Onko nöyrän Jumalan Lapsen sanaa se, vai onko se Ylpeän itsetietoista ihmisen sanaa? (Katsoo Room 8:38-39, John 10:28-30).

Haapsaari, Nov 25, 2018 Heb 12:18-25 RLLC. (22:20) When we think of a little child. They have a tender conscience. They know very clearly what's right and what's wrong. You, and those of us who have raised children, or those who remember how it was when you were young. We recognize that, yes, that tenderness is a part of childhood. Tender conscience. And we are being taught to strive to keep a tender conscience, because there is a danger, and that's the

goal of the enemy of the souls' that our conscience becomes less tender. It hardens, as we use the term, so that we don't hear that well God's voice in us anymore. Because conscience, the name, means knowing together. Knowing to con means together. And this sense is of knowing or of feeling. So, we cannot say that my conscience says this way that if your conscience says that way, that it's fine. It's not so. Conscience is knowing together. Knowing together with the Word of God, and that voice of the Holy Spirit that speaks in the congregation. I cannot think that somebody are more timid or scary of sin and I don't need to worry that much. conscience can become hardened. That's the goal of the enemy of the souls, that we would harden our conscience. How does it become hardened? Because of disobedience. Because of sin. I would say, in its most graphic form, being rebellious. If I rise against that voice that speaks in the congregation, my conscience becomes hardened. Or, if I join in planning to sin together with someone. Or, even worse, with a few people. It hardens the conscience . If the conscience is hardened, we cannot hear God's voice. And so, this law was given to mankind because they had lost their natural ability to hear God's voice. Because God speaks. God speaks in nature, God speaks in the phases of people and nations, and God speaks in his Word. And God speaks in his congregation, through the voice of the Holy Spirit. (26:15) (see Piri, Palmupäivät 2010, J Palola SRK VK 2008, Juha Seppälä SRK VK 2014 p 103, Room 14)

“… And last on the list was "continual forgiveness". This was a new term, something he had never heard. This person mentioned that he (Jouko) should delete this email, so he did. (The implication was that someone who mentions "continual forgiveness" is lumped into an understanding of making allowances for a sinful life…” (Jouko Haapsaari, Ministers Teleconference, 1 November 2018)

Minister’s Teleconference, 1 November 2018 [full comment]
Jouko: I need to confess my faith. I am thankful. My thought is disappearing. These have been difficult years. I understand little. The new concepts seem odd. I am fearful of them. There is a wrong teaching. Twelve years ago I arrived in America. In the first month, I received an email. In conclusion, there was an odd list of questions. It was in regards to the moderate use of alcohol, worldly music and continual forgiveness. I was worried. I don’t believe in this way. There are new concepts. I expected to get phone calls. There were no phone calls. Forgiveness is the core, it is food for our souls. There is temporal and spiritual food. There has been smoke. There is new thinking. Are some who are wiser? We stand in grace (Romans 5). Nathan approached king David (2 Samuel 12:12). God frees you now … This is like we were always taught. Who is teaching [otherwise]? It is wrong. Be accursed … (Gal. 1). Thankful. We have been like in a desert. The sun is now beginning to shine. Like in Finland, some say. Odd – people say that they believe differently in Finland. There may be some individuals. Regarding the email that I mentioned earlier, some of those were from Finland. Be comforted. The gospel washes sins away. Can I believe?

Ministers Camp at SLC 14 April 2018, Saturday evening

Jouko Haapsaari [full comment, 2:46:30] I got from Matti Laakko long time ago a sermon that he sent me. [He said]: read this! It is from 1853. It is a Laestadius sermon, where he speaks of the signs in the sun and the moon and the stars. He speaks of the darkness. He speaks of human reason, causing this darkness. Bear with me. I will try to translate it on the fly. It is in Finnish. It is one short excerpt from the sermon that speaks me, kind of the crux of the message. “We don’t doubt that these signs in the sun and the stars will become seeing [visible] also in the eyes of the unbelievers. But the Christian who takes heed of the signs of the time sees these signs way before they become before the eyes of the unbelievers. He sees how the sun becomes dark, when the light of the Christianity goes out. He sees how the moon will go before the sun. That is when human reason blocks Christianity. Then the reason puts out the light of the sun of grace, when all of the substance of living Christianity has ended. When the knowledge of sin has ended and the knowledge of Christ has ended. Temptations have ended. Fear and doubts have ended. Then the dead faith becomes stronger. [The] sinner starts sinning upon the grace (?). (Because there is grace, the sinner starts to sin). And reason makes sins lawful. Drunkenness becomes lawful. Fornication becomes lawful. Greed becomes lawful. Cursing becomes lawful. Even battle (?) becomes lawful.” So that is the quote from Laestadius’ sermon. So, we read from the content of the whole sermon that reason kills, suffocates living faith little-by-little. It goes in [this] way that we don’t talk about sin. Sin becomes lawful. If there is no sin, there is [not] even grace. I have to say that I have mightily suffered with this concept of continuous forgiveness. Because it takes, in my mind, it takes sin away. If sin is forgiven, it does not exist. I remember dear brother [Craig] when we were in the LLC office. I think that it was the Southern Minnesota minister’s meeting, where I thought [that] it was a slip of the tongue when he said that when Christ died he forgave all the sins. Almost being impatient, I almost said no, no, he atoned them. I am not sure if you think that way. If sins are forgiven, they are forgiven. If I believe that Christ that when died, he forgave all my sins. They are forgiven … If God forgives my sins, who can take them back? They are forgiven. Why do they ever confess forgiven sins? I don’t like confession that much that I would just confess for the kicks. I use it for a desperate need. So, if we lose the sight of sin, we lose the sight of grace. We lose the sight of doubts. We don’t fear. We become very confident. We become theoretical. And faith becomes, as Laestadius says, the faith of the skull. It is theory. It is wisdom. It is information or knowledge, something. Faith is life and it is practice. We practice faith. Or, how would I say [it]. We battle. I battle every day. My prayer is, please protect me. I cannot protect myself. I have heard enough, seen enough, like Olli [Vanska] said. When friends have given up the faith, my children have given up their faith, they go astray. And I know – it is because of sin. It is because of unforgiven sin [on] the conscience. I see this teaching of continual forgiveness fatal. Fatal. It’s killing the faith. It is not right. Grace is God’s gift.

And the believers are so troubled, young and old. Young people come to me, what is this continual forgiveness? Old people say, I have never heard of that. I tell you. I heard about that the first time ten years ago. When I moved to this continent, I got messages from people who tested waters around me. They tested how I believe. I got an email from a person with a long list of stuff that were new findings. One was [the] moderate use of alcohol. One was moderate use of worldly music. In the long list, the last one was continual forgiveness. In the email the person said that you can expect many phone calls. There are many friends who think that way. They would like to hear how you think. I answered to this email as I believe. Since, I have never heard about that. As for me, it is a wrong doctrine. The person replied immediately and said that please delete this email. It is confidential. I don't want you to spread it anywhere. I deleted it. I don't have it. But, of course, I remember that [email]. It was shocking to me. I didn't get a single phone call of those many promised phone calls. So, it has been here at least ten years. Now I heard just a few months ago when John [Lehtola] came to Rockford Home and Family Meeting and spoke of that. I thought, no, no, now it is back. I don't know what else to say. I am not against people. I am not attacking. I am not judging. I want to say as clearly as I can that I don't see it as right teaching. I am against it. I don't dare, because I have answer to God. And I know that in Revelations there is rebuke to the congregation pastor who allowed wrong teaching in the congregation. I have been weak. I tried to say a little bit. I am tolerant also. I have tried to speak as I believe from the pulpit. But I have been too weak to approach. I have spared my flesh. I am sad. I am sorry for that. I asked many times, God why did you put me into this calling (Jouko cries)? I am too weak. Dear brothers, can I believe? [2:56:02]

"… I have to say that I have mightily suffered with this concept of continuous forgiveness. Because it takes, in my mind, it takes sin away. If sin is forgiven, it does not exist … I see this teaching of continual forgiveness fatal. Fatal. It's killing the faith. It is not right. "…" (Jouko Haapsaari, 2018 Sat Apr 14- Ministers Camp at SLC)

Ministers Camp at SLC 14 April 2018, Saturday morning

Jouko Haapsaari: Dear brothers, I first want to say amen to the presentation. It comforts … [Inaudible word] … It came through our dear brother, but it didn't come from him, it came from God. Thank God for it. I prayed and prayed and prayed that God would give wisdom this one time to our dear brother, because we need it now. And he gave. God gave all of his possessions (?) … rejoiced in my heart. This is exactly how I believe. I couldn't agree more. I have nothing to add. I am very thankful to good God. Secondly, greetings from Finland brothers. I sent a photo. I took a panorama of the whole group. And I sent it to the brothers there. They are having three opisto's area-wide meetings. So, there were lots of brothers. They sent their greetings here. I felt during these last

months that the spirit is troubled amongst the congregation. The spirit is troubled. And God's spirit is never troubled without reason. God is not troubled without a reason. I also felt that the spirit was awake. So many knew of these meetings. I could think that a few years ago some families went on to services and wondered why aren't we having a service here, a sermon. Why are you having a recorded sermon? Then, oh, there is a speaker's camp. Now, I don't know if everybody didn't know about that. So many spoke of that. So many sent their greetings and messages and are praying. There are so many prayers sent for this weekend that I have never experienced before. The spirit is troubled, and the spirit is awake. Now we have had almost three years of intense discussions. I remember very clearly two years ago our visits here how God spoke. I thought that it is like a talented artist making a painting one brush stroke at a time. As Jim [Frantti] said, God gives some to one brother and something else to another. They add up. The picture is painted through discussion by God not by men. There are two kinds of brush strokes, for and against. There are two understandings. That is painfully clear. It is so painfully clear. I feel so strongly when the message answers to my spirit as this presentation [presented]. There is no doubt of that. It is like silk. It is so smooth. When there is a speech that does not answer my spirit. My wife said once — we were in the congregation discussion; I tried to sit and calm down — she said, don't get so dramatic. I am so troubled when I hear another message. I am not against ... we do not battle against men. I do not battle against brothers. I can only make it to heaven by the grace of God and because of much forgiveness and almost unlimited patience from God in God's congregation. How would I be against someone? We are but sinners, there is no question about that. We are a group of sinful people [women] here, but this is not Pharisee Simon's house. This is God's congregation. This is God's house. We came here because of love to God. God has loved us first. As Jim said, we have not dared to say no. I still remember the day when Matti Laakko said at the Oulunsalo congregation evening, now the Haapsaari matter … [I thought that] I must be deep in the woods. My matter is brought before the congregation ... then they put me to speak [cries]. What do you say to the congregation? Do you say no to that? How could you? [I would love to just]... sit down. Just believe for myself. Not to worry about anything. But my spirit is troubled. I am so worried. I am not judging. I am not a judge. I don't see into their hearts. But some speeches answer my spirit and some don't. I may be wrong. I don't mean that. I am not the ultimate judge. I also trust in the others — the spirit of God that speaks in the congregation. I would say to the brothers who know my spirit is troubled, the brothers around me — pray to God, pray to God because the word either heals or it offends. It is not neutral. We are before God. We are not before men here. If the word does not heal us it will offend. It is either/ or. It is because of God, not of us. It is because God is a majesty. Almost three years of discussions — and we have more and more questions. Where does it lead us to? Before we go to a path, we should think where is this path leading me to? Don't battle against confession. Don't battle against

forgiveness. Don’t battle against the understanding that you hear in God’s kingdom. Don’t battle against your conscience. If you know that there is something lying on my [your] conscience, humble your heart and take care of that. God does not wait eternally. We are only flesh. We are all only very small specks of dust. We are only humans. If we are disobedient — if God closes, who can open? I am thankful to be here despite the fact that I am troubled. I am very thankful to be here. I feel the presence of God here. I am so thankful that I can hear God speak. But I hear the other message also. I have to be honest. My heart has not agreed with all speeches here. But it has agreed with many speeches so warmly that I felt like rejoicing in my heart. I have … [not heard judgment of any speeches] but I have heard another understanding. And I am saddened of that. And I would hope that God would help us to one united understanding. If that happens, we will leave home happily. And if that doesn’t happen, the rift is wider than it was when we came here. May God help us. He only can. Brothers, can I believe my sins forgiven? [cries] I want to believe.

“The spirit is troubled here (in reference to continual forgiveness).” (Jouko Haapsaari, RLLC Discussion Afternoon, January 21, 2018)

Jouko [2:03:47] Rockford on 21 January 2018

We are talking about faith. It is a mystery. We understand in part and we see in part. So, I don't feel that bad that I know so little. But it is kind of humiliating to understand so little. I do not have much understanding to speak about continual forgiveness. But what I hear is that the spirit is troubled. That is clear. It is obvious. There are warnings of emphasis, like emphasizing continual forgiveness too much. Sometimes, what is not said is maybe more troubling than what is said. Maybe I am just so sensitive and timid. We talk about the most important matter in our lives. We talk about the treasure. We know that the enemy is going around wanting to destroy and steal our faith. If we would see the enemy, which is around us, the lion that is going around, seeking whom he may devour, I think we should be worried about it. Then we have the question, what can we do to keep faith? What should I do to keep faith? We should not worry about talking about works. What can I do? How can I keep the treasure which I own and cherish. I don't want to give it away. We know that unforgiven sin leads to [unbelief]. There is no question. If somebody disagrees [with this], I am perplexed. So, there is such a thing as unforgiven sin. When there is the emphasis on continual forgiveness and the thought of forgiving sin, I find it difficult to put them into one context. Maybe it is because of my little understanding. I know the concept of being justified [righteous] and a sinner simultaneously. It is so personal. My highest goal is to make it to heaven. I know that

the enemy is going around and wanting to get me as a prey. I know that my conscience gets troubled when I fall into sin. But I also know that if I do not show obedience to God, my conscience can become hardened, dulled or dead. It does not worry about it anymore. God can take his Holy Spirit away, because of disobedience. To me it is a necessity to have my sins forgiven. That is why I cherish this home congregation [so much]. I can sit on the bench and be encouraged to believe my sins forgiven.That is why my wife is my life's greatest treasure. From her flows the gospel. I can turn to her and hear the gospel and believe it. It washes away my sin. I have lived long enough to try many ways to get rid of sin. I have read from the publication the absolution. It did not work. I tried when I was a young man. I did not want to confess the sin that troubled me. I knew it. I tried to read the absolution. It did not work. Why would I not use confession, when God has given it. I try not to envy those who are deep in doctrine and understand it a lot. And I don't [understand it]. But I am thankful that I can believe and make it to heaven. Dear brothers and sisters, can I believe my sins forgiven?

Minister's Teleconference, 11/2/2017 at LLC Office

Jouko Haapsaari [1:11:10]: Dear brothers, we have had about two years of discussions and not much change. There have been two understandings. Some of the talking points have changed, but the two understandings, which have caused unrest and lack of freedom, weighing of words, doubts, has prevailed. I wonder how much longer God gives time to repent? There is an end also for God's patience. I don't know, of course. I hope it continues. But I have been, of course, approached with many of these questions, received many different kinds of text messages with uncomfortable understandings. So, I will touch on a few. First, the Finland ministers and USA ministers speak differently. I don't know if I am a Finn. I have preached 2 ½ times longer in Finland than here. I preach the same [way] here as I did in Finland. I have been approached [by] offended listeners. I just can't change. The only way for me to preach is as I believe. I have felt the support of the believers, but I have also felt that some of the listeners have been offended, unhappy, like some were in Finland. So, [that] the Finn ministers speak differently, I say no. We have had the good fortune to host basically all of the Finn ministers [who have] visited here during these ten years. We have visited about matters of faith. No difference. Not even a wrinkle. First, it is not the case. Why is there a need to push this idea of different teaching? I don't understand. Secondly, this absolution in communion. Brian mentioned [it]. When I heard it for the first time, that is a recollection I had … oh boy, exactly the same teaching which was [at] the eve of the minister's heresy in Finland. I would say that it is even logically unstable. If the believer could have forgiveness of their sins by receiving the communion – and Luther says that it takes faith to receive the blessing of the sacrament. If an unbelieving person believes in it, it is then a place of new birth logically. How else could we understand it? This Christianity has always understood it so that it is not a place of new birth nor in baptism. There is no question about that. This world, this self-righteous world, has preached this throughout the ages. It was just a few years ago when the believers had the greeting by a local bishop

(Repo) at Finland summer services. He gave a long lecture how there is new birth in baptism. It is the official doctrine of the Finnish state church. It has never been the doctrine in God's kingdom. So, those who speak that way, they boldly and openly stand against the understanding of God's kingdom. I am also very saddened with that. I heard what Don Lahti said. My heart says amen. Study [Examine], or how did he call it, if you are in faith or not (2 Cor. 13). Law-mindedness. I would say that people who speak so, don't know what law-mindedness is. It is one of the very clever disguises of the enemy of souls to put this word in people's mouths. When there is a warning against sin, oh, this is law-minded preaching. The enemy of the souls is good at its job. It is one proof of it. It is [a] very scary teaching. I wonder what happens in the conscience of the person who openly speaks that way? It is very hurtful for that person's conscience. I would say that there are those who are losing sight of God's kingdom. I have been asked, what is God's kingdom? Meaning, is it a group that support you or is it a group that supports me? I remember one sermon by Pauli Korteniemi where he preached and spoke of the enemy of the souls who shoots those fiery darts. He said, interestingly, that the enemy of the souls tries shoot the eyes first to blind the believer, so they would lose sight of God's kingdom. They don't know any longer where God's kingdom is. So, when they get lost, they can not find the way back. They don't know where God's kingdom is. So, when they get lost, they can't find the way back, because they don't know where it is. Jesus says, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Who is 'you' today? That is the question for all of us. Who is 'you'? We understand by faith. We cannot believe through understanding. It is impossible to rationalize, to analyze, to build such a human understanding through which you could find God's kingdom. If somebody doubts, read first Corinthians one and two, where Paul explains how he felt when he walked from Athens to Corinth, from the cradle of [Greek] civilization in Athens when he came to Corinth. He said, when I came to you, I did not come to reveal this mystery where the [elephant?] works. I only wanted to know the crucified Lord Jesus. I am very troubled or worried. It seems like a boldness to disagree has increased. That is how it is. The word of God either heals or it offends. It is not neutral. When God speaks through people, God wants us, the listeners, to obey, to humble our hearts to accept and to believe. If we see

something to be corrected, because the word of God is like a mirror in front of us. When we see ourselves in the mirror of the word of God, we have to obey. We have to humble ourselves. If we turn away from that mirror, likes James said, we immediately forget what we saw there. So, we find ourselves. If the enemy of the souls could lead someone astray, he would wish to lead the ministers astray. We are especially vulnerable, dear brothers. We are the main object of the attacks of the enemy of the souls. If he can close [blind] your eyes, blind your eyes either a little [bit] or a lot … If he blinds our eyes a little, we start avoiding some topics. We shun away from them, because they are difficult for us to talk about. If he can blind us fully … We remember the congregation of Laodicea (Rev. 3) in Revelations, there was a minister who was blind. It can happen. I am talking to myself. It can happen to me. Oh, if I ever become so blinded that I lose sight of God's kingdom, that God would still spare my hearing that I could hear. A blind one, if he hears and obeys, will be guided back to the path. I hope I have spoken so that I have not cut any ears. But this comes from love. I have been worried [for] about two years, at least. Where are we going? Are we united? Do

we see heart to heart? Or are we 95% agreeing? One spirit does not teach in two ways. God does not fight against himself. So, may God keep us humble and tender [with] our ears open that we can hear what the spirit speaks in the congregations. Brothers, can I believe my sins forgiven? [1:24:20]

Jouko Haapsaari, Rockford, 28 May 2017, John 17:18-23

[17:45] … The kingdom of hearing. So, we hear here. We hear an audible sermon. The core of the audible sermon is the audible proclamation of the forgiveness of sins. Everything in the Bible boils down to the core of the Gospel, which is the audible message that my sins are forgiven. That is the core essence of God's Kingdom. Without that word, there is no God's Kingdom. Then he said "that they all might be one" … [19:45] … "That they all may be one; as the Father *is* in Jesus, and Jesus in the Father." [John 17:21] This Triune God is so amazing. It is too much for our little mind to comprehend fully. For sure it is. But the Bible explains enough of that [so] we can believe that God is one. That means that God's Son, Jesus, is not another person. And God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is not a separate entity. But all three form one united entity. God's spirit is God. That makes the congregation of God so special. It elevates the congregation to its proper and right position. The congregation is God. The congregation is Christ. The spirit of God and the spirit of Christ speaks in and through the congregation. What makes it difficult for us or for the human mind to accept it is that it happens through sinful people. That is strange, I agree. It is so strange, but it is also so beautiful. Because if that would not be the case, how could we hear God speak? [21:50] … We don't see angels. The Angels don't speak to us. What we can see and hear are humans. And with the help and the will of God, humans will speak to us the Word of God. When we receive that, we receive God Himself. Jesus said, "the glory that you have given me, I have given them." God's glory is with us. How? Through the Holy Spirit. That is God's glory -- the Holy Spirit. That is why the forgiveness that the congregation preaches is God's forgiveness. That is the glory of God … [31:15] … We have been allowed to enter this Kingdom of children. This is not the kingdom of adults. This is the kingdom of children. With the grace of God, some adults have been granted God's grace to enter into this Kingdom. But it also means that we ought to become as children everyday. Although the Bible speaks, when I became an adult, I forsook the childish things. So, we are adults in one sense, but in the other sense, we are children. And we are supposed to be. Adults take care of themselves, don't they? That is one of the definitions of being an adult. You are capable of taking care of yourself. In that sense, we can never become an adult. Spiritually, we can never become adults. But we have to be as little babes, as the Bible describes -- as newborn babes, who cannot provide for themselves any support or any help. Everything is channeled through the congregation. It is God's way and God's will. The core of the support is the forgiveness of sins. When Jesus left the keys of the forgiveness of sins in his kingdom, He left them here on earth. The older brothers used to say that Jesus did not take the Keys of the Kingdom to heaven because there is no sin in heaven. There is no need for the forgiveness of sins in heaven, because there is no sin there. Sin takes place here on earth. That is why the Keys of the Kingdom or the keys are there forgiveness of sins must be here in the kingdom of God, where God through his Spirit still proclaims a beautiful message. Dear brother and sister, it is so important that we believe daily

and momentarily our sins forgiven -- that we use this old-fashioned proclamation of all of our sins. That we would ask for it and hear it, and that we receive and believe it, because it is the Word of God. It is the word that frees us from sin. So, uplift your heart and believe your sins forgiven in Jesus' name and precious atonement blood. If you receive it, not as the word of man , but as the Word of God, it gives you what it promises. It is the treasure of God's Kingdom. Can I believe my own sins forgiven? … in Jesus' name, Amen

Jouko Haapsaari

Rockford, 28.5.2017

https://llchurcharchive.org/sermons/play/19260

[19:45] "Here Jesus says that we are one, as the Father is in Jesus, and Jesus in the Father. [John 17:21] This Triune God is so amazing. That it is, I know, too much for our little mind to comprehend fully. For sure it is. But the Bible explains enough of that, that we can believe that God is one. And that means that God's Son, Jesus, is not another person. And that God's Spirit, the Holy Spirit, is not a separate entity. But they all three form one united entity. God's spirit is God. And that makes the congregation of God so special. That elevates the congregation to its proper and right position. The congregation is God. The congregation is Christ. The spirit of God and the spirit of Christ speaks in and through the congregation. And what makes it difficult for us or for the human mind to accept it, is that it happens through sinful people. That is strange, I agree. It is so strange, but also it is so beautiful. Because if that wouldn't be the case, how could we hear God speak?...."

"Tässä Jeesus sanoo, että olemme yhtä, kuten Isä on Jeesuksessa ja Jeesus Isässä. [Joh. 17:21] Tämä kolmiyhteinen Jumala on niin hämmästyttävä. Tiedän, että se on liikaa, jotta vähäinen mielemme ymmärtäisi sitä täysin. Varmasti se on. Mutta Raamattu selittää siitä tarpeeksi, jotta voimme uskoa, että Jumala on yksi. Ja se tarkoittaa, että Jumalan Poika, Jeesus, ei ole toinen henkilö. Ja että Jumalan Henki, Pyhä Henki, ei ole erillinen kokonaisuus [entiteetti]. Mutta ne kaikki kolme muodostavat yhden yhtenäisen kokonaisuuden [entiteetin]. Jumalan henki on Jumala. Ja se tekee Jumalan seurakunnasta niin erikoisen. Se korottaa seurakunnan sen asianmukaiseen [proper] ja oikeaan [right] asemaansa. **Seurakunta on Jumala. Seurakunta on Kristus.** Jumalan henki ja Kristuksen henki puhuvat seurakunnassa ja sen kautta. Ja mikä tekee sen meille tai ihmismielelle vaikeaksi hyväksyä, on se, että se tapahtuu syntisten ihmisten kautta. Se on outoa, olen samaa mieltä. Se on niin outoa, mutta myös niin kaunista. Koska jos näin ei olisi, kuinka voisimme kuulla Jumalan puhuvan?"

Craig's speech at Southern Minnesota speakers meeting 2 May 2017

Craig Kumpula: [1:45:00] [I have] a lot of thoughts and things going through my mind. I will address maybe the question you had, Rod, as far as what things we are hearing, what things [people are] visiting about. It is a struggle for me to speak on these matters, but I want to be free. First of all, I have to say that this topic of justification and what that truly means. That was explained from the summary of you brothers and also how Luther explains it that it is the core, it is the core of our faith. That is the primary tenet of our doctrine. There is much in scripture that points to that concept of justification. I just going to read a couple of verses here. Romans has many examples. "Therefore, by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin." Also, in that same context: "Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." This is all from Romans 3. "Therefore, we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law." In chapter four. 'If Abraham were justified by works, he has whereof to glory, but not before God." In Romans five: "Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." So, we can find many, many portions. I won't go into them all. But justification is a simple concept, but it is also a very deep concept in a lot of ways. I will share some examples. First of all, just from my own experience, I mentioned this at our own board meeting that I have not always understood that concept of justification. And I am not sure yet if I have perfect understanding. Luther lamented that he had to go back to that again and again for assurance from scriptures. Is this true? Christ died once, as it is explained in Hebrews for the sins of all, all sins were forgiven one time. He entered once unto the holy place and was raised for our justification. So, then the question is – truly, sins are forgiven. That is what justification is. They are forgiven. So, as the question has been raised – why we preach the gospel? We have already heard tonight – why [do] we preach the gospel? Dear brothers, I agree, we need to keep preaching the gospel the way we are familiar with that gospel, because it is for our weakness. It is for our assurance. We are not, and will never be, completely free of sin in this life, because of our sinful flesh. But yet it is true, even as Uljas explained in "Treasure Hidden in the Field" that faith is not a deed of man, but it is a gift of God. Therefore, faith is not a merit on the basis of which we are declared righteous, but man owns the perfect righteousness of Christ through faith. Righteousness of faith is that which comes from outside of us. It is also called gift righteousness. This is paraphrased from the teachings of Luther. He goes on to explain how it was a central question of the Reformation. He also explains in the section on confession that when we go to confession, we go there just as much of a believer before the confession as we

are after confession. So, clearly the confession in that understanding is not what saves us. It is still faith before the confession and after the confession – it is faith. So, we could almost say that in theory it is true that all of our sins are forgiven. And we can believe that. The question always comes that am I strong enough to truly believe that? Therefore, we need, and continue to preach the gospel, as Eric [Jurmu] just explained from one example. There are many more from our own experiences that we need to be assured. But again, the concept of justification itself, going back to that, in some of the discussions that I have been involved in – just this weekend I was in two different discussions. In my weak way I attempted to explain this concept of justification. Both times the questions – why haven't I understood this? Why hasn't this been taught? I do, I guess, feel in my heart that it has not been clearly taught. I am not saying that it has not been there and it has not been understood. But I don't believe that it has been clearly taught. [This idea] that we aren't going to confession in order to more justify ourselves, in that sense. We are going there for reassurance. Sins are all forgiven even before we go there. But we need the reassurance. As I said. And some of the discussions surrounding that, on one hand, some alarming to people because it sound different what they have understood, but nonetheless it is the message of scriptures. It is the teaching of Luther. It does not throw confession out the window. It does not throw the preaching of the gospel out the window, because we do, and will continue to, need that as long as we are here. So, I don't know if that sounds clear or sounds confusing. But that is simply how I understand justification to be. We are forgiven, but yet remain sinners. We are righteous, yet full of sin. As Luther explained, that is one of the most difficult things to understand about faith. How can we be pure, righteous, holy and completely acceptable to God, but yet full of sin at the same time? It is a mystery. But I hope, dear brothers, that we can continue to be open and free in discussing these matters. But I do feel that there is much confusion around that very matter. That is where a lot of these discussions have been now. [1:52:50]

Eric Jurmu: May I ask what some of those confusions are that you hear, just out of curiosity?

Craig: Well, I guess to sum it up in a sense in this way that, maybe not agreeing that our sins are forgiven already even before … [hearing the gospel? Unclear] I guess, in the sense that they are forgiven when you hear it. That, of course, can sound confusing by itself. We believe it forgiven when we hear it. But yet justification means [that] we don't have to be burdened with this thought that I am going to be condemned if I don't confess this sin. I know that is how I have

felt at times in my life. Of course, we want to. As Luther explains, confession is never a demand. We can never demand it of our children or anybody else. But yet we freely confess because we freely believe. When sins burden us, we are free to confess them. But it is not ever a demand. I guess, part of that misunderstanding has been that they truly are not forgiven unless I ask. So, in that sense it would almost be as if you would be condemned unless you ask [1:54:16]

Jouko: I would like to comment. I would like to say that I am troubled with this understanding. It does not answer my spirit. There is something, some element, in that that I can't explain. I don't understand. But it troubles my spirit very much. I have to say, my mind trembles. There is something … I can't explain it any better. But there is something with … Again, I understand that the … comes very close. It is not my [doing?] … The best Bible portion that helps me to understand this very difficult question … This is in Micah? Yes, Micah 7:18. I read it in the Finnish Bible. Of course, I have to read English. "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger forever, because he delighteth in mercy." In the Finnish translation it says … How do you translate this? I will read what I can in English, then I will switch to Finnish. You brothers know how to translate this. Who is such a God as you are who forgives sins? He goes by – Han menee ohitse perimisen jääneiden rikoksia. So, it says that he goes by those sins that are being forgiven. So, what I understand is that my salvation has not been left into my hands. For sure not. I am free of that. So, I don't worry about that in this sense that I should make sure that I will [be good at]. Because I know that it is impossible for me. It has not been left – I say like Lenna Pellikka said so many times -- it has not been left into these sinful hands. It is not my duty. Secondly, I understand that I don't even understand all my sins. I don't even know them. So, God goes by those sins. He imputes grace – these terms are so difficult for me. This concept of when Christ died [that] he forgave all my sins. I don't think so. He paid for my sins. The sin debt of mankind was reconciled, was paid for, but it was not forgiven. I can't think that all [of] my sins are forgiven all the time. Because, unforgiven sin leads into the world. If all sins are always forgiven, no one can one fall away from faith. It is impossible. I think it is even logically impossible. That is Pollarian doctrine. That troubles me. I say again that I understand so little. Brothers, I would love for your sakes to understand better. But I don't understand it any better.

I have to say, my dear brother, my heart trembles, when I hear someone say that my sins are already all forgiven. I fall into sin every day. I feel the pain for my sinfulness. I pray to God that he would not become angry with me. Because I know that if he takes his hand away from me, his protection away from me, I am lost. If he takes away the pain for sin, I am lost. If I start thinking that all the sins are always forgiven, I don't need grace. It is not to me a reminder. But it is as Sam [Roiko] said. I was amazed how many times when Valde [Palola] when he kept the presentation about the justification of faith. How many times … Well, I lost track. I didn't have time, when I was translating. He wore me out. Sam had to come finish the presentation. How many times he said of the audible proclamation of the gospel? That is, in my understanding, that is in odds with this understanding that sins are always forgiven already. If my sins would be forgiven already, I wouldn't worry about them at all. If they are forgiven, they are forgiven. … [some sentences I couldn't follow. They were in Finnish] … Unforgiven sin leads into the world. We don't have unforgiven sin [meant to say, don't need forgiveness], if sins are forgiven. That is even logically to me – I will stop here. Brothers, can I believe my own sins forgiven? [2:02:33]

Rod Nikula, moderator: Myself even, thinking of the question, Craig. It says, the wages of sin is death. Then you think about the Prodigal Son, who was a child of God in his father's home. I think it is very clear, he lost his faith because of unforgiven sin. He returned again when sins were forgiven. So, if those sins were all forgiven, how did the prodigal become an unbeliever or go into the world?

Craig: I am not sure the context was the question. I think this is important because it does touch the key of a lot of these discussions. Again, I am thinking freely. I hope you guys can bear with me. Here is an excerpt of a sermon that was given in Finland in September. I don't know if anyone has seen this … [Jouko asks, Valde Palola's sermon?] Yes.

Jouko: [2:04:00] We have heard about that. I even asked Valde about that. It was not September, it was April … lot of garbled comments by others in the background. I got this text message that is floating around. I asked him [Valde]. I listened to the sermon. I also listened to the sermon before that. Valde answered to me that he feels sorry, first that his weak words in attempt to explain it are being used. He said that wonder if this is [being] used in support of the

understanding that sins are always forgiven. That was his guess. It was a humble answer. He felt sorry for his weak words. He felt very sad that that piece of his sermon is being texted around. [Some asks, what was his sermon about?]

Keith Waaraniemi: I think Craig can go ahead and read it. It is going around.

Craig: [2:05:12] Should I read it? I will read it. [Someone asks, do you have the shorter or longer version?] I have the longer one. [33:17] … On a certain day during the past week, I received an email where it was asked of me, does the child of God have unforgiven sin before God? Is it not an important question? Does a believer have unforgiven sin before God? How do we answer this question? If we would say in this way that if a believer would have unforgiven sin before God, what would that mean? It would mean that the Law has now come in the place of grace. Saying to us that you have fallen into this one sin, you now become as if owned by perdition. "Before God, a person cannot have any unforgiven sin if a person desires to be saved. When I had to answer this question, it led me to recall what we heard during our services from earlier today how confession can become mandatory, and even a merit work. It's not so that when I've now confessed a matter that it is then forgiven. No, but is has been forgiven already before that. Why? Because we have securely believed on the merits of Christ Jesus within God's house of grace as dwellers in His kingdom. Dear travel friends, this is the deep mystery of the righteousness of faith. A child of God, a believer, does not have unforgiven sin before God. For we have been promised that we can believe as sinners, yet righteous, with feelings of sinfulness, yet righteous, as evil and with evil feelings, yet holy. As I have related many times before of a certain grandmother who said that when she looks at herself, she finds herself to be so sinful and unsuccessful that certainly there is no worse person in hell than she is. But when she raises her gaze upon the Lord Jesus, securely believing in the merits of Christ, in his righteousness, by faith, she then rejoices in her heart that in heaven there is no one more holy than she is. This, dear travel friend, is the holy mystery of the righteousness of faith. But we certainly believe and understand that this does not lead us to purposely commit sin and [live in] the permissiveness of sin. But rather, so much the more, and better and closer, it instructs us to be near Christ, our Redeemer, the atoner of our sins, to travel by His side, in His footsteps, together with the other children of God. Tonight, dear listener, I encourage you to raise your

gaze unto the Lord Jesus Christ. Believe simply." [38:37] (Valde Palola; Helsinki; 18 September 2016; Isaiah 44:21-23) I have to say for myself, that is believing simply. We believe on that merit work of Christ. He has paid for our sins. He has redeemed us. But yet we are weak and sinful, and we continue to battle against sin. We put sin away when it troubles. It doesn't make us less righteous before God. We are in that condition before God where he looks at us through His Son. [He] sees the innocence of His Son. We believe on that. That is our salvation. That is simply how I see it. [2:08:43]

Jouko: Would it make sense if I would read Valde Palola's reply? Would that balance the situation? [Rod, go ahead]. I hope that we wouldn't trouble Valde much with this. I think in fairness it might be good to read what he said. I sent him this shorter version of this text [sermon excerpt] and translated that into Finnish. I told him that this excerpt of your sermon is [being] sent [around] as text, sometimes even without name, sometimes without any question or comment, just this piece of this sermon. It raises questions. Why is this piece being sent around? He says: "Thank you, Jouko, for your message. I wonder what purpose [tarkoitus] might be behind this message you received? Is it again so that some wish to use a piece of the entire sermon as a support for their understanding? Does this join in this question where is mentioned that even the future sins are forgiven and therefore the forgiveness of sins would not need to be preached in services. In this we stated together – the discussion we had here [at the LLC, SRK and SFC meetings] – that there is a strange [foreign] sound in this thought – tallaisessa ajatuksessa on vieras aani. The righteousness of faith is not leading a believer to the permissiveness of sin, but merely to battle against sin. It is always disappointing or unfortunate [harmillista] that our faulty sermons and weak expressions in the sermon, and by slightly altering them, one wishes to get support for their own [tarkoitus perille] cause with critical heart [an] interpretation can be made [tarkasti] precisely [for example] based on one sentence without wanting to understand what the speaker [on kokonaisuuteen liittyen syvimmiltään siitä tarkoittaa] intended from a broader context or purpose. I will read it in Finnish. You translate … kokemaan niinkuin entisetkin pyhät [this we end up experiencing in our times as the former saints]. Jumala antakoon meille kaikkein kärsivällisyyttä ja rakkauden mieltä [May God give each one of us a mind of patience and love]. Jumala meitä ohjatkoon viisaudesssaan [May God

lead us in His wisdom]. Kiitos vielä kerran yhteisistä keskusteltuistamme [Thanks yet again for the mutual discussions]. Saimme kokea luonanne yhteistä ja veljellista rakkautta [We were able to experience with you both mutual and brotherly love]. Siitä olemme iloinneet [We have rejoiced over that]. This was Valde's reply. I sincerely wanted to send him what is here being sent [around]. I translated that text into Finnish as precisely as I was able to do. And this was Valde's reply. I thought, if you bear with me. [I thought of this]. When a minister tries to emphasize something and looks from that perspective [from] this is one thought. He unintentionally forgets or doesn't get the balance approach to look at the other perspective. We can take our weak [war?] into it. They have tried or meant to say. [I am] a little boy. I feel worried about this. There is something in that which troubles me. I can't put my finger on it. But I don't feel comfortable with that doctrine or understanding. I have to say. Now when we speak [about] this openly, the first time I heard about it was Al Lake's speaking turn in Brainerd in a meeting. I was shocked. It felt so foreign. He said that [same thing] in the MBMAC meeting. It troubled the minds [of the listeners]. It always troubles. I am not comfortable with that thinking. I have been very free explaining. [2:15:34]

Minister's Camp at SLC April 2016

Jouko [47:20]: Dear brothers, I feel that I have to speak up, because my name has been mentioned in this connection that I have a wrong [doctrine] of preaching the gospel. This is a very important doctrinal question. Many have said how they have trembled in coming here. That is unique in the history of Christianity since the [time of Adam]. We don't battle against one another. It is a spiritual battle. I am not on a warpath against anyone, not even those who have said with my name openly that they don't believe in my doctrine, as if it were mine. The way that I believe. We have two different situations. We talk about the penitent sinner and impenitent sinner. I think that it is very important that we make this difference. I heard so much talk about penitent sinners that we ought to forgive [them]. [There have been] many examples. I agree. There is no question. I think it has been a good discussion. It has reinforced our conviction that the penitent sinner they need the gospel. To the poor the gospel is preached. But that is not the whole picture. That troubles me, because if we only speak of the penitent sinner, we forget the other part. Although it is so rare that most of us have never experienced that. I try to think if I have ever been in a situation. I am not quite sure. Many trusted brothers that I have talked to, have been preaching for fifty years, many have experienced once or twice or three times in their

lives. It is so rare that I understand, if some younger brothers have said that these are hypothetical situations. They have not been hypothetical, but they are so rare that they happen just a few times for the brothers who have such experiences. So, we talk about the very rare situations, very unhappy situations, but very important. There has been [public comments?] that the gospel can never be withheld, even when there is an impenitent sinner. I think our discussion thus far has shown that most of us believe that way. I don't think that I have heard anybody say differently. It surprises me, because this discussion has taken place. I understand, that there is another opinion. So, where has this other opinion now disappeared? I have not had this question. I remember being called [after the] 2011 MBMAC meeting, when this question was made … I tried to answer as best as I could, shortly, not taking too much time, not to filibuster [laughter] I hate to take much time from others. [Try to give] answers to the point or trying to get to the point. Then maybe the answer … I just wait for the time when I can withhold the gospel. I can't recall that I have ever been in a situation where I didn't preach the gospel. I can't recall, at least. So, I have to say that this rebuke or accusation [has made me heartbroken]. I feel that I have been treated unfairly. I don't know what rumors are going around, how law-minded and heavy-handed and what no that I am. I can't help it. I asked, as many of you know, in Finland at the speaker's meeting this question. There were 750 ministers present. Maybe five or six brothers spoke of that [issue of forgiveness]. None of them said, or anybody else, said that that was a strange or odd question. Are you law-minded or willing to withhold the gospel? But they spoke of their experiences. [Eric: what was the question?] The question was that the gospel is the treasure of God's kingdom. The power of God. It is our JOY and PLEASURE and happiness to preach the gospel always. I have to say this, can there be a situation when the gospel has been asked, but it cannot be preached? If there is, what kind of situation would that be? What Bible portion would support us in this? The brothers spoke. The term that I heard twice in the discussion, as I heard before, it is so describing. They used the term, 'feed through the fence'. If we are in the sheepfold and we feed through the fence, where does the food go? It goes outside. We cannot feed those who are outside. We cannot feed through the fence. They must come in, where there is plenty of food, as the Prodigal Son recalled in the in the foreign land. If we start feeding through the fence, the brother said that we [will] lose our salvation. That is why it is so important. I have used in the discussions the portion of the sermon that Arvo Perala kept in 1957, after the Small Firstborn heresy and in the midst of the battles of the Minister's heresy. I have been rebuked incorrectly of this. There has been a statement of concerns about Arvo Perala [John Lehtola just mentioned hearing a discussion in Finland that some of Perala's interpretations in his two books are maybe questionable when looking at them in retrospect]. I have heard about that. I asked in Finland, a trusted brother. I talked to four brothers. Never. So, I don't know what kind of concerns there were with Arvo Perala, at least the contemporaries are not aware of. He was very centrally involved in SRK

work. Arvo Perala was a SRK board member for twenty plus years and [a beloved speaker brother]. He explained and Aarno Haho explained in the Minneapolis Church that why the wise virgins could not give oil [to the foolish virgins]. It is not a question of oil, of our oil. It is a question of the Holy Spirit. Why they were not able to bless those [foolish] virgins. They said, we will lose our salvation. That is what they said. There is not enough for us. We will lose our own salvation if we fall into spiritual fornication. Don't we all believe that if somebody falls into fleshly adultery … they won't make it to heaven. Spiritual fornication is equally dangerous. It is just the opposite side of the road. It is not a light matter. It is not a small matter if we speak about spiritual fornication. I have heard speeches of four types of soil that we sow the seed into all kinds of soils. Yes, we do. [But] there are two kinds of seeds. There is good seed and there are the tares. The enemy of the souls, [sows] the tares. Good seed grows good fruit. And the bad seed grows tares. Jesus said, let it grow until the harvest time, then they will be cut out. So, it seems that the Bible speaks of the last times in three parables, Ten Virgins, Wise and Foolish people together, both tares and wheat grew in the same field, and the parable of the net, both living and dead fish were in the same net. It may be at the last times of the world that we live in that kind of situation where two groups mingle together … [George: Dear brothers, be free. It is a matter of personal salvation, but also the salvation of the children of God]. I will read from Galatiians 1:6-8. That is my last. "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed." [59:55]

Rockford; 19 March 2016; Mary's Day Services

Jouko Haapsaari [8:35] I also join in the thankfulness of my heart for the presentation. My heart said amen to it. I am thankful for it. It is an important topic. I would add one more description to what forgiveness is. I would also call it a treasure of God's Kingdom. It is kind of a cornerstone. I have two Bible portions. The first is from Romans 1 verse 16. It is very familiar. "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first and also to the Greek." There is one important word describing the blessing of it. Everyone that believes. It must be received in faith. It takes faith. That is why we are called believers. We believe our sins forgiven. In Hebrews chapter 13 verse 9 it is written.

"Be not carried about with diverse and strange doctrines, for it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace nor with meats which have not profited them which have been occupied

therein." It says it a little bit clearer in the Finnish translation. The grace of God establishes us in faith. Those who did not believe it, it did not help them. So, the gospel takes [requires] faith. To receive the gospel in faith. As Jim [Frantti] said, it is God's forgiveness. it is not man's forgiveness. If man does not receive it in faith as God's forgiveness, it does not help. It was very clearly [said] by Luther when he describes repentance or conversion. Luther says, we in no wise doubt, but we firmly believe that our sins are forgiven with this absolution. [11:50]

Meeting at LLC Office with John Lehtola on 19 December 2011
Jouko: Good that he speaks for all of us – not his own mouth (don't know what he meant by this). Ten Virgins – not much understanding. Arvo Perala (???) – It does apply to this time, not the end of the world. Gospel is demanded – preach it to me. They want to keep the lifestyle contrary – yet want to live as believer. A cloak over sin. Yet they demand the gospel. If they see it [as] a wrong lifestyle, then preach the gospel. Jouko refers to Perala's sermon. Now you ask with conditions – we have to stand on the foundation of God's word. We lose also. It bothered me – that the gospel must be preached! We are pleased, eager to preach the gospel. It the spirit of a person does not join with that of God's kingdom – can't be joined by forgiveness. Hebrews – it doesn't benefit them. I agree – we are not examiners of the heart. But more than us. God's kingdom may be troubled. It has full spirit (1 Tim. 5:22,38). A person intentionally lives in sin, but wants to take the gospel as a cloak – then become a partaker. There is a disagreement.
Jouko: Oiva Tolli – man would have made a better repentance if he could have. It wasn't expected. We accept a poor repentance. I fear the spirit of New Awakenism – rises above and uses power. Truth before grace is a harsh whip. Balaam whipped his ass. Asked John – television, homosexual, birth control. Such a one demands to be a believer but wants to live that life. What would you do? You are in no-man's land.

1970s Discussion at Board Members' Workshop
Rockford December 3, 2011
Jouko Haapsaari
o This is a narrow way. He felt timid. There are dangers on both sides of the way. Referred to the parable of the ten virgins (Mt. 25). He said that this parable is not about the end of time, but refers to today. Why was oil not given to the five foolish who asked? Accusers ask for forgiveness with conditions. Binding is not always wrong. We forgive a penitent sinner. But sometimes we don't forgive. The spirit searches the heart. But if a person

wants to continue to live the lifestyle they are living, we can’t forgive. We cannot mix light with darkness. There is no other power than the gospel. Grace is not a cloak over sin – it is wrong.